

Sustainability at MScSM

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Dear All,

I am excited to welcome you all to our family – the Sustainability Management Family. The family, which started in September 2014, is small and young but highly promising; it is focused on the most challenging issue of this century – sustainability – sustainability of the human race or *Global Sustainability*. The issue is critical not only to the family but for the survival of the human race and other forms of life.

This year, I am going to start my talk with a story of a Frog living in a well for long time.

There was a frog born, brought up, and lived for a long time in a well. One day other frog that lived in the sea for a long time fell into that well. The first frog asked – from where did you come? The second frog replied – the sea. The first frog asked – is the sea bigger than this well? The second frog replied – do not compare the sea with this little well. The first frog asked again the same question. The second frog again replied – what nonsense, the sea is very big and cannot be compared with this little well. The first frog said that there is nothing bigger than my well, you are a liar, and go out of my well. The same is the story of the most non-conventional religious people belonging to different disciplines. The sustainability issues/problems cannot be solved/addressed by these narrow/blind views. Everyone has to visit other wells and finally the sea to address sustainability problem.

In the case of sustainability, the key question is: **What is Sustainability?** In most cases, people interpret sustainability as environmental protection/conservation, but sustainability is not about only environment. Some scholars divide sustainability in

environmental/ social/ economic sustainability. This division is also not appropriate because sustainability is not divisible.

Sustainability Lens

Sustainability is sustainability – it is neither environmental nor social nor economic; it includes all; we are talking about sustainability only because we have been looking the world through the myopic lenses of environment, social, and economic , and issues of sustainability can be **addressed only through a sustainability lens that can look all aspects together. You can get this lens only by coming out of the well and visiting or willing to visit the sea,**

Sustainability is about sustaining human wellbeing. Sustainability management focuses on optimization of stakeholder's values using ethical means, and it is purpose, and not profit, driven.

Sustainability, being focused on human wellbeing, cannot be limited to a traditional single department such as Geography, Environmental Science, or

Economics or any other department. It includes all disciplines/subjects, it requires multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches, and holistic, integrative, and critical thinking.

The current State:

Many so-called experts are confused about sustainability. Some are not even willing to accept the challenges faced by society and others question the concept of sustainability by arguing that that there is no clear definition of sustainability.

There are two main reasons for such a state of crisis/challenge. First, sustainability problems are complex, and experts try to find solutions in their narrow range of expertise. Second, experts' expertise are not value-neutral but they believe that their own world of expertise is value-neutral, and try to find solutions within their own value system while that value system is not universal.

To address sustainability problems we have to shift from our current dominant paradigm of *reductionist* and *narrow* approach to *integrated* and *very broad* approach. This is a challenge to humanity; and it is not easy to transform paradigms. .

To achieve this, we have to understand the roots of the dominant paradigm of reductionisms, individualism, and narrow view.

Prior to the emergence of scientific worldview, which started in early 15th century, the ancient worldview around the world was organic: people had organic relations with nature and other people. In this worldview, the goal of gaining knowledge was to understand the meaning and occurrence of different natural phenomena and not to control and/or manipulate. The questions related to the meaning of our existence, the creator, the soul and ethics were of highest importance. The so called scientific revolution, which started with the work of Nicolas Copernicus (1473-1543) and formalized by Isaac Newton (1643-1727), transformed the organic world view into the Cartesian view. Now, the Cartesian view is the foundation of all disciplines.

Fortunately, physicists, who established the Cartesian view, started challenging the Cartesian view through the Quantum Theory (QT) in early 1900 with two articles by Albert Einstein. As per

atomic theory, everything is made up of atoms, which are not hard solid particles. Even electrons, protons, and neutrons are not solid objects; they exhibit dual nature of particles and waves depending upon the context of observation; and do not have any intrinsic property independent of its environment. In addition, no sub-atomic particles can exist in isolation; all these particles can be understood as interconnections between different particles. John Bell (1928-1990) demonstrated that due to non-local connections, the two particle system is an indivisible whole even if particles are far apart, and therefore the system cannot be analyzed as two independent units. David Bohm (1917-1992), in his S-Matrix theory, suggested “unbroken whole” or “each part, in some sense, contains the whole”. These findings of QT suggest that when the building blocks of all matter – atoms – are inter-related and inter-connected, how can the higher level blocks will be not related!

However, this worldview has not received acceptance and almost all academic disciplines as well as businesses, governments, and other organizations continue to follow the reductionist

paradigm. The main reason for this resistance is that the scientific revolution – also called enlightenment or paradigm of “reasoning” – superimposed the new religions of different disciplines and sub-disciplines over the conventional religions of Christian, Islam, Hindu, and Buddhist etc. These new religions are as orthodox as conventional religions in terms of their thinking, views, practices, methods, and even membership of their religion. The so called scientific world has made most so called the most intelligent animal – human being to behave like stupid being. In the name of science, corporations ranging from petroleum to medical sectors are making this world serving their interests rather than the interests of this world. The preachers of the non-conventional religions are not willing to accept that their orthodox sermons are not driven by unbiased reasoning but the interest of corporate world. In a way, these non-conventional religions are more dangerous than conventional religions because the conventional religions were not against the nature and all those religions were supportive of relations among people and relations with nature while the non-conventional religions are

against relations with nature and other people. In fact, preachers of non-conventional religions believe in their supremacy over nature; they believe they can control the nature. This is the extreme example of the stupidity. A being who cannot understand himself/herself believes that he/she can understand and control the nature – what a tragedy?

The challenge to all of us is to make a big leap towards the new thinking, which I have called the sustainability paradigm in my previous welcome remarks. The key features of this paradigm are – holistic, organic, and integrative while its pillars are emotions, relations, empathy, and love. Transformation of the dominant paradigm to the sustainability paradigm means creating a new culture – the culture of love, relationships, and sustainability.

Next question is – What is love or true love? I have discussed this in more detail in Opening Remarks in September 2015, so will not deal it in detail.

However, brief attraction is not love, and similarly your efforts to achieve your own goals by supporting others, such as your kids, is not true love. In true

love, there are no conditions attached. I will call that the first principle of true love is:

“Seek your happiness in the happiness of the subject/matter/object that you love and not vice-versa”.

The opposite of this is not true love. In true love, there is no place for dominance; true love is based on complete and unconditional surrender. True love means sacrifices for the happiness of your love.

The true love – either to kids, students, and nature will have three main features – respect, integration, and balancing of diverse views /perspectives of everyone involved (or every stakeholder) or whom you love including your kids, peers, professionals, managers, faculty members, staff and others. That is also required for sustainability. So, true love and sustainability are inter-twined or two similar sides of the same coin.

The next key aspect of true love is Love by Mind or Love by Heart. As you know, if there is anything that can move faster than the sunlight – it is human

mind. So, love by mind cannot be true love and is transitory in nature. Heart is always in peace with yourself, it is the place of deepest thought, it is a place that connects you with your surroundings. Hence, love by heart is true love and it is permanent. A common example of love by mind is short-term relationship where there is only physical attraction and no true love. If there is a true love – the relationship will not be short-term. This does not mean there is no role of mind in sustainability.

Imagination has a big role in sustainability. You have to use the super speed of your mind to reach those places, in terms of addressing sustainability issues, which are beyond the current knowledge system and dominant value systems. You have to use your mind to serve sustainability and not to control/dominate nature because there is no role of control/dominance in true love. Similarly, in other cases of true love, other than sustainability, use your mind to serve the true love and not to dictate or control true love.

Hence, the second principle of true love and sustainability is:

“Love sustainability by heart and serve sustainability by mind”

Follow two principles of true love and sustainability

I do understand that transition is not easy and it will take some time. However, to facilitate your transition, some of our program’s ethos are:

- Nurture your “inner dignity” and encourage each student to explore his/her “individual identity” rather than superimposing uniform “external identity”;
- Encourage learning which includes engaging student’s personality and involves creative, activities, problem solving, visualization, and imagination and discourage teaching – the process of a teacher “telling” what to do; and
- Encourage learning through mind, hand, and heart.

What do we expect from you? Make a serious effort to this transition. 20 months is a long time, and we are very confident that by the end of the program, you will be a great member of this family – some of you will be a better member than us, or at least, me – that is a true desire/love of a Guru. Now for this transition, some important steps:

1. You have to come out of the mode of an undergraduate student;
2. You have to treat yourself as a student of a Professional program – Professionalism is the key - which includes rights and duties (or responsibilities) – be on time, finish your work on time, contribute to the group work, present in the class when others are presenting, use of computer only for academic purpose etc. – a long list – you will find this list in the Handbook; and
3. Do not become a parasite – too much dependent on any one – including Claire, Rose Mary, and your friends
3. Respect, integrate, and balance others views/perspectives.

These steps can also be imposed by rules and regulations but that will lead to a temporary change in your behaviour – change by mind and not a change by heart. You will go to the old habits as soon as the rules/regulations are relaxed. That will not be your transformation. I would like you to be transformed, and you monitor your transformation, and self-report it to me during and at the end of this program.

Finally, in true love, you are in total love. As Gandhi once said, **“Hate the sin and not the sinner”**. It

means that you may not like few habits/actions of the person whom you love, but that does not mean that you start hating that person. As part of your true love, your duty is to help that person to come out of those actions/habits.

Coming to real life examples, you will have to do a lot of work in groups and I am sure that people will have diverse views/perspectives and ways of doing assignments. As a part of your true love to sustainability, you will have to start with your love to each other. So, if someone in the group is not contributing/performing as per your expectations, and remember expectations are not one-way but are either two-ways or multiple-ways which means you may also be not performing as per others expectations; the solution is not to criticize each other, but to understand, help, and support each other to get out of that trap.

In this context you have to remember the simple physics principle – “Pulling is easier than pushing”. The same law applies in human beings, but we often forget about that. Generally, when you are in disagreement, you try to push other person to make him/her agree to your view. Remember, by doing this, you are working against the Laws of Nature.

In the process of pushing, you will be wasting your physical energy, mental energy, emotional energy, and your time. All these resources are your private resources and valuable to you and you can use these resources for some other important contribution; so why to waste these resources – you are a student of sustainability management program, you are planning to teach others – how not to waste resources – specifically public resources such as water, forest, and environment etc. How can you teach others or why other will listen to you if you do not learn yourself not to waste resources? So, let us start – walk the talk – right from today – right from our friends/colleagues. This is all about true love to sustainability management.

Let us start now with our true love to sustainability management family and move from there to sustainability management community and later to global sustainability.

With love and best wishes

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