

## Sustainability Management Family, Love, and You

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**Director, MScSM Program**  
**Welcome Remarks, Class 2017, September 1, 2015**

Dear Family Members,

I am thrilled to welcome you all to a newly formed family – our Sustainability Management Family. This family, started in September 2014, is very young but it is highly promising and focused on the most challenging issue of this century – Sustainability – Sustainability of 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.

Generally, a family (Latin word: familia) is defined as a group of people affiliated by birth or marriage or residence. This limited view of family may not capture the foundations of our family. In fact, some of the common attributes of a family are a common value system, use of common resources, standing for each other, but the foundation of all these attributes, either of a narrow view or broader view, family is Love.

The word Love may seem simple but it has deep and multiple meanings. It is often not correctly used or understood. You commonly hear “I love you”, “I love nature”, and “I love Toronto” etc. Sometimes, you are attracted to something and you say I love that thing/person/place. This is your attraction or your liking of the subject and not really love and definitely not true Love. Sometimes, it may be attraction only and no love at all; sometimes strong attraction and some love; sometimes a strong attraction and deep love; and rarely, real/pure love. So, the fundamental question is – What is true love?

I am not the first one who is going to explain, “What is Love”? There are many views including biological and psychological foundations, cultural, religious, and political views on love. I am going to try to establish preliminary relationships between love and sustainability, one of the untouched areas in sustainability literature.

Let me start with some examples, especially one close to my own experience. Many parents, specifically East Indian parents, want their children to become engineers/doctors and possibly lawyers while the children may want to do social work, anthropology, or history. Similarly, a common problem in many countries is that parents want their daughters to get married or have boyfriends in 20s while the daughters may, instead, be loving their independence. These are the examples of misplaced concept of Love. Parents try to demonstrate that they are doing this because they love their kids while kids think otherwise. So, 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 but parents/individuals who want to shape the future of their kids as per their own values/expectations/knowledge, which may not match with their kids. This is the parent's/individual's desire to dominate over kid's value system. In true love, there is no place for dominance; true love is based on complete and un-conditional surrender. True love means sacrifices for the happiness of your love.

The surrender for true love does not mean that parents do not teach anything to their kids and leave them completely on their own. They have to teach them how to find their own true love in their own ways, not in what parents think is best, or in the area where parents think they will have the most financial or otherwise notional rewards.

So, the next question is, why do these parents want their kids to do the things mentioned above? Generally, this is due to the parents' own past experiences – they might have faced some situations/context in their past or they might have locked-in to some situations that were not prosperous (so called). Normally, people like the known (i.e. familiar) past, irrespective of new opportunities available to the next generation. This situation is known as path-dependence which is not about parents but about every profession including science and management. So, whatever I have said about parents also applies to professionals, scholars, and scientists. They want their next generation to just continue their tradition – that is their love for their work, love for the continuation of their thought process, love for their desire to dominate; which is, as stated earlier, not the true love to the next generation of students or sustainability workers or not to social welfare.

Where does it lead us in terms of sustainability and love? The true love – either to kids, students, and future professionals 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.

What is sustainability management? In short, SM is science as well as art of respecting, integrating, and balancing different values and perspectives of human systems and different attributes of natural systems. 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, your mind is the best wonderer – it is everywhere and moves very fast. 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 which by nature itself is temporary; there is no true love in such a relationship, there is only physical attraction. If there is a true love – the relationship will not be short-term. If there is no true love, who cares if that relationship breaks because you want love by heart – a permanent relationship. On the other hand, relationships based on love by heart will never break; in these relationships even if you do not live together, your love is still immense and true. Good examples of these relationships are rare but there are some; these may be true love by your parents, your love for your kids, your love to your teacher etc.

This does not mean there is no role of mind in sustainability. Once Einstein said:

*“True sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination..... Logic will take you from A to B but imagination will take you everywhere.”*

You have to use the super speed of your mind, which is a hindrance for true love, 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.”

This program is unique/ nowhere else you will find to be treated like a member of a special family – a family whose foundation is based on true love. So, my expectations from you are to become an ideal member of this family. What does ideal member means?

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. 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

*Shashi Kant*

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9.00AM to 9.45AM

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