

**Empowerment - Making the word "impossible" lose its meaning.**

Empowerment is the process of tapping into a power greater than ourselves. According to *The Bhagavad-gétä*, empowerment comes from God within in our hearts.

*I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. ~ Bhagavad-gita 15.15*

In lecturing on this verse, Prabhupada said:

*So He is sitting in everyone's heart, and He's giving intelligence. Because intelligence is not his. It is by the mercy of God one gets more intelligence, one gets less intelligence.*

Sometimes the intelligence to solve a problem, or come up with a new idea, comes to us as if out of nowhere. Wolfgang Mozart once described how he created his musical works: "Thoughts crowd into my mind as easily as you could wish. Whence and how do they come? I do not know and I nothing to do with it.... Once I have a theme, another melody comes, linking itself with the first one, in accordance with the needs of the composition as a whole.... Then my soul is on fire with inspiration."

This is how inspiration works. In a quiet moment, perhaps while taking a bath, walking in nature, or meditating, a solution to a problem we have been struggling with suddenly appears in our mind. It is God reciprocating with our effort to solve a difficult problem or achieve an objective - perhaps even create a masterpiece.

But this is not the only way we receive great ideas. Often we must dig hard within our Self, deeply questioning how we can do or be better. Many wonderful ideas that can solve our problems or move us ahead are "hiding" within us, but we need to pull them out.

Here is a powerful process we can use to "strain our brain." When looking for a solution to a problem, or when searching for ideas to move you forward, write down a "How to" question that asks either how to solve a problem or how to achieve a goal. Then write down at least twenty answers to the question.

Usually the first three to five answers come easily. Around fifteen to seventeenth answers you'll probably feel you have exhausted all possible ideas. Keep going. It is in the last few answers that you may find most brilliant solutions and ideas, (You can even do this exercise another day with the same question). What is amazing is that the answers were hiding within you. As Emerson said, "*God hides things by putting them near us.*"

Why are ideas that can move us to another level difficult to discover? Many of us lack self-confidence. We don't think we can move beyond our boundaries, and thus we don't try. But sometimes, all we need to move forward in a new way is for someone to show confidence in us, to tell us "You can do this." Prabhupada continuously showed confidence in others, and this worked miracles in their lives. Often, the difference between an average performance and an extraordinary one is that someone had more faith in **another** person than they had in themselves.

*The greatest good you can do for another is not just share your riches, but reveal to them their own.* ~ Benjamin Disraeli

We, like Prabhupada, should be the empowerer, the person who gives others faith in themselves. A few words of encouragement on a consistent basis will give a person new found confidence in their innate God given creativity, talent and intelligence. This will produce dramatic changes in how they feel about themselves and what they accomplish.

*"If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be."* ~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Prabhupada always encouraged his disciples to come to a higher level, challenging them to expand their ideas, creativity and abilities. Along with these challenges he assured them they could succeed. He instructed his managers to do the same. *"Our leaders shall be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service, which is individual and spontaneous and voluntary. They should try always to generate some atmosphere of fresh challenge to the devotees, so that they will agree enthusiastically to rise and meet it*

The importance of creating an atmosphere in which people are enthused is illustrated in the following story.

While a group of frogs were traveling, two of them fell into an old deep well. They desperately tried to jump out, but since the well was so deep their attempts were hopeless. Seeing the fatal situation, the other frogs told to stop jumping. They suggested that they accept their lot and spend the end of their lives peacefully accepting their fate.

Despite this discouragement the frogs were determined to get out. But the harder they jumped, the more fervently the other frogs appealed to them to stop. Finally, one frog accepted his fate and gave up.

But the other frog continued, trying even harder to get out. The irony was that the more the frogs discouraged him, the harder he tried.

Then a freak of nature happened. As the frog was jumping a gust of wind entered the well and threw him out. The other frogs couldn't believe it. They embraced him and celebrated this miracle.

But they couldn't help but ask the obvious. "How was it that every time we discouraged you, you would jump harder and higher?"

"You mean you were discouraging me? I am hard of hearing. I thought you were encouraging me!"

When encouraged, we work with greater energy, determination and creativity. Prabhupada noted that, "Without enthusiasm everything is finished." Encouraging people to tap into their creative resources was so fundamental to the way Prabhupada ran his movement that he was weary of giving too much training in areas that primarily depended on inspiration and creativity for success.

Today's corporate world is highly oriented to sales training. When Prabhupada's disciples suggested developing a training manual for selling his books, he said it was a bit artificial, quoting the saying, "Every man is his own genius." He preferred to let his disciple's sincerity and enthusiasm be their main sales training. Even without much training, Prabhupada's disciples became so proficient at selling his books that it was not uncommon for businessmen who observed their skills to offer them high paying sales jobs in their companies!

We should be encouraging and facilitating genius. That's why smart companies like Apple give employees free creative time every week. And the best companies trust their employees with customers by giving them the power to make decisions at their level, rarely having to go to supervisors for approval. (Customers hate bureaucracy.)

*The leader of the past was a genius with a thousand helpers. The leader of the future will be the helper of a thousand genius.*

I was put in charge of our center in Vancouver, Canada at the young age of twenty. I had little experience in management, yet, I was given a lot of freedom to develop the project (within the boundaries of Prabhupada's principles and vision). Foundational to my training was this instruction Prabhupada's gave me: "Feel yourself unqualified for this position, and thus always pray to God to give you the ability and intelligence to successfully manage the center. Be totally dependent on Krsna for guidance."

Prabhupada was sometimes forced to put people with little management or leadership training in charge of projects. He put more weight in their sincerity and integrity than in their skills. If they remained humble and sincere, he was confident they would get the internal guidance needed to develop their project. Of course, when needed Prabhupada would get involved - either personally or through mail - in areas in which he had the expertise his disciples lacked. But he advised his disciples to chant (meditate) and pray sincerely for the answers to their questions when he was not available.

(Prabhupada was also sure that Krsna would send "qualified" assistance in the areas the project leaders lacked sufficient knowledge or skills.)

The more I felt helpless, the more I received intelligence, inspiration and ability, as well as external resources. Because of this empowerment, my view of "impossible" started changing. Does this mean I couldn't have benefitted from more management training? I definitely could have. But this kind of training is only part of the equation. The instructions I received from Srila Prabhupada to be dependent on God for Divine guidance were, I believe, at the heart of my success.

This reminds me of a story in which the demigods became proud of their amazing performance in battle. To humble them (keep things in perspective) Krsna went to them in a disguise. First Krsna asked Agni, the god of fire, if Agni could burn a blade of grass He was holding. This was obviously a simply task for the Firegod. To Agni's amazement, no matter how hard he tried the grass wouldn't burn. Next Krsna met Vayu, the god of wind. He asked Vayu if he could move the blade of grass. This is an easy task even if you are not the Windgod. Vayu tried but also failed. Shocked, they realized this person was Krsna, and he came to teach them a lesson a humility. The abilities that helped them win the battle were given by Him, and He could take them away in one moment.

Prabhupada said that he had no qualification for writing books, but the power to do this work came from the inspiration and grace of his guru. These are the "higher order" laws under which the sadhu works, and under which all of us can take advantage. These are truly "Divine principles at work."

## **The Principles**

- **Empowerment is Divine guidance from within.**

- God is the source of our intelligence, ability and creativity.
- The empowerment process is activated by a sincere desire to succeed.
- Impossibility is a limitation imposed upon ourselves by a belief that success depends solely on our own abilities.
- Empowerment of another happens by both challenging a person and showing confidence in them.

#### The Practices

- List 20 ways you can solve a problem or 20 new ideas to move your forward.
- Sincerely pray for abilities, intelligence and answers.
- Help build others self-confidence by regularly encouraging them and appreciating their abilities.
- Cultivate a strong desire to be increasingly successful, to constantly "tax your brain."
- Be enthusiastic, even when you are not.

#### The Lessons

- Creativity and intelligence come in proportion to our need for them and our ability to humbly receive them.
- Re-think impossible. It may be impossible for you but not for Him.
- Nothing succeeds without enthusiasm
- When you encourage others, you encourage yourself.
- Do not rely too heavily on training in areas where creativity and inspiration are foundational for success.

#### The Quotes

- *Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish. ~Sam Walton*
- *Every child is born a genius. ~ Albert Einstein*
- *Your sincerity will be accepted by Krishna and He will give you intelligence from within. Simply we must be sincere, then everything else will follow automatically. ~ Srila Prabhupada*
- *To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. ~ Bhagavad-gita 10.10*
- *Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly and they will show themselves great. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson*

- *It is to be admitted that whatever translation work I have done is through the inspiration of my spiritual master, because personally I am most insignificant and incompetent to do this materially impossible work. ~ Caitanya Caritamrta purport*