

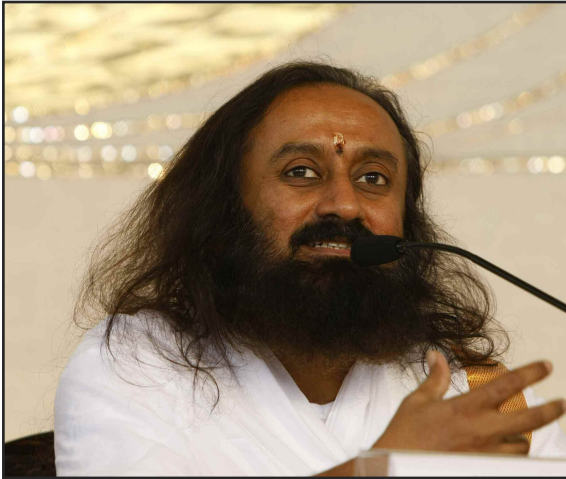


HIS HOLINESS SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

Creating a Stress-Free Mind and a Violence-Free World

‘We need to attend to the human aspect in today’s times’

Excerpt of Sri Sri’s address at Infosys Technologies’ annual Strategy & Action Planning meet (STRAP 2009), Bangalore (India), February 27, 2009



Bangalore is called the IT city. IT, I say, stands for the city of inner transformation. You need transformation in society, in technology, in our outlook and in our environment.

There are three aspects required for transformation - perception, observation and expression. There are four Ts that have to be reviewed and renewed again and again - truth, tradition, technology and trade. They have to be renewed again and again. You all know about technology, but I am talking of the experience of reality. Buddha gave one technology - how to control your mind. He refused to answer irrelevant questions - among them on God. He said, ‘I will

not talk to you about that which you think you know. I will talk only about that which you don't know.’ He did not even say that which you don't know. He said that which you are not aware of. He said, ‘There is sorrow, there is a cause for sorrow and there is a way to get rid of sorrow.’ Few thousand years later, this became a concept too. Then Adi Shanakara came and renewed the knowledge. Time and again, this renewal is necessary.

There are four sources of energy - food, sleep and the breath. Breathing is an important source of energy and intelligence. We can bring intelligence in those who are dull by making them breathe correctly. The fourth source is a calm and peaceful mind. When you’re working at home for a festival, you can work for hours without getting tired. But in the BPO if the boss says work for two hours extra, you say ‘Oh no’. We can perform better if we know about the seven layers of existence - body, breath, mind, intellect, memory, ego and self.

Whenever there is a crisis, the share markets plunge and ashrams get fuller. When there are deadlines and stress, ashram makes the hearts fuller. So there is an inverse proportion!

Two months ago, I was in Iraq when the Iraqi prime minister said, ‘There are big powers in the world but they cannot unite the hearts and minds of people. This work can be done only by a spiritual leader.’ That is the power of spirituality. Would you like to start a company in a Naxal-hit area? You want a secure, peaceful place. We need to bring that transformation.

I often say, inside every culprit is a victim crying for help. Of course, it takes time! Some time ago, the Bangalore police sent a bunch of rowdy sheeters. In four days, we sent them back as better material! Today, they have adopted 18 villages. What I am saying is that we are not attending to the human aspect in today’s times and we need to do this. If we can transform a violent person, we can also transform a lazy, uncommitted person. Time and again, the human aspect has to be looked into. Tiredness can also be overcome by attending to the mind, to the breath. This is what I call Inner Transformation.

Are you all here? Everyone? Psychologists say if one keeps taking for 10 minutes, the mind goes out for cappuccino at least three times.

You motivate somebody how long does it stay? Two weeks? You give a raise or a bonus - how long it stays? One day? I would like you to notice the difference between inspiration and motivation.

Motivation is material-oriented. Inspiration is goal-oriented, value-oriented and stays for a long time.

You see these highly motivated Maoists? You will be surprised. In the prime of their life they go through the forest. They don't live a comfortable life. They are inspired by Karl Marx or Mao. Can't we use the same inspiration in a creative manner? They should know that what they do will contribute to a larger cause of humanity. Mahatma Gandhi inspired people and so the entire nation united. This inspiration has been used politically, religiously - what makes a young boy of 22 put his life in suicide missions? If he puts this into science, technology - what couldn't be achieved?

These days, people enter R&D if they have nothing else to do. What can accelerate invention is inspiration. We are all entitled to have a violence-free society, disease-free body, prejudice-free intellect. Often, our minds are filled with prejudices. In India, we have this ceremony of lighting a lamp. It takes quite some time to light the lamp. Some ministers cannot even light that lamp. A small boy in our school gets an idea and puts some camphor. And it will easily catch fire. A small boy! Any good idea coming from any corner has to be welcomed.

A violence-free society, disease-free body, prejudice-free intellect, trauma-free memory: all these are the birthright of every individual. We can achieve it.

A question and answer session followed the talk. Following are excerpts:

Q: When there is intolerance around you, how to retain equilibrium?

A: See life from a broad picture. See intolerance as a lack of education. That is one thing. Second is patience and perseverance.

Q: Do you get stressed?

A: The product really works well! (laughs) Just last week I went to Kerala. They had organised 19 appointments in a day. I cancelled some of them before I went there. Yet, I ended up attending 22 appointments. I thought I would get irritated, but I surprised myself and didn't. Each one of us has tremendous energy within us. One single cell can light up the entire city of Bangalore for 24 hours.

Q: Where does Obama get his inspiration from?

A: Today, the global problem is terrorism through wrong ideology. I feel that we need to emphasise a broad spectrum of education for the future generation. If each child knows about other religions, it won't think other religions will go to hell. Even in India, madrassas are getting CBSE status because of the vote bank. I'm not saying all madrassas are bad but there is an 80 percent chance of narrowing vision. We need to have a long term goal and long term vision in everything. An education which has science and spirituality - head and heart is the only solution.

Q: What inspired you?

A: In school I used to say I have family everywhere, I am going to go everywhere. Sometimes you get that gut feeling or inner premonition. My mother was my inspiration. She was so alert, so awake. She never made a mistake, never said sorry in her life - can you imagine!! Another inspiration was my teacher who was associated with Mahatma Gandhi for 40 years.

Q: How do I handle criticism?

A: When someone criticises you, they are taking a risk. Who wants to take the risk of making enemies! When they are doing that, you appreciate them. Stand up to criticism. Also have the courage to criticise for their improvement. But if someone is criticising you out of jealousy, you smile, it is their problem.

Q: How do you ensure that conflicts, backbiting, politics doesn't happen in your organisation?

A: People are people wherever they are. I can count on my finger how many times I got angry - seven times maybe! If you fight, fight a new fight, don't fight the same fights! Intellectuals don't walk like sheep. They don't agree many times, they don't walk the same way. That is the fun.

They should know how to de-stress themselves. Let out the steam, get into the team!!

Q: You emphasise education. Yet, most problems are caused by educated people.

A: When I say education, I don't mean only a degree from college. Unfortunately, in recent times, pride has got attached to aggression. If you lose your equanimity or calmness, it means something wrong. This shift from pride getting attached from aggression to non-violence must happen.

Q: Do you have any goals?

A: I just inspire people to set their own goals.

Q: What are the two-three mistakes the organization has made. How has it learnt?

A: Our biggest blunder is our first principle: 'Accept people as they are'. I cannot reject anyone! Drug addicts, fools, riffraffs everyone comes. We can't reject anyone and we lose a lot of time!! We cannot discard even the incorrigible.

Second is we don't have a hierarchy - it becomes difficult to manage and track! Everywhere, people are starting on their own. Now after 28 years, we are streamlining.

Everyone is a spokesperson - that becomes difficult to control.

During our Silver Jubilee, we had such a hilarious time. The program was mesmerising, but behind the scenes, every department was in a mess.

Q: Are we getting too caught up in the negativity of today and forgetting the big picture that this will pass?

A: There are natural calamities where we can wait and watch. But in manmade calamities, we can't afford to take that outlook. Change is not possible if you don't do that. For some things, we cannot be just fatalistic and say this will pass.

Q: How does one make a balance between the heart and mind?

A: Yes. You do your business with your mind, and service with your heart. In both cases, there is a third component - intuition. Never be with in the business with heart. With family, be with the heart, don't use your mind there. Do both with the gut feeling!