



***"Greater energy and greater passion is more extraordinary than greater genius."***

**— Lt. General Arjun Ray, (Retd.), PVSM, VSM**

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**Dear Friends,**

### **EMPATHY**

*"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."*

**— Leo Buscaglia.**

Leadership has its roots in the human value of Empathy. This quality has been described as the ability and capacity to recognize emotional levels in both other humans and to a certain extent, animals. It is the first step in feeling compassion. It is the basic and ultimate requisite of a leader who is respected, loved and followed.

Sadly, too many children grow up today, without this great cognitive/affective quality of empathy. In school years the connection is made between acquiring knowledge as the exclusive key to success. Cut-throat competition in academics and sports is perceived by most educators as a healthy indication of ability. The ability to reflect, to interact, to nurture is given the go by.

But in the world of work, where human interaction is a huge part of the scenario, there is a frequent requirement of the ability to read and understand people and be in tune or resonate with others. Future success of organizations is seen as the collective work of the team and not the division of responsibility in a hierarchical context.

Theodore Roosevelt's quote, "No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care", requires reflection by each leader. Each person has "empathy capacity". Early childhood is the opportune period in life to bring out the best in caring and sharing. Nascent empathic skills need to be honed as early as infancy. This paves the way for becoming a good communicator, to be able to connect positively with others through speaking, through writing, movies and the arts.

Human empathic skills do not make one a "softie" or an individual who cannot survive or rise above physical, academic or professional competition. In fact they are the facilitators of successful strategic planning. Leaders with a high empathic quotient, can and do identify with others or the masses whom they lead. They earn the credibility of those they lead without great effort because they genuinely feel and realise the reality of situations they have never been in themselves.

An "energy empath" feels and is in sync with another's highs and lows. Physical, intellectual and spiritual energy is infectious and is an essential ingredient of a leader's charisma. Such leaders can reach out and transform the most anti-social, apathetic, ineffective people. They can appeal convincingly against violence or precipitate action.

Empathic concern is appreciated and well received by the staunchest resisters to an idea or plan. Having at heart the welfare of others, even at a cost to oneself or one's family rarely goes unnoticed. Ideally this implies experiencing and feeling another's physical or emotional pain, another's loss or deprivation, or the disability or inability of others. This is what lies at the root of inclusive education, which we practise at our Indus Schools.

Human survival is under grave threat unless we explore and bring to the surface of our behaviour this unique innate resource, the quality of feeling with and for others. It is this lost quality that lies at the base of all conflict and violence, whether it is personal or perpetrated on a mass scale. It is this loss which makes humans stoop to base levels not ever known before. Empathy is what prompts outrage. In a true leader it should be a motivating force to action, to reform and to positive human and humane growth.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arjun Ray". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Lieutenant General Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM (Retd.)

Chief Executive Officer

Indus Trust