

Dedicated to
My late father-in-law Dr. Gangadhar Sahu
My mother-in-law's late sister Kanak Behera
and my late sister Prasanna



ZeNLP

LEARNING THROUGH STORIES

(A COLLECTION OF INSPIRING STORIES)

Murli Menon

THE WRITTENWORD PUBLICATIONS

THE WRITTENWORD PUBLICATIONS

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Cover Design By Arjan Vir Singh, AJM/930.

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ISBN 978-81-925371-1-5

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what the press says about ZeNLP

ZeNLP shows how success in life can be achieved through meditation

– **Life Positive**

More than 5000 people have benefited from ZeNLP workshops till date

– **Economic Times**

ZeNLP helps to harness the infinite power of the mind

– **Hindu**

ZeNLP exercises are simple

– **Yahoo India News**

ZeNLP helps people discover their inner power

– **MSN India News**

ZeNLP trains the mind to think positively

– **Telegraph**

Negative thoughts can be silenced by ZeNLP

– **Civil Society**

ZeNLP can empower individuals through meditation

– **Asian Age**

for deepika my wife...

This book is a result of your sacrificing nature. The tremendous support you have provided me over the years has enabled me to discover the author in myself. This book is dedicated to your selfless nature. Your hidden hand is visible in every word of this book and I would like to accept that this book is as much yours as mine. Writing this book without your support would have been tough. You have smoothened my path by managing everything singlehandedly during my long absence from home. Your soothing presence motivates me to work longer and harder.

Thanks for those endless cups of fresh ginger and tulsi herbal infusion which have kept me active; as also your innovative zero stress vegan cooking which increased my effectiveness and efficiency. Thanks for not watching television. Thanks for not going to watch movies. Just because you couldn't do these without me and I couldn't accompany you, as I was busy travelling. Thanks for not buying milk and willingly following my vegan diet. Words are insufficient to communicate my gratitude for packing my bags and thoughtfully including everything I needed in the remotest corners of this planet. Thanks for paying the bills during my absence from home. Thanks a ton, chotu, for being my pillar of strength during our initial turbulent days at Bangalore.

preface

This book is a result of fifteen years of painstaking work and repeated journeys to some of the most interior and inaccessible areas in India. We undertook these pilgrimages as we wanted to research stories, folktales, parables and real life anecdotes to include in this book. We were guided to all stories featured in this book by hidden meaningful coincidences, which enabled us to meet the right person at the right time. I would like to recount my personal experience which has transformed my life.

On January 1st 1995, I had one of the most traumatic experiences of my 28 years of existence on planet earth. I was returning home after a New Year's party at Jayanagar in Bangalore, when I had a head-on collision with a truck. I had a serious head injury but was saved as I was wearing a helmet.

Unfortunately there was organic damage to the right frontoparietal lobe of my brain. This hemorrhage prevented blood flow to my right brain resulting in complete paralysis of the left side of my body. Doctors at Manipal Hospital were brave enough to declare me a vegetable for life, as blood flow to my right brain had been obstructed for eight hours and I went into coma. The subsequent surgical interventions meant total dependency on powerful antiepileptic drugs for the rest of my life!

After about a week of drifting in and out of coma, I regained consciousness. However, the left side of my body continued to be a dead weight. Slowly but surely, I recovered from paralysis by combining Zen meditation with NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming). I was regularly practicing meditation and creative visualization before my accident. I knew that mind power could cure any disease including amnesia, epilepsy and paralysis. By practicing ZeNLP, I regained my health in a short span of three months. I decided that as I had been given a new life, I would dedicate it to the cause of environment protection. I made a list of goals and put them in writing.

On the first anniversary of my accident, I decided to spend the New Year's Eve at a forest resort, which is an eight-hour drive from Bangalore. The Bilagiri Rangan Hills or B.R. Hills is a reserved forest, which is approximately 300 km. south of Bangalore. On 30th December 1995, I took the KSRTC (Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation) bus to B.R. Hills and arrived there at around 8 p.m. Early morning, I decided to take a trek around my guesthouse, when I found a group of tourists proceeding into the forests for sightseeing. One of the passengers of the jeep happened to be my student and he asked me to join them in their safari.

Unknown forces were propelling me into an adventure, which would last a lifetime. I hopped on to their vehicle and found myself in lush deciduous forests. The tourists were trying their best to spot elephant tracks but could only spot a few stray deer and

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solitary wild boar. After about an hour of wandering aimlessly, we came across a clear mountain stream and a few secluded caves. Our vehicle stopped here abruptly and though the driver tried his best, it wouldn't start. The engine spluttered, stopped and refused to start.

I stepped down from the vehicle and made my way down the spiral steps leading to the stream. I quenched my thirst and was waiting for the others to join me where I was, when I saw a series of tridents arranged in concentric rows on the banks of the mountain stream. Curious to discover more, I stepped barefoot through the icy cold water and crossed to the secluded caves when I was blinded by a brilliant flash of light. Followed by this explosion, I found myself as light as a helium balloon and felt ecstatic. I was overcome by waves of euphoria and found a tingling sensation emanating from the bottom of my spine and moving upwards towards my brain. It was as if each and every cell of my body was vibrating with a renewed energy. I could feel waves of energy arising from my spine and flowing into my brain. The experience was so pleasurable and intense that I wanted it to continue forever. I could feel each and every cell of my body tingling with a consciousness I had never felt before.

Waves upon waves of pleasurable sensations were breaking upon my body as if each and every cell was experiencing cosmic bliss.

I stood transfixed in front of the tridents and Shiva lingams under the centuries old Champaka tree at the

Dodda Sampige forests inside B.R. Hills. Minutes passed into hours as I experienced cosmic consciousness or kundalini Shakti as it is termed in Vedic scriptures. I could feel circuits in my brain, getting activated. Circuits, I never knew existed in the first place. After about an hour of experiencing this cosmic energy, I made my way up to the vehicle. It started as mysteriously as it had stopped, as soon as I entered.

It would be an understatement to say that kundalini awakening has changed my life. The literal translation of the word “kundalini” is as follows. Kundalini is a combination of kunda which means coiled and lini meaning energy. Kundalini is symbolized as a serpent coiled up three and half times and residing at the base of the spine. This is the dormant phase of kundalini.

When kundalini is awakened it moves through the seven chakras represented in the gross human body as Muladhara, (spine) Swadisthana (pelvis), Manipura (navel), Anahata (heart), Visshudha (throat), Ajnya (forehead) and Sahasra (crown). When the energy liberated from the coccyx traverses these seven chakras and strikes the pineal gland situated in the brain, kundalini or cosmic consciousness is awakened.

I started experiencing physical, psychological and spiritual benefits of kundalini. The first was my ability to be energetic and active. I became a source of boundless physical energy. My weight became steady. I started losing weight spontaneously and reached the ideal body weight (66 kg.) needed for my height (5feet 8

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inches) and continue to do so since 1996. My hair loss stopped in 1996 and graying of hair got reversed. Today, at 44, I have thick, dark hair. My skin became more radiant and youthful. A calm and serene look, congruence of body movement, soft pace of speaking and a sense of peace when alone are some of the major behavioral changes that I experienced. I developed a good memory, improved my concentration and reading speed. I started to write compulsively and have published three books in the last nine years. Most of my articles just flow out of my pen. Almost all my writing is spontaneous. Sometimes, I feel that the cosmos is expressing itself through my pen and workshops!

After smoking 20 cigarettes a day for five years, I quit smoking spontaneously from 1st January 1996. I also quit alcohol permanently though I was a moderate alcoholic. By 1st January 1997, I had changed my diet drastically. Gradually, I quit eating fish, meat, eggs, milk and all milk products. From 1st January 1998, I effortlessly became a strict vegan, quit taking all allopathic drugs and substituted all chemical based toiletries with natural ones. From that unforgettable day in 1996, I have not knowingly eaten fish, meat, eggs, milk or any milk product or any product of animal origin. I stopped using silk, leather and honey and am allergic to all animal products!

From 1st January 1996, I started conducting ZeNLP workshops for large corporates and in the last fifteen years have addressed more than 9000 managers on methods to awaken cosmic consciousness. Individuals

who have attended my talks include India's first and only astronaut among numerous others. I haven't watched a single movie in the last nine years, watch little or no television but devote my day to meditation, prayer and exercise. I have visited some of the most naturally beautiful places in India and have meditated on the banks of the Saraswati, Indus, Brahmaputra, Ganga, Narmada, Kaveri and Godavari. My work has taken me to the equatorial rainforests of Malaysia to Pangong Tso Lake in Leh to Fatrade beach at Goa to Chandipur on Sea. I have trekked all alone to Om Parvat in Kumaon and to several Himalayan peaks in Nepal and Ladakh. Meditating at all these destinations was a divine experience. In the last fifteen years, I have not had a single epileptic attack due to my immense faith in the power of the human mind. I get prophetic dreams about earthquakes, tsunamis and floods far before they actually occur.

I started reciting the gayatri mantra, which I barely knew before my kundalini experience. I also discovered that I could read palms of complete strangers with surprising accuracy about their past and have correctly foretold the future of several acquaintances, over a fifteen year period. I also discovered that I had been blessed with the gift of healing and have cured several cases of paralysis and other psychosomatic diseases till date. I conduct free healing camps for patients and my success rate at healing is miraculous. I have lost interest in material things and spend my time in research on cosmic consciousness.

This book is a collection of travel articles with a loose

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common thread that binds chapters which seem unconnected. However, you find a mysterious force which guides you to discover the hidden connections between the various chapters and awakens your intuitive powers to give you a holistic view of the sequence of activities needed to be coordinated to visit the tranquil travel destinations featured in this book.

I have visited and meditated at each and every destination featured in this book between the years 1995 and 2010. Some of my goals I visualized while lying supine in the hospital bed included:

1. To trek barefoot to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet from India (I have achieved this goal twice)
2. To dive at one of the world's most beautiful diving spots
3. To stay inside the world's most beautiful desert
4. To publish five internationally selling books
5. To fly in the cockpit of a plane
6. To travel on a cruise liner
7. To visit a mine
8. To visit and stay with the most primitive tribes in the world
9. To visit and stay at the world's most beautiful lakes, rivers and beaches
10. To stay in a secluded island on my own
11. To visit the largest trees in the world

I put these goals down in writing and have achieved most of the goals I envisaged in the last 15 years, effortlessly. I have also documented my travels on our

website tips4ceos.com besides authoring three books and numerous travelogues published in Indian and international travel magazines. In the last five years, I have authored three internationally selling books on ZeNLP.

I have travelled to all these destinations without using leather, wool, silk, fur or feathers! I have eaten only fruits, vegetables, boiled vegetables, roasted potatoes, dried fruits, seeds, nuts, grains and pulses during my travels. I eat only one meal a day and avoid eating all solid foods after sunset. Eating in the absence of sunlight puts a tremendous amount of stress on the digestive system.

However, I have achieved most of my goals set in 1995, while lying supine on a hospital bed in Bangalore! When you put your goals in writing, follow a vegan diet, avoid all products of animal origin, follow the principles of ZeNLP meditation, creative visualization, autosuggestion and chanting; powerful meaningful coincidences are created, which propel you to reach your goals effortlessly. This is the secret of my visit to these tranquil destinations in India, Tibet, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos and Indonesia. Meditating on the banks of “The Holy Mansarovar Lake” in Tibet was a highly spiritual experience. So was the trek around Mount Kailash.

Swimming in the placid waters of the translucent volcanic lake on the Cambodia-Vietnam border, river rafting down the Kinabatangan River in Borneo,

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visiting the longnecked Karen tribe on the Thai-Burma border, spending a week at a secluded island off the coast of Phuket and diving in the world's most beautiful diving spots at Koi Noi island are but a few of my experiences which have been published in travel magazines across the globe! Inner life can surely change outward events. Whatever the mind can conceive and believe it can achieve.

acknowledgement

I dedicate this book in memory of my late father-in-law Dr. Gangadhar Sahu (Baba), who encouraged me in all my endeavours and travels over the years. Baba will live on in our memories forever. My late father-in-law offered me physical, mental and spiritual support over the last 12 years and motivated me to become a better human being through continuous learning. Baba, who passed away in January'2011, had retired as the principal of BJB College, Bhubaneswar. This book is a result of the combined knowledge gained from unknown people living in inaccessible villages in the most interior parts of India. A few of these places are Baldes, Dah and Beama in Jammu and Kashmir, Bangriposhi, Upper Barakamuda, Jenabil and Jamnagad in Orissa, Sareikalla in Jharkhand, Kutti, Jollingkong, Nabhidang, Napalchu, Bundi, Gunji, Kalapani and Garbhiang in Uttaranchal, Rae Bareli and Mankapur in Uttar Pradesh, Karripode, Quilandy and Kollengode in Kerala, Darjeeling and Kalimpong in West Bengal, Gangtok and Peling in Sikkim, Nimbut in Maharashtra, Umalla in Gujarat, Barog in Himachal Pradesh, Barnala in Punjab, Kalka in Haryana, Chittorgarh in Rajasthan Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh and Bilagiri Rangan Betta in Karnataka among numerous others.

My publishers Naresh, Aditya and Deeksha Sagar are the catalysts who had the confidence to publish this

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

book based on their gut feeling. I would like to acknowledge their great contribution in giving shape to this volume of work. I also appreciate the efforts of my production team and editors.

I acknowledge the silent motivation provided by the following friends from the hotel industry in Thailand, namely Lisa Sol, Suda Huangthanapan, Kanokrat Petchpornprapas, Cheryl Treleaven, Deepak Ohri, Tharawuth Chuemuangphan, Hans Spoerri, Holger Gronninger, Peter Schnyder, David Holden, Marion Walsh, Ivan Casadevall, Marco A. Saxer and Franck de Lestapis. A large part of this manuscript was written in hotels that I stayed in Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Tibet in between 2003 and 2009.

The press has been kind to me. Their continued support over the years has contributed to ZeNLP becoming a brand name. I would like to express my gratitude to Amy Fernandes and Sugatha Menon at Jade magazine, Mumbai, Hiren Bose at “By The Way” magazine, Kalidas and Dilip Bobb at India Today, Divesh Nath and Paresh Nath at Delhi Press, Ziya Us Salaam and Sangeeta Barooah at Hindu Metro Plus, New Delhi, Shreekumar Varma and Sharada Prahladrao (book reviewers at Deccan Herald), among numerous others. Among the press, Sachidananda Murthy from Week magazine and K. G. Suresh and Sachin Gogoi (both ex-PTI) deserve a special mention. Shubhangi Swarup from Open magazine at Mumbai has been particularly helpful.

Many thanks to Sanjay Singh (Tata), Raghab and

Subhashree Das (Rajya Sabha) at New Delhi, for their hospitality during my visits to Delhi.

My clients have reposed faith in tips4ceos.com and our training abilities and are partners in my success. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Imon Ghosh at Academy of HRD, Ahmedabad, Laxmi Radhakrishnan at Madras Dyslexia Association, Deepak Makwana from Excellers Group, Ahmedabad, Sanjay Bapat at indianngos.com, Hans Henrik Lichtenberg from Denmark, Rahul Shingavi from Pune, Namitha Asthana from New Delhi, Indrani Sharma from ashoka.org, Venkataramaniah Cheruku at materialistspiritualist.org Surya Mahadeva at Hyderabad, Sanjay Bapat at indianngos.com, Anup Tarafdar at ebeamsolution.com S. Ramaswamy at Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd., N. Palai at teamorissa.org, Tushar Sharma at card.org.in, Arvind Bhate at migindia.biz, Lawrence Polsky (New York) at peoplenrg.com, Chhedi Lal Gupta from Gwalior, Shailesh Mule at fotocorp.com, Rohit Saxena at adrindia.org, Jaideep Khanna at Novotel's Hyderabad International Convention Centre, S. B. Dangayach at Sintex Ltd., Mr. Praveen Puri at Skyline College, New Delhi, Mr. Tirlok Malik from New York, Mr. Parvez Akhtar from IIM, Indore, Mr. Devansh Kothari from Remax India at Ahmedabad, Mr. Jai Bhagwan at 9dot9.in, New Delhi. N. Venkateshwarulu of Seven Seas Entertainment, Hyderabad, Chitra Singh and Shuchi Krishan (painter) from New Delhi.

Thanks to each and every one of you for helping

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

tips4ceos.com sustain its cutting edge since 1995. A special note of thanks to Dr. Chandrashekhar Ranade of Ahmedabad who used accelerated Learning techniques to proof read this manuscript. Anjana Maheshwari and Ashok Gulani of Indian Airlines Ltd. have been particularly helpful. Thanks for motivating this vagabond. Also, Satish Khanduri at GMVN (Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam), Dehradun helped me a lot during my travels in Garhwal. I have also learnt from the combined experience of all the 9000 participants who have attended our ZeNLP workshops since 1995. Thanks for your active participation.

The Government has been extremely cooperative, especially during my visits to small unelectrified villages. The officials who have gone out of the way to assist me include N. N. Prasad and Tara Kendra Vaishnav in Uttaranchal, Satish Nehru in Leh, Gopinath Mohanty and Dev Kumar Singh in Orissa, and Najamus Saqib in Jammu and Kashmir.

A very special note of thanks to Mr. Suresh Chandra Mohanty, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Govt. of Orissa) and Mr. S. K. Nanda (Principal Secretary – Forests and Environment, Govt. of Gujarat) for their support. Above all, I am indebted to my mother Sowbhagyawati Menon and father Kannanunni Menon, who have given me the freedom to explore the unknown. My mother-in-law Ashalata Sahu, sisters-in-law Ashima, Lipika and Neelima have made my extended stay at Bhubaneshwar as comfortable as possible. Thanks for bearing with my tantrums!

Mr. Girish Murmu, (Home Secretary), Govt. of Gujarat has always been helpful to me.

Anil Jacob and Sandip Kotak (both at Cox & Kings) have helped me whenever I called them.

Taraben, Hansaben and Jagdhishbhai saved me loads of time by running errands for me, so that I could complete this book on time. Rajul Sarkar of HDFC Bank, Ahmedabad, saved me time by solving my banking glitches and Nirlep Raval of Tata Telecom resolved my broadband and telephone disconnections in time.

Though a lot of inputs from innumerable sources have gone into this book, if any unacknowledged sources are brought to our notice, they will be incorporated into future editions of this book. I humbly acknowledge that all the good things in this book are lessons I have learnt from my varied experiences. However, all shortcomings, errors and mistakes in this book are solely mine. I take full responsibility for all mistakes that have crept into this manuscript and have escaped my attention. I humbly acknowledge the hidden spiritual guidance provided to me by Shirdi Sai Baba, who guides me through all my journeys and Mata Vaishno Devi who protects me in all moments of danger. The photographs of Lord Shanidev from Budhigere have accompanied me at all times during all my journeys. This book is a direct result of the divine protection offered to me by the gayatri mantra, which I have been mentally chanting every day, since the last thirty years.

*“Among the rivers, I am Ganga,
Among the mountains I am Meru,
Among the vasus I am Agni,
Among the mantras I am Gayatri,
Among the words I am Om.”*

1

introduction to ZeNLP

ZeNLP is combination of Zen plus NLP. The history of the word Zen is interesting. Zen means meditation or improvement. The word *dhyana* means meditation in Sanskrit and *dhyana yoga* (yoga through the path of meditation) is a part of the Holy Gita. Zen was rooted in China by Bodhidharma which came from India in the sixth century and later carried forward to Japan by the 12th century. *Dhyana* was mispronounced by Chinese monks as *ch'an*, due to their inability to pronounce the Sanskrit word *dha*. *Ch'an* became *zh'an* in Japan, as the Japanese mispronounced *cha* as *zha*. The modern word Zen is a descendant of the 12th century Japanese word *Zh'an* which meant meditation. Thus in ZeNLP, Zen is derived from *dhyana*. Thus, ZeNLP has its roots in the Holy Gita, which itself is Lord Krishna's commentary on the Vedas.

ZeNLP or Neuro Linguistic Programming with a touch of meditation is the new technology of achievement. The origins of ZeNLP can be traced back to the Rig Veda - one of India's ancient texts. Taking advantage of the giant strides made in the fields of computer technology, automated translation and digital cameras, our ancient texts have become the focus of in-depth research by western scientists. They are rediscovering most of their discoveries, in our

ancient scriptures. PNI (Psycho-Neuro Immunology) which is one of the most recent discoveries in the fields of psychotherapy and immunology, has been discussed in intricate detail in *Charaka Samhita*. Similarly NLP has been practised by our *rishis* since Vedic times and several Vedic *shlokas* talk about the “Mind-Body” connection. But Western scientists have done a good job of restructuring our ancient texts into “acronyms” like PNI (Psycho-Neuro Immunology) and DHE (Designer Human Engineering).

In NLP, *Neuro* is derived from nerves, which represents behaviour. *Linguistic* is derived from language, which means structure and *Programming* is borrowed from computers, which means creating change. Thus, ZeNLP creates structured behavioural changes in your attitude. ZeNLP improves conceptual skills, analytical ability and stress management skills of teams, with a focus on body language and communicating with the unconscious.

NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) was created by psychotherapist John Grinder, mathematician and psychologist Dr. Richard Bandler in association with Dr. Erikson, a leading hypnotherapist. Bandler and Grinder have since split and are separately teaching their own versions of NLP to their respective students. NLP originated in the research labs of the University of California at Santa Cruz, and evolved as late as the 1990's. ZeNLP was invented by us in 1995.

The computer was modelled on the human brain by

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its inventor Charles Babbage. The human brain is the most powerful supercomputer in the world, notwithstanding Gary Kasparov's much publicised loss to IBM's Chessplaying computer Deep Blue. The human brain is a powerful supercomputer. Supercomputers can be programmed by software programs. So, applying deductive logic, the human brain too can be programmed using software! ZeNLP is this software. Software for relaxing the body, mind and soul!

As Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* elaborates, "The Mind and Body are parts of the same system". Hence, far reaching changes can be brought about in human behaviour, by upgrading our mental software. These changes are permanent and can be brought about by ZeNLP exercises lasting no more than two minutes! I have come across several cases of men and women with phobias, who have overcome their fears, after a few, simple ZeNLP sessions. Just as today's Wi-Fi laptops are more powerful than the gigantic computers of the yesteryears, similarly, a few hours of ZeNLP therapy can cure severe phobias, which conventional psychotherapists used to take months to cure, in the past. Speaking from experience, I overcame my paralysis, without any residual defect, by practising ZeNLP therapy.

ZeNLP can be put to use in a variety of diverse corporate and individual environments, but it is most commonly used for stress management, healing, goal-setting, goal achievement, communication, motivation and teambuilding. How can managers benefit from

ZeNLP? ZeNLP meditation techniques develop the fine art of aligning your energy in tune with the universal energy. This reduces stress levels as managers begin to be guided by the infinite intelligence within them. ZeNLP meditation and tribal music for relaxation help them to be calm while making crucial business decisions.

ZeNLP researchers have discovered that people have three basic methods of perceiving the world based on their unconscious mental maps, namely visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. All of us have one of these preferred mental maps in our unconscious. The important point about these mental maps is that these modes are the preferred modes of thinking! A Visual employee is most comfortable when you show him colourful brochures. It is his most natural way of understanding the world. Employees get distressed faster when communicated to, in their preferred mode.

ZeNLP researchers believe that each one of us is a Visual, Auditory or Kinaesthetic based on our preferred mental map. In India, 35 per cent of us are visuals, 35 per cent are auditorys, and the rest of us are kinaesthetic. You can take your mind map test by visiting our website:

<http://www.tips4ceos.com/mind/map.php> Or email us at zenlp@rediffmail.com to receive your blank ZeNLP mental map questionnaire.

An indepth analysis conducted after collecting filled questionnaires from 9000 participants at our workshops, reveals that individuals are partial to one of the three senses, when given a choice!

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These ratios differ from country to country. For example, the French are predominantly auditory; Russians are predominantly kinaesthetic while Americans are predominantly visual. ZeNLP techniques help to build trust. Once trust is built, stress levels will reduce. ZeNLP based stress management techniques are based on your unconscious mental maps. ZeNLP research indicates that visuals respond to colour therapy, fire, music and creative visualisation exercises. Similarly, auditorys respond to music therapy, autosuggestion and water music. Kinaesthetics respond to massage therapy, clapping therapy and earth music. These relaxation techniques program their unconscious mind and help them manage stress more effectively.

Other ZeNLP techniques to reduce stress include Movie Music, Ring of Excellence, Listening, Garden Meditation, Empathising, Mirroring, Anchoring, Stealing Anchors, Paraphrase listening, Pacing, Metaphors, Zen stories and Reframing. Thus, ZeNLP can be used to program your employees to get relaxed faster. It is all a matter of using the appropriate programming technique to elicit the desired outcome. The mind is the laboratory, where ZeNLP experiments are carried out. Upgrading your software is as easy as changing your thoughts, in the way the brain codes experiences. ZeNLP shows you this way. Visuals should meditate at fire destinations, Auditorys at water destinations and Kinaesthetics at earth destinations. For example, Modhera is a fire

destination, Benares is a water destination and Gir is an earth destination.

I have meditated outdoors at many places and found these places vibrant with primordial energy! Needless to say, you have to follow a strict vegan diet, respect the environment and avoid all animal products to benefit from ZeNLP meditation! ZeNLP meditation involves meditating at destinations which are high in cosmic energy. The energy inside the “Great Rann of Kutch” in Gujarat is the energy of fire, the energy at the Holy Mansarovar and Ganges is the energy of water. The energy inside the thick sacred groves of the Mankadia tribals inside the core area of the Simlipal Tiger reserve in Orissa is the energy of earth. As per ZeNLP, Visuals should meditate at fire destinations, Auditories at water destinations and Kinaesthetic at earth destinations, to align your energy with the cosmic energy and experience complete tranquillity. inner peace, serenity, calmness and discover the connection between the microcosm and macrocosm. High resolution colour photographs of fire, water and earth destinations are hosted at our website tips4ceos.com. Interested readers can register for a free 30 day trial at tips4ceos.com by pointing your browser to <http://www.tips4ceos.com>



***“Stories are ideal for learning as the lesson
remains with us throughout our life.”***

– Ancient tribal proverb among the
Kohl tribals in Orissa

2

introduction to Metaphors

Travelling is learning. Having travelled extensively over the world since the last 25 years, I have learnt a lot from the combined knowledge of the people I encountered during my travels. The two languages all these people knew were the language of love and the language of stories. In ZeNLP, stories are termed as metaphors. Metaphors are extensively used in ZeNLP training as metaphors touch the emotions, are easy to understand and have a deep impact on our unconscious mind. The language of stories is universal and cuts across the barriers of nationality and language.

Having successfully used metaphors during our corporate training workshops on ZeNLP, we decided to travel around India and South – East Asia to research stories, anecdotes, proverbs, folktales and parables and use them in our training workshops. This book is a collection of metaphors and touching stories encountered during our travels.

We spent the last fifteen years researching the songs and folktales of the most primitive tribes of this planet including the Murut tribe in Indonesia, Karen tribe in Thailand, Orang Asli tribals in Malaysia, Khadia and Mankadia tribe in Orissa, Zat tribals in Kutch, Brok-Pa Aryans in Ladakh, Sidi tribals in Gujarat, Hmong

tribals in Laos, Bon-Pa tribe in Tibet and Mon tribals in Cambodia among numerous others.

Tribes who do not have a written script communicate through the medium of stories. All their dances, songs and ballads are messages from their ancestors through the medium of stories. These stories help tribal children understand the creation of this universe, animals, birds, trees and medicinal plants. It is no miracle that even the small children among these most primitive tribes know the medicinal properties of all plants found in the jungles, as this knowledge has been instilled into them through the language of stories, included in their folk songs. As there is no written script, there is no distortion and the unadulterated knowledge passes on from generation to generation.

The most powerful proof of the power of metaphors is elucidated by my real life experience. In 1995, I was invited to an engineering college in Bangalore for addressing their students on ZeNLP. After I finished my lecture, I asked the students a question, "Will you remember to practice these ZeNLP exercises?" Before they could reply, I narrated the following anecdote and said that their answer was hidden in the following story.

One day a child goes to his mother and asks her, 'Ma, who is that old man sitting on the mountain? Mother answers, 'Don't call him an old man, for he is Lord Buddha, who knows the answer to every question in this universe.'

‘Really, he knows answers to all questions?’ asks the child.

‘Yes, my dear,’ replies the mother. The child goes to the mountain where Buddha is meditating, catches a butterfly from the garden, and cupping the butterfly gently in his hands, he approaches Buddha. Keeping his hand behind his back, he asks Buddha? ‘Is the thing in my hand alive or dead?’ The child thinks that if Buddha answers that the thing is alive, he will crush the butterfly in his hand and show the dead butterfly proving Buddha wrong. And if Buddha answers that the thing is dead, he will open his gently cupped hand, allowing the butterfly to fly away showing that the butterfly was alive, again proving Buddha wrong. Thus, Buddha did not know the answer to all questions. “Is the thing in my hand alive or dead?” repeats the eager child. The Buddha opens his eyes, nods his head and replies, “My dear son, the answer lies in your hands!” I then told the group that the answer to the question about practicing ZeNLP exercises lay in their hands.’’

Sixteen years later in 2011, a young software engineer in a leading infotech company at Vadodhara attended our two day ZeNLP workshop. Just before I started the session he introduced himself and mentioned that he had attended my introductory lecture on ZeNLP at their engineering college in Bangalore in 1995. I asked him to share with his fellow participants, what he remembered from my lecture he attended sixteen years back. Not only did he remember the butterfly story but

INTRODUCTION TO METAPHORS

he could narrate it in his own words. Sixteen years had passed but the learning process through stories had stuck in his unconscious mind and I am sure that if I ever come across any of his classmates from the engineering class at Bangalore, in the future, all of them will recollect my story about the butterfly! I have narrowed down to just thirty touching stories to be included in this book. I am sure these thirty metaphors will impart lessons to our readers which will remain with them throughout their life.



3

the power of stories in ZeNLP

One day a young lad finds a lamp in his attic. This ancient lamp is covered with dust and soot. There is an inscription on the lamp which cannot be read due to the thick soot deposited on it. The lad rubs the lamp gently expecting the proverbial genie to emerge, but his efforts are to no avail. Remembering the Chinese adage which says, 'Don't curse darkness but light a lamp to dispel it', the lad lights the lamp and begins to make shadows of animals with his hands, playing on the reflections of his fingers. Soon, he masters the art of shadow play and invites the children of his village and entertains them with his skilful fingers. The children are enthralled and request him to teach them this art. The lad teaches these children the fine art of making shadows of birds, dogs, cats and squirrels. A few weeks later this young lad leaves his village and travels far and wide with his magic lamp.

A few months later, he arrives at a village hundreds of miles away from his native village and sees a huge crowd around a candlelit tent. He gently asks one of the villagers about the event. He comes to know that the crowd had gathered to witness a firsthand display of shadow play. Merging into the crowd, the young lad finds himself seeing the same shadow tricks he had taught the children at his native village.

The next morning, he takes his lamp to the river and scrubs it clean with coconut husks. Finally, all the soot and dust disappears and he is able to read the tiny inscription on the lamp. It reads, "What is invisible, spreads fast and spreads warmth and joy?" "Can you think of the answer to this question?" Think for a minute. The answer is knowledge!

One of the greatest reasons, why learning through stories is fun, is because stories spread fast. That is why inspiring stories are the fastest moving chain mail among email users. All of us love to read stories. Here is one more story which is my personal favourite. I heard this story from a Mankadiya tribal in Orissa ten years back. However, the lesson from this story has remained with me over the last ten years.

A tribal in Orissa had two large pots, each hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the water-bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments; perfect to the end it was made.

But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection and was miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure,

it spoke to the Kohl one day by saying, "I am ashamed of myself and want to apologise to you."

"Why?" asked the Kohl, "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for the past two years, to deliver half my load because this crack on my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The Kohl felt sorry for the old cracked pot and in his compassion he said, "As we return to my master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it a little. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load and so it apologised for its failure once again.

The tribal said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flowerseeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you have watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."



*“If you want me to remember for a
lifetime, tell me a story.”*

- Ancient proverb among the Karen tribe who
live in the tropical rainforests on the
Thai-Burma border

4

continuous learning though stories

The dream of every management trainer is to make the participants recollect the central theme of the session, touch their emotions and trigger anchors which will make the learning permanent. He also looks at changing the attitude of the managers over the long term by touching the unconscious minds of the trainees. There is no better tool in the armoury of trainers than through the language of stories.

Once, I went to a crowded vegetable market in Mumbai. Every vendor was outshouting the others while trying to sell their vegetables. This resulted in a lot of din and cacophony at the market. Among the vegetable sellers was an old lady with a feeble voice. She was not shouting but was quietly sitting with her basket of vegetables. At the end of the day, her stock of vegetables remained unsold. As a ZeNLP trainer, I decided to help this old lady. The next day, I purchased a hand held temple bell and handed it over to this old lady at the vegetable market. I told her to start ringing the bell when her competitors started shouting. As soon as the market started on Sunday morning, a huge crowd of buyers descended on the markets.

As usual, all the vendors started screaming at the top of their voices to attract the customers to them. However, the old lady stood up and started ringing the temple bell.

As soon as the clanging of a temple bell was heard in the market, customers stopped briefly and made their way to the source of this different sound. By the end of the day, the old lady had sold her stock of vegetables. This anecdote teaches us a simple lesson in marketing. In an overcrowded market, when all your competitors are making the same kind of noise, make a different kind of noise. You will get noticed and sell your goods. I have always followed the lesson learnt from this “bell story” and this has resulted in us getting noticed in a crowd. Thus, make a different kind of noise to be noticed.

In Kerala, there is a tree called the areca tree, from which we get the betel nut. Like a palm tree it is very thin and fibrous and tapers at the top. Looking at the tree you may think it would break if you climbed it but it will not. A man who goes up one of these trees to gather the small fruits at the top, does not need to come down and climb another tree. Instead by bending the tree with his own bodyweight, he catches hold of the next tree. In this way he moves from tree to tree gathering fruit. Only after he gathers fruit from the last tree, he comes down.

Continuous learning is like the areca tree climber. He continues to learn throughout his journey and gathers the fruits of his learning with minimum effort. The climber feels little exhaustion as he is moving rhythmically from tree to tree and he is in a dynamic flow. He can gather fruits from all the trees and descends after completing his objective. There is

another tree, the coconut tree; a man picking coconuts must climb down from one tree before climbing another tree. Conventional learning is like climbing a coconut tree. One must descend the first tree in order to climb the second tree. But great effort is required to climb every tree and more often than not, the climber gets exhausted quickly and has to rest before attempting to meet his objective, the next day.

Continuous learning is the ability to learn from nature and the difference between conventional and continuous learning is elucidated by my real life experience, when I happened to be sitting next to a group of German agricultural scientists who were flying to Bhubaneswar for a research project. One of the scientists informed me, that they were trying to find a solution to reduce wastage of foodgrain in their fields in Germany, from birds. They had tried all modern techniques including round the clock security guards shooting rubber bullets, ultrasonic vibrations, frequency jammers and radars in an effort to repulse the birds but had failed and they ended up with weary eyed security guards in addition to reduced harvests. They had even visited Australia and trained their guards on the use of boomerangs, but to no avail. Finally, a nonresident Indian had suggested him to try Orissa. I accompanied these scientists to the interior tribal villages in Orissa and learned a lot about their methods of agriculture and medicine. Once, while spending the night on a 'machan', we could hear the continuous clanging of a bell throughout the night.

Spending a sleepless night, we decided to pay a visit

to the tribals who were the source of our disturbance. As we neared the source of the sound, we found no tribals around. Instead of finding a tribal ringing the bell, we found ourselves at the edge of a perennial mountain stream. The tribals had built a contraption out of bamboo, which had been placed on the path of the waterfall. As the water hit this contraption, a seesaw mechanism saw the free end of the bamboo swinging wildly. Attached to this end was a large metal bell. As long as the water kept falling on the bamboo contraption, the bell continued to clang. As this was a perennial waterfall, the bell clanged throughout the day and night, thus scaring away birds, which preyed on their crops. And soon the Germans had their solution to their own crisis. They employed a windmill to create an artificial perennial stream near their fields and used the tribal bamboo contraption and bell to scare away the winged predators throughout the harvest season, thus saving them millions of tons of grain. The admirable quality among the Germans was their ability and willingness to learn. Here I would like to end by quoting Eric Hoffer, who said, "It is the malady of our information technology age that the young are so busy teaching us that they have no time left to learn."

5

our faithful companion

Chundaran was a puppy, when he entered my grandmother's house. He was gifted to my grandmother by one of our relatives whose Alsatian had given birth to a litter of cross breeds. From the day he entered the household, he was a mischievous pup. However Chundaran was extremely intelligent and grew up to be an obedient and faithful companion at our ancestral *tharavadu* house in interior Palakkad. Growing up in a family of six brothers and one sister, Chundaran was extremely attached to my mother and youngest uncle Balamama.

Every morning, my grandma used to tell Chundaran, “*Idlis* are ready” and Chundaran used to rush up the stairs and wake up my mother. Chundaran used to eat breakfast with the family and refused to eat plain *idlis*. He would only eat after a generous helping of *sambhar* or coconut *chutney* was poured onto his *idlis*. He joined the family for lunch and used to walk away if he was served leftovers. He was a dutiful dog. His Alsatian looks and human like intelligence became the talk of our village and no thief dared venture near the Anthure House at Karripode. Always alert throughout the night, Chundaran could be heard barking at the slightest hint of noise or movement around our house.

Whenever my uncle would return to his place of work he heard barking at the slightest hint of noise or movement around our house.

Whenever my uncle would return to his place of work after his holidays, Chundaran would rush to the bus stop or railway station to drop him. Similarly whenever he got the hint of the arrival of any of our family members, he was always there to receive them. Chundaran had become part of our family. After ten long years of companionship, my mother got married and left for Ahmedabad. Chundaran searched for my mother in all the rooms of our ancestral house for a week. He used to constantly sprint upstairs and keep searching. Within another year, Balamama moved to Ahmedabad too as he got a job there. Chundaran continued to stay with my grandmother. After about a year, Balamama returned to Kerala on his annual leave. Chundaran could sense the impending arrival of Balamama and was restless since that morning. He rushed to the bus stop and patiently watched the arrival of each and every bus that stopped at our village bus stop.

Finally, Chundaran saw Balamama alighting from a bus and blindly crossed the road to welcome his master. It was at this juncture that a speeding truck hit Chundaran. Chundaran was thrown several feet into the air and landed near Balamama's feet. Chundaran was bleeding profusely but he kept on wagging his tail and licking Balamama till his very end. Though it has been over four decades since

Chundaran's unfortunate accident, tears well up in my mother's eyes even today when she recalls her childhood friend.



6

united we stand

The anticipation of travelling abroad for the first time is almost like falling in love! You choose a destination and an adventure that makes your heart leap and your pulse race. When you arrive, you do not know how it will turn out to be, a casual flirtation, a torrid affair, a long term relationship or if after all the planning and expectation, there is just no chemistry!

In September 2003, I was invited by TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India) to address their convention at Genting, Malaysia, on 'Stress Management for the Travel Industry'. This was my first visit abroad and I was nervous, as I am a strict vegan. I only consume vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts and seeds. I also do not consume any cash crops including tea, coffee and sugar. Also, having lived in Gujarat all my life, I do not consume any solid food after sunset. I had been strictly following this diet since I can remember. I am also partial to Indian cuisine and slow food. One of the major worries I had was how would I manage my diet during the three day stay in a strange land! Also language was a barrier. It was too late to join a crash course in Malay, as I was expected to fly at short notice. The flight was full of TAAI delegates and I was flanked by two European tourists, both of whom did not know Malay. After arriving at Kuala Lumpur, the TAAI bus took us to Genting. I was flanked by two journalists

who were also travelling abroad for the first time!

I was getting increasingly nervous about how to say “I am a pure vegetarian” in Malay. At Genting we disembarked the bus and waited to board the ropeway to the hotel. I had settled in my skycoach, when I was joined by a thin, lanky, young man in his twenties. He had Indian features. So I asked him in Hindi, where he was from. During the ride through the clouds, I discovered he was working in the hotel kitchen as a helper and he was from Sialkot in Pakistan. He had been working for two years and spoke both Hindi and Malay. So I explained to him, I was a vegetarian and how to convey the same in Malay. “Saya Makaan Sayoran Sahaja” explained my young guide. He also helped me in translating the basic numbers, names of fruits, vegetables, grains and nuts into Malay. He knew little English as he had studied only up to the fourth standard, but had picked up Malay well. I tried to remember the tongue twisting Malay words and phrases but was having difficulty. His name was Alam Shah.

As we parted, I gave him my card and told him I would be staying at the hotel for three days. I also mentioned I liked Indian food. As a backup, I was carrying three packets of *khakras* (a crispy Gujarati snack) and managed on the first day. The next day morning I found an envelope under my door. Thinking it would be the agenda of the meeting, I opened the cover. I was mistaken. Inside the envelope was a handwritten note in Hindi. Alam had painstakingly written the names of

my favorite fruits and vegetables in Malay as well as in Hindi, along with the numericals and basic greetings in Malay including *Selamat Detang* (Welcome) and *Terima Kasih* (Thank you).

My session on stress management was one of the highlights of the TAAI convention, as most of the 1000 international delegates from hotels, airlines and travel agencies were glued to their seats for 120 minutes, (my official time was 60 minutes) and the lunch sponsored by Jet Airways was delayed, as delegates waited for the last slide!

At the convention, I combined my rudimentary knowledge of Malay with palmistry (my hobby) and was invited to visit Penang by my fellow speaker and the then tourism minister of Penang (Mrs.) Dato' Kee Phaik Cheen (Presently, Deputy Chairman, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board). During all the three days of my stay at Genting, Alam used to bring me a few bananas (bought from his own pocket I am sure) in the morning. There were no fruit baskets in the rooms for any of the delegates! On the last day he brought me a tiffin and told me he had made it in his chummery and he had cooked it himself using oil. (I do not eat any animal products including honey, ghee, milk or any milk product or any product from the bakery). After he went back to the kitchen, I opened the tiffin. Neatly packed inside were two thick "Tawa Rotis," "Peshawari Dal" and "Alu Ki Sabji." Over the years, I have had countless vegan meals all over South East Asia, but the taste of the "Peshawari Dal", Rotis, and "Alu ki Sabji" was one

of the tastiest meals I have ever enjoyed! The ingredient that made the food special was the love and care with which the meal was cooked!

It has been nine years since my first trip abroad. After the TAAI convention, many hotels in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia invited me to conduct stress management sessions and today I can travel blindfolded across South East Asia. I have friends in almost every “Leading Hotels of The World” member hotels in these countries! I can speak broken Thai, Malay and Chinese (both Mandarin and Hokkien) and have trained and learnt from hotel managers from more than forty countries around the world. Every hotel is a family in itself.

During my workshop at Holiday Villa, Langkavi (during my three month stay at Penang), I was introduced to the chef Afras Moin (presently in Egypt). He was from Lahore. He along with the then General Manager Fernando Pareja (presently in Ecuador), ensured I got 100% Indian vegan cuisine, cooked and served in my *suite*. At Gurney Hotel in Penang, it was the same story, thanks to Mr. Cheong. The entire staff of every hotel I stayed at always took me to their kitchens for inspection. Unless one visits the back operations of a hotel, one will never get the idea of the complexity of the backend operations of large hotels.

During my first trip to Malaysia, I was hopelessly lost in one of the most symmetric parts of the city, late at night. It was a Pakistani boy named Ali, who was

working in the neighborhood, who not only escorted me to a taxi, but also gave me a lift on his humble bicycle. I can never forget that ride along the flyovers that criss cross Kuala Lumpur on a bicycle! Probably, we were the only cyclists in Kuala Lumpur that night. However, I could find my way back to my hotel and have a good night's sleep thanks to Ali. May God bless Ali, Afras, Alam and all their brothers and sisters all over the globe for making my first visit to Malaysia an extremely memorable one.



7

learn your lessons well

I joined St. Xavier's High School Mirzapur at Ahmedabad in 1972 as a toddler after my K. G. at Daisy School and am presently the author of two internationally selling books on ZeNLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming with Zen meditation) and having travelled the world, I wish to share my learning experiences with the present generation. My formative years at the school have had a deep impact on my life. The first lesson I learnt was from Mrs. Unwala, who always laid emphasis on good handwriting! Even today, every banker marvels at my signature which looks like a computer font! But it took me many years of dedicated cursive writing to perfect my handwriting. Rev. Fr. Alphonso inculcated the habit of reading books. I was always in the library reading. Syed Sir and Pandya Sir, made me exercise. I chose long walks and my childhood training held me in good stead while I trekked to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet, Everest base camp in Nepal and during several rainforest treks in Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand.

While learning history, Dhruv teacher taught us the importance of visualisation. I remember having seen a single line drawing of the temples at Angkor Wat. I just mentally visualized myself at Angkor Wat when I was ten years old. My international engagements took me to Cambodia for six months and I spent two months at

Siem Reap exploring the temples of Angkor Wat. My greatest fear is not that we are weak; my greatest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. I learnt discipline, punctuality and humility not only from my teachers but also from my fellow students. I can count Gurdeep Singh Batra, Charles D'Cruz, Shoeb Ansari and Hiremath Subiraj as my good friends , though I have rarely met them after I passed out of school in 1982. I was among the top 10% of my class throughout my school and it helped me maintain this record in higher secondary, college and during my Masters in Business Administration at Pune. I learnt about the importance of studying regularly for a few hours every day, early at school. But I always balanced my study life with lots of kite flying, visits to Nalsarovar, Kaya Varohan, Dwarka and Gir. It is no coincidence that in my work life, I have river rafted over the Ganges, Indus, Mekong and Kinabatangan Rivers and have visited each and every wildlife sanctuary in Thailand, during my official visits for conducting ZeNLP stress management workshops.

In Geography, I learnt about the gold mines at Kolar, aluminum mines in Orissa and zinc mines in Rajasthan. The human mind achieves what it conceives and believes. I have indeed been to Kolar Gold Fields, Kolar, NALCO, Bhubaneswar and Hindustan Zinc in Udaipur to deliver lectures on my books. Memon teacher used to give us blank maps and make us mark the ports. I always used to dream about ships and ports while filling the maps. No wonder I have visited Paradip Port Trust, Chennai Port Trust,

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Vishakhapatnam Port Trust , Cochin Port Trust and Goa Port Trust. I wrote both my books at the sea side resorts of Penang, Goa, Koh Samui, Phuket and Chandipur on Sea. Your dreams are tools to sculpt your future. So, study regularly, be punctual, treat all classmates as equal, read deeply from good books, listen to soul uplifting music, pray regularly, dream big, get eight hours of good restful sleep, obey your teachers , go for that long overdue trek today, eat your greens and live in the present . Do what you enjoy and enjoy what you do and you will not have to study for a minute!



8

a soul-stirring experience

There have been few decisions in my life I have spent sleepless night over and each time I've made the decision in the morning. The first time this happened, I had to decide whether to give up a plush job with one of India's largest pharmaceutical companies and do my MBA instead.

After graduation, I had joined a multinational as a sales executive and had risen up the ranks, till I joined the present company in the management cadre. But now, having got admission to do the MBA, after clearing the tough entrance exam, group discussions and interviews; I seriously debated whether to give up my cushy job, the fat pay cheque, the credit cards and the corporate jet-setting to get back to studies after five long years of work experience.

After pondering over this the entire night, by next morning I had decided to quit my job. I submitted my resignation letter to my boss first thing in the morning, before I had second thoughts and changed my mind. The next time, I spent a sleepless night, was when I had to decide whether to get married or not.

I had completed my MBA with flying colours and after the campus interviews, joined a multinational company based at Bangalore as Product Manager. After

settling down comfortably in my new job and house, and having celebrated my 27th birthday, the next logical step was to get married.

Pondering over the matter one night, I decided to go ahead with it. Instead of placing a matrimonial advertisement in the newspapers, I chose the 'Meeting Ground' column of "Femina" I decided to go in for an arranged marriage as I had not found anyone by myself and thought it was too late to find someone to fall in love with.

My advertisement read as follows: Menon guy, 28, MBA, manager MNC, interested in poetry, environment and philosophy, invites matrimonial correspondence from simple, independent and good natured girl. No bars.

Reply to...

The response was overwhelming. I got replies from Bahrain to Bihar, from Kashmir to Kerala, from Gujarat to Guwahati and one from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands too.

It was a tough job short listing the replies. There were many whom I replied to, but who never responded. Finally, the choice was narrowed down to two candidates in Mumbai. One was a journalist with a magazine and the other was the daughter of a defence officer. My correspondence with the journalist whom I'll call PM – continued for a long time. Finally, we decided to meet to check on mutual compatibility.

In the meantime, I had a scooter accident and suffered a head injury (my helmet saved me). After spending a week in hospital, the neuro surgeon gave his verdict. I had a few blood clots in the right side of the brain, but they were not serious enough to be removed surgically and I'd be normal, provided I took my medicines regularly. Well, I left hospital and reached home and about my routine without any further problems.

Soon, I got a chance to travel to Mumbai on an official trip. I sent a letter to PM informing her about my accident and my planned trip to Mumbai. I reached Mumbai without incident.

I called up PM and we decided to meet at a restaurant in the morning; but, since both of us had never met or even seen each other's photographs, I decided to wear a blue cap so that she could identify me. I hired an autorickshaw for the day and reached the restaurant at the appointed time. Initially, I didn't see anyone, but then I spotted this attractive girl walking hesitantly towards me. It has PM. We introduced ourselves and wondered how to spend the rest of the day.

I was new to Mumbai and had to go for a number of official appointments throughout the day. PM insisted on time with me as possible.

It so turned out that the rickshaw driver and PM were both Bengalis and they would chat away the time, while I completed all my appointments; PM and I talked and got to know each other inbetween. Soon, it

was time for me to catch my return flight and I reached the airport just in time. PM and I had got along like a house on fire. We were comfortable with each other, and both of us had liked each other immensely. The future looked promising.

I reached Bangalore and the next day, I awoke with a spitting headache. My landlord rushed me to the hospital. After a CT scan, the doctors discovered that the one of the clots was putting pressure on my brain and an emergency craniotomy would have to be done to remove the clot.

I agreed to the operation. When I came to, I found myself surrounded by doctors who told me the tragic news. The clot had been removed, but the pressure on my brain had resulted in my left side being paralysed. I refused to believe what the doctors were saying to me, and tried to move my left hand and leg. But I couldn't. They were totally numb and wouldn't move. I was really and truly, paralysed!

I asked one of my colleagues to collect all my letters from home. There was one from PM. It was read out to me by the nurse as I was not allowed to read. I said "I have fallen in love with you and I want to marry only you. I don't want to lose you." I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

For 15 days. I was in the I.C.U. bedridden and helpless. With no access to PM's phone number or address. I could not inform her about my fate. And as

about my fate, as the months passed and there was no improvement in my condition, I lost my desire to tell her. What was the point, after all?

But PM kept writing to me. Loving letters, lovely letters, desperately wanting to know why I'd stopped writing to her, pleading for me to come down to Delhi to meet her, where she'd got this fantastic new job with a foreign newspaper. She wanted me to share in her joy. But I am stubborn, or maybe just adamant. I've decided never to contact her again. As I lie in bed, hoping for a miraculous recovery, the only thing I think about is that one wonderful day spent with PM. But I don't have the nerve to inform her about my condition. I don't want her world to come crashing down.

Today, my only solace are her letters and her cards, which continue to come regularly addressed to the man she met one day and fell in love with. But that man, active and healthy, no longer exists; and maybe one day, as the days go by without any news (from me), she'll think as I now do, that that one day was a figment of our imagination. We never met. We never fell in love. I recovered from my paralysis through creative visualisation, ZeNLP meditation and through goal setting and achievement. I programmed my body through exercise, fasting and following a strict vegan diet. I programmed my mind through creative visualisation exercises and I programmed my soul through prayers, chanting and surrender to God.



9

learning from failures

When Edison was asked after perfecting the electric bulb after 10,000 attempts, about the reason for his perseverance, he answered, “Simple, I conducted an experiment with 9999 steps.” There is an important lesson to be learnt from this simple answer. Failure is the stepping stone to success.

Reactive services ignore mistakes. Active services learn from their mistakes. Proactive service providers learn from their own as well as others mistakes. One can be effective in customer relationship management by learning from mistakes of others. Here is an interesting real life experience of sloppy customer relationship management. I am the holder of a debit card issued to me by a leading Indian bank against balance in my savings bank account. I had received the card only after the manager’s assurance that I could use it to withdraw money by accessing their Automated Teller Machine (*ATM*) network throughout the country.

Being a management consultant and trainer, I travel around the country frequently and needed the services of their *ATM*’s. However, on a visit to Mumbai, on 21st February 2002, I visited the *ATM* of an affiliated bank at Mumbai, to withdraw cash, as I was leaving Mumbai for Ahmedabad by Gujarat Mail. I reached the bank’s *ATM* at 18:45 hours (6:45 p.m.) and checked my balance

and withdrew cash. As the ATM took an unusually long time to eject the cash and printout the transaction record, I decided to inspect the transaction record slip minutely. Immediately after, I counted the cash, placed it in my wallet and looked to take out my ATM card, when I found that the machine had automatically taken back my card.

I immediately rushed into the bank, and met the Branch Manager, who expressed his helplessness to retrieve my card back citing that he did not have the keys of the ATM. However, he acknowledged capture of my card by his ATM and assured me that it would be sent by courier to me on 22nd February so as to reach me by 23rd February. As I was leaving by Gujarat Mail, I rushed to the station and reached Ahmedabad on 22nd morning. I had made it clear to the Branch Manager that I needed my ATM card on 22nd morning, as I had to make purchases on my ATM card for buying corporate training material for my management training workshop scheduled to be held on 24th February 2002 at Ahmedabad.

Unfortunately, I received my ATM Card from this bank after 35 days. One of the most fundamental rules of customer relationship management was broken by the bank. Deliver what you commit. Commitment is doing what you said you would be doing whether you feel like doing it or not. Nothing happens without commitment. Successful companies are those who honour their commitment to customers. Never commit what you cannot deliver.

In conclusion, I would like to caution all ATM card holders not to use the ATM services of customer unfriendly banks, as these ATM's don't have 24 hours backoffice support, in the event of card capture. When the right of one consumer is trampled upon by a consumer unfriendly bank, the rights of all consumers have been trampled upon by all consumer unfriendly banks. However, the bank in question compensated me for the inconvenience caused to me by a goodwill gesture on part of their Branch Manager.



10

an autographed apology letter

In 1999, I was invited by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd., Bangalore to conduct a two day ZeNLP based workshop on 'Team Building' and 'Goal Setting' for their senior managers at HAL's engine division at Bangalore. The workshop was well received and I was invited to conduct a two hour introductory session for their directors, managers and pilots at their corporate office. We distributed ZeNLP mind map questionnaires to all participants, when I was invited by then General Manager-HRD, Mr. Sanjeev Sahi for discussions. During our meeting, we were joined by a middleaged manager. Mr. Sahi introduced him as Chief Test Pilot Rakesh Sharma. I dutifully handed over the ZeNLP mind map questionnaire to him and after exchanging plesantaries, invited him to join our interactive session on ZeNLP which was scheduled after about an hour.

In 1984, I was in the 12th Standard. However, I still had a very vague feeling that Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma looked familiar! At the interactive session there were nearly seventy participants and it was well received. After returning to our garage, we analysed the ZeNLP mind map questionnaires collected after our lecture demonstration on ZeNLP! We printed out the address labels and mailed the mind map analysis of all participants by ordinary post.

AN AUTOGRAPHED APOLOGY LETTER

We received several responses from participants thanking us for the analysis of their mind maps. Among them was a letter on the official letterhead of Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma (designating him as Chief Test Pilot) at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

I am reproducing the text of this letter verbatim*.

Dear Mr. Menon, (handwritten)

I am writing to acknowledge with gratitude the receipt of your mental map analysis. It's a pity I was unable to make it to the interactive session. Bad time management on my part. (Typed) With regards, (handwritten) Sincerely yours, (handwritten) Autographed by India's first and only astronaut!

Addressed to Murli Menon, Mind Power Strategy Consultants, Garage**, Bangalore-560075

When a mango ripens it begins to stoop. Humility pays. If you make a mistake, admit the mistake. If you lose, you lose but do not lose the lesson.

*Letter Reference Number: DO.NO.P/CTP (FW)/10-45/RS/549/99 dated 24th September'1999.

** The garage was my residence cum office!

I am grateful to my teachers at St. Xavier's School (Mirzapur), St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad and IMDR (Institute of Management Development and Research),

Pune, who inspired me to close the doors of the classroom after starting my session. All latecomers are asked to go home, even if they arrive one minute late, excuses notwithstanding. I dedicate this letter to my teachers who gave me the courage and earned me the respect of all managers who have attended our ZeNLP stress management sessions throughout the world, over the last fifteen years!



11

the story of Raja and Rani

Being a Malayalee, born and brought up in Ahmedabad, I had never been to Orissa in my 28 years of existence. However, Lord Jagannath had other plans for me. While working as a manager at a Bangalore based multinational company in 1995, I was introduced to a young, intelligent girl at JNU during my visit to New Delhi. Her name was Deepika Sahu, but I was unaware of her regional antecedents. We kept in touch over phone, through letters and by sending gifts. We also met once in a while. After a couple of years, we decided to seek parental approval for marriage! By this time Deepika had completed her studies and was working in PTI (Press Trust of India) as a trainee journalist.

My first trip to Orissa was to seek Deepika's parent's approval. I went to Bhubaneswar via Hyderabad. The first glimpse of Chilka Lake through the translucent window of the train had me hooked!. Never did I know that this was the first in a series of never ending visits to Orissa. The local people whom I met on the train were humble, simple, honest and helpful. The *baingun bhaja* and dalma with rice was my first introduction to Oriya cuisine. Being a strict vegan (vegetarian who does not eat or use any animal product), I enjoyed *pakhala* (rice soup) and *alu bhaja* (potato curry)! It is no coincidence that in our ancestral home in Kerala in

Palakkad, *pakhalo* is the local delicacy.

My father-in-law accompanied and shielded me from the sticks of the *pandas* at the Jagannath temple at Puri. Eating a delicious meal at “Puri Hotel” and swimming at Chandrabhagha beach and exploring the Lingaraj and Konark temples left indelible imprints on my mind. Needless to stay, our wedding at Bhubaneswar was a traditional Oriya wedding with the womenfolk doing *hulhuli*.

After our marriage, I have been to Orissa many times and I have managed to visit many tribal villages in interior Orissa. I have not only learnt to exist with Oriya food at home but also learnt how to cook it. During my first visit to Orissa, I had to meet a forest officer named Ravi Mohanty. I called up his residence and his mother answered the phone. As she spoke only Oriya, she replied in Oriya “Mohanty babu nahanti” Thinking that he was taking his bath, I called him after an hour. “Mohanty babu nahanti” replied the voice at the other end. So I called him after two hours to be greeted by the same answer. I was wondering whether Mr. Mohanty had a swimming pool at his house till I learnt the real meaning of the word *nahanti* (*nahanti* means is not here in Oriya). I have learnt Oriya, slowly but surely and have managed to communicate effortlessly and effectively throughout Orissa.

After marriage, we moved to Bangalore where Deepika joined Deccan Herald. I have fond memories of watching a vibrant and colourful Odissi dance recital organized by the Orissa Cultural Association at

Bangalore. Watching the *chau* dance at Baripada, Sareikala (an Oriya speaking village in Jharkhand) and Purulia (an Oriya speaking village in West Bengal) exposed me to the martial dance of Orissa not unlike the *kalari* in Kerala.

In the meantime, I developed a taste for Oriya vegetarian cuisine and maintain that traditional Oriya cuisine is underrated by celebrity chefs who cannot appreciate the health benefits and nutritive value of delicately flavoured Oriya dishes using traditional vegetables like pumpkin, green papaya and much more. One of the most important books in our house is a recipe book of traditional Oriya recipes, which is my wife's most valuable treasure. I remember many a Sunday late mornings when Deepika disappeared into the kitchen only to appear with lipsmacking *soris masala* or dal flavoured with *panch phootan* or *dalma* flavoured with *lanka jeera gunda* (roasted red chillies and cumin). My taste for groundnut and coconut oil instantly gave way to the pungency of mustard oil. Food cooked in mustard oil is definitely stimulating to the tastebuds like no other oil can. The best part of Oriya cuisine is that the vegetables are either roasted (*tomato poda*) , boiled (*dalma*) or steamed (*enduri pitha*). The oil used in the *baghar* is minimal and the subtle flavours of *soris*, *jeera*, *methi*, *saunf* and red chillies is imparted to the food while cooking in mustard oil.

During my frequent visits to Orissa, I had the good fortune of visiting several tribal villages in interior Orissa and staying in their traditional dwellings and

sleeping in the open air under starlit skies and partaking humble meals with these simple folk who live off the land. Some of the more interesting meals I have had in Orissa, include, freshly harvested wild sweet potatoes. Poached on a traditional fire created by burning dried leaves collected from the forest mildly flavoured with lime juice rubbed on it and wild mint. The Kohl tribals staying inside the Simlipal forests eat these roasted sweet potatoes whole without removing the skin. The same with lime. They eat the lime with the skin! This is the secret of their eternal youth! I myself tried it during my stay at Simlipal and have elucidated their diet in my books based on ancient tribal wisdom.

The most interesting way of learning a new language is through proverbs. My wife Deepika taught me many. “*Pimpudi deepa rukhe ke chadile kahe mu swargo ko asili* “ (An ant climbs a burning candle and exclaims, I am in heaven), “*Dhinki swargo ko gale bhi dhano kute*” (A rice pounding tool will pound rice even in heaven) “*Kansari ghar para....*” (We are like pigeons who live in the house of a blacksmith and are not scared of noise). The list of Oriya proverbs goes on and on. A language rich in proverbs points to the strength of the traditional wisdom of the people speaking that language.

I was introduced to hand-woven cotton *sambalpuri kurtas* by Deepika and I have been so impressed by the fabric and the *ikkat* designs that I have switched to *sambalpuri kurtas* since marriage. During my travels in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, many times, strangers have complimented

me about the uniqueness of my traditional Indian dress as they termed it! An incident I can narrate about my stay in Vietnam, is about forgetting my *sambalpuri kurta* with a laundry at Ho Chi Minh City and losing the receipt in the bus leaving for Hanoi. I returned to the laundry after four weeks on my return journey and not only was my *kurta* delivered to me without producing a receipt but the toothless old Vietnamese shopkeeper, gave me a cash discount of US\$ 1 because he was highly impressed by the weaving skill of the *sambalpuri* weavers!

Orissa also provides opportunities for close experiences with Mother Nature. Be it the opportunity to watch thousands of Olive Ridleys nesting at Gahirmatha, and Rushakulya beaches or while whizzing on a speedboat over the azure glass like surface of Chilka lake or while coming face to face with the tiger at the Forest Guest House at Chahalla inside the core area of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve! I was fortunate enough to have done all of the above. As my mother-in-law hails from Kendrapara, I had the luxury of spending a weekend at this quaint little place which still retains the charm of a bygone era. Here is a touching, true life experience of my grand mother in law.

My grand-mother-in law whom we fondly called Bou and who was in the pink of health till she passed away at the ripe age of 95, lived in a house adjacent to a canal at Kendrapara. Many years ago, two small swanlings who somehow got separated from their mother, made their way to the canal. Bou started caring for the

swanlings and started feeding them rice. Over the years these tiny swanlings grew up into gorgeous snowwhite swans. The swans were always at her house eating grain from her hands. She lovingly called the twins Raja and Rani. Soon, Raja and Rani became a part of her life and home. And one day the unthinkable happened. Raja and Rani disappeared. Bou started searching for them in the village. They were nowhere to be found. Finally one of her friends spotted Raja and Rani in a cage at a local shop. They came and informed Bou who rushed to the shop owner. However, the shop owner refused to part with the swans claiming them as his. A disappointed granny went to the police and registered a complaint. Finally the case went to the local court. Inside the court, the shop owner maintained his stance, that the swans were his and had been with him for many years and Bou had made a mistake! So the judge decided to summon the swans to the court. It was decided to keep the swans in the centre of the courtroom and allow them to decide their rightful owners.

There was pin drop silence in the courtroom as the swans were brought in by the court officials. As soon as the swans were placed in the centre Bou had tears in her eyes as she loving called, "Raja Rani" and a miracle happened. Both Raja and Rani flew and perched themselves on the lap of Bou. The judge immediately gave custody of Raja and Rani to Bou. Raja and Rani lived happily ever after at our ancestral house in Kendrapara!

That's the power of unadulterated love... which I have discovered in little known places of Orissa.



12

management lessons from ants

Teams of robots can achieve complex tasks without communicating with each other. Armies of such cheap, expendable robots might one day help build a base on Mars — or simply mow your lawn. Non-communicative behavior in ants is observed when they combine their efforts to carry large pieces of food, such as leaves. Researchers have mimicked the same sort of distributed intelligence in a gang of worker robots. If you watch a particular ant, its behavior seems chaotic and sometimes counterproductive, but the “team” as a whole displays a form of intelligence despite the lack of central control. This is attractive lesson to researchers who build robots because such distributed systems tend to be very robust. It is a lot cheaper and easier to build a large number of simple robots than build one expensive complex robot to do the same job. A centrally controlled system can be brought down by a single failure. A study of the behavior of ants reveal interesting results.

Although the behavior of individual ants appears chaotic, ants constitute an orderly social structure with these various responses, lead a life based on mutual news exchange and they have no difficulty in achieving this correspondence. We could say that ants, with their impressive communication system, are hundred percent successful on subjects that human beings

sometimes cannot resolve nor agree upon by talking (e.g. meeting, sharing, cleaning, defence, etc.). First, scout ants go to food source that has been newly discovered. Then, they call other ants by a liquid they secrete in their glands called pheromone. When the crowd round the food gets bigger, this pheromone secretion issues the workers a limit again. If the piece of food is very small or faraway, the scouts make an adjustment in the number of ants trying to get to the food by issuing signals. If a nice piece of food is found, the ants try harder to leave more traces, thus more ants from the nest come to the aid of the foragers. Whatever happens, no problems arise in the consumption of the food and its transportation to the nest, because what we have here is perfect “team work”.

What can we learn from these foraging ants?

Team work:

Ants are perfect team players and sacrifice their individual ambitions to become cogs in a wheel, in order to ensure the evolutionary progress of their species.

Balance:

Just as the pheromone secretion ensures the correct balance of ants, ensuring effective and efficient transport of food, managers who balance work with play are cheerful, relaxed and successful.

Discipline:

Just as the army of ants are disciplined in their approach and go about their task with one mind, managers who are disciplined and dedicated are more likely to be successful leaders.



13

the power of silence

Every business is dependant on winning new customers. The customer is profit, everything else is overhead. The key to run a profitable business lies in selling more to existing customers and in obtaining sales from first time customers. Every new customer contributes to your topline as well as bottomlines irrespective of the fact that you are multibillion shipping multinational or a custom clearing agent at Kandla. Thus, the key to profits is to develop your business by actively prospecting new business and effectively closing deals with these prospects.

There are several ZeNLP techniques which enable you to create rapport and trust with prospective customers and effective usage of these techniques will result in a significantly higher conversion ratio and ensure maximum output through minimum effort. One of the most powerful techniques to create trust and rapport is to effectively utilize the power of silence. The art of effective listening needs to be cultivated as exemplified by this anecdote.

Once upon a time there lived a tyrannical ruler who ruled Patliputra. He had many enemies but none dared to speak against him though he was boorish arrogant, foolish and unjust. One day, he was informed by his

messenger that one of his ministers Dara, was plotting to overthrow him. The king immediately got furious and ordered his Commander-in-Chief to execute Dara. Dara was to be hanged to death in public. On the day of the hanging, the rope broke and Dara had a miraculous escape. In those days, Dara's miracle was considered as divine intervention and such prisoner's received the royal pardon. However, Dara was requested to speak a few words to the crowd after his providential escape. Dara proudly announced "You see, in Patliputra, they don't know how to do things properly, not even how to make rope!" The king was about to sign the royal pardon, when he asked his messenger, "Did Dara say anything after this miracle?" The messenger replied, "He said that in Patliputra they don't even know how to make rope." "In that case" said the King "let us prove the contrary" and he tore up the pardon. The next day, Dara was hanged again, this time, the rope did not break.

This anecdote illustrates the fact that silence is golden. The more you listen, the more you learn to use the power of silence and this will prove to be a valuable asset in creating a favorable impression about your product or service. You can win customers without opening your mouth. Unbelievable but true. Silence has a deep impact on the unconscious minds of customers and one must utilize this technique during presentations, sales calls or other such interactions. Listening actively creates rapport and trust resulting in more sales.

The next ZeNLP technique to create rapport and

trust is pacing. Pacing is an invaluable asset, especially while soliciting appointments for meetings from new customers, over the phone. After the receptionist comes over the phone, close your eyes and listen to her voice as if absorbing each and every word individually. Listen to her accent, sound tone, pitch, bass, timbre, speed and volume. Now request her to transfer the line to your prospect. Remember, you should use pacing here. Pacing is to repeat your request in the same accent, language, pitch, volume, timbre and bass as the speaker. This action will result in a more positive rapport with prospects and ensures that the right person comes on the line in the shortest possible time. In other words, the receptionist is less likely to put your call on hold if you pace her voice pattern.

Pacing is a simple technique but requires practice to master. We have conducted pacing workshops for call centre operators by improving one component at a time. Pacing is a scientific technique which can be mastered easily. All you need to do is practice regularly. Pacing can be used in one to one meetings with new customers. However care should be taken that you merely pace and do not mimic the speakers. There is a fine line demarcating pacing and mimicking, ZeNLP workshops help you to discover this fine line through live action role plays.

Another simple yet effective technique to develop rapport and trust is nodding. While communicating, nod in agreement to what the speaker says. You may even agree by verbally repeating “Yes” a few times

during your conversation. You will be able to build unconscious trust through simple nodding. Care should be taken that the nod symbolizes “Yes” in the cultural context of the speaker. In some cultures nodding the head sideways indicates yes, whereas in others nodding the head downwards signals agreement.



14

learning through experience

One of the techniques employed to get more business from existing customers is the introduction of loyalty programmes. It could be frequent flier programmes like Jet-Privilege or Shopper's Stop's "First Citizen's Club". The idea is simple, lure existing customers into using more of your services by offering more economical prices or extra value for money spent. Bharat Petroleum has also introduced a similar offer for their loyal customers.

Many airlines regularly upgrade their frequent fliers from Economy Class to Business Class subject to availability. This feel good factor goes a long way in successful customer relationship management. More often than not, air travel companies arrange for chauffeur driven cars to receive their frequent fliers and offer them a privileged drive to town. Sometimes, free fine dining at fivestar restaurants or overnight stays at airport fivestar hotels are thrown in as surprises to ensure that the excitement never stops for frequent fliers.

Satisfied customers do give repeated business but extreme care has to be taken to treat these customers as privileged ones. Here is an example. I am a frequent flier of a leading airline, since 1996. As of January

2002, I accumulated 30,402 miles by frequently flying this airline, expecting free tickets for my loyalty. In February 2002, I redeemed 6800 of these hard earned miles in exchange for tickets of the following sectors.

Date	Sector	Departure Time
09th Feb 2002	Bangalore-Chennai	9:35 a.m.
11th Feb 2002	Chennai-Bangalore	6:15 p.m.

I received these tickets from the airline's office (both OK) after paying tax component of the tickets. I collected the tickets two weeks prior to my departure date. I was visiting Chennai to conduct interviews to recruit marketing associates at Chennai for our website (tips4ceos.com). I expected to reach Chennai by 10:30 a.m. and hence had booked the Board Room at Hotel Shelter, Mylapore from 11:00 a.m. onwards. I couriered interview calls to candidates, inviting them for interviews from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00p.m to Hotel Shelter on 9th February 2002.

I checked the tickets and the departure time printed on it was 9:35 a.m. I reached Bangalore Airport at 8:30 a.m. on 9th February 2002, expecting to report one hour before departure as per the airline's rules. To my utter surprise, the authorities at Bangalore Airport rudely informed me that the Chennai flight schedules had been changed and the flight was departing at 8:45 a.m. and inspite of seeing my ticket and acknowledging the mistake of their office of not informing me the revised timings, they refused to let me board the flight citing rules & regulations! The 8:45 a.m. flight departed

without me and I met the Airport Manager and requested him to put me on the 9:30 a.m. flight to Chennai, as the candidates for interviews would be arriving at Hotel Shelter from 11:00 a.m. onwards.

However, the Airport Manager told me that as I was holding a worthless ticket (meaning frequent flier redemption ticket), my tickets were valid only for passage on their airline only and he had no authority to book me on another airline. The least he could do was confirm my ticket on the Bangalore-Chennai-Bangkok flight, which would be leaving the International terminal at 1:45 p.m.

Finally, resigned to the frequent flier unfriendly attitude of this airline, I took the 1:45 p.m. flight and reached Hotel Shelter at 3:00 p.m. where all but one of the interview candidates had left. However, I had to pay the hotel bills in full, as I had booked the Board-Room in advance and no refunds were allowed against cancellations. This is the true life experience of a loyal customer who flew 80% of all flights taken between 1996 to 2001 by this airline. If this is the treatment meted out to frequent fliers, I dare not think of the treatment lesser mortals receive from India's leading airline. Here is a classic example of how to not treat your loyal customers!!! However, this airline has compensated me for the inconvenience caused to me by a goodwill gesture on part of their customer friendly Station Manager.

I used this experience to great effect while conducting

our ZeNLP workshop for a group of young management trainees about to join the customer services department of a leading multinational company selling branded computers.



15

teaching can be fun

Having started training in 1995, I have successfully trained 9000 managers in the last 17 years from almost every industry in India ranging from textiles to telecommunications to aerospace. Every management development programme I conducted was unique with a set of 20 to 30 managers with rich and diverse experience. On the final day, we invited the wives of the participants and had a “Fun at Work” session for the group. However, there are four training sessions I have conducted which have had left an indelible imprint on my soul. The first was in 2004, when I trekked to Mount Kailash in Tibet, on my own. I had stayed for two nights at Gasgu, from where the trek to Kailash starts. From Gasgu village it is a five kilometer trek to Mangti Nala which is the starting point of the trek to Mount Kailash.

As I was trekking from Gasgu to Mangti, I saw a small thatched hut alongside a meadow full of flowers. Sounds of children were emanating from this hut, so I placed my rucksack on the edge of the bridle path and went to the hut. It was a small primary school with 20 students ranging from the ages of five to nine. I had a quick word with the teacher, and she let me take a session with the kids. I spoke in Hindi and started telling them a few stories. In a few minutes the class was paying attention to every word I spoke! Then, I told the children that I knew a magic trick and would show

them the secret of the trick. I took out a one rupee coin and placed another similar coin in my pocket. Then, I asked the teacher to get an empty steel glass which she did. I placed the one rupee coin on the table and covered it with the steel glass. I told them that at the end of my session the coin would be out of the glass and I would not touch either the coin or the glass during my session.

As soon as the audience grew bored, I took my hands near the inverted steel glass and I had twenty attentive students following my hand movements. Every time, I opened my empty palms, saying that the coin was still in the glass. Finally, after my session was over, I took out the one rupee coin in my pocket and told them that the coin was out of the glass and I had not touched the coin or the glass. But a few of the smart students protested claiming that the coin in my hand was different from the one inside the glass. Finally one of the bolder students came up to the table and took away the glass, to reveal the coin. All of them had a good laugh. Then, I told the students that I had said that at the beginning of my session, the coin would be out of the glass and I would not touch the coin or the glass. I asked them if I had touched the glass, “No Sir” they answered in chorus. Had I touched the coin? They nodded their heads in denial. Was the coin out of the glass? They agreed in unison. So that was the secret of my magic trick. It has been 7 years since that fateful afternoon at Gasgu but I am certain that the students of that primary school will remember the magic trick shown by a visiting faculty to their classroom. I am sure they will remember the stories I narrated to them in their class.

In 2004, I showed this same magic trick at a primary school in Jammu and Kashmir, in the village of Beema. I had visited Beema to stay with the Brok-Pa Aryans for eight weeks in Ladakh. I stayed at the PWD (People's Work Department) Guest House in Beema, on the banks of the Indus. I was requested by the collector to visit the primary school at Beema. I went to this school and addressed a class full of Brok-Pa tribal children from the ages of six to twelve. As usual, I broke the ice with a few stories and started teaching them techniques to improve their memory. Before I knew, my 60 minutes were up and the next teacher had to remind me of her session which was next. I had exceeded my session by 20 minutes and neither me, nor the students had noticed. My stories had put them into a trance!

The third session I enjoyed was in at a primary school in Baripada District in Orissa in 2002. I had stayed with the Kohl tribals who live inside the Simlipal Tiger Reserve, to study their folk tales, dances and songs in detail. Enroute to Simlipal, the forest officials had taken me to a primary school at Gurguria. Here, I took a session on "The importance of tree plantation" for these children.

My 60 minute talk was embedded with several stories. I made the children do ZeNLP clapping exercise outdoors and made each student plant a tree at the school.

The fourth session I really enjoyed was in 2006, while teaching a group of six to eight year old children at a tribal village in Mae Hong Son on the Thai-Burma

border in Thailand. I had gone for a nine week long stay with the long neck Karen tribals who live in the villages surrounding Mae Hong Son on the Thai-Burma border. My host, who was herself a long neck Kayan had put me up at her thatched hut inside the thick rainforests of Mae-Hong Son. One day, I visited her neighbourhood school, which was attended by the Karen children. I had a word with the teacher, who let me take a session and who volunteered to translate my talk into the local language. The magic trick had a great response here with every kid watching me intensely during the session. At the end of my talk, many students gave me sunflowers. It was then, that I learnt that the valley from Chiang Mai to Mae Hong Son is known as the valley of sunflowers and millions of sunflowers carpet the foothills of these evergreen rainforests.

The language of stories is universal. Children all over the world love to listen to stories. Every effective teacher should have a wealth of stories to draw upon. Ideally, every teacher should start a session with a story. Highlight his presentation with a powerful anecdote and summarise his lecture with a story. In my 17 years of training experience I have come to realise that stories are the most powerful tools in the hands of trainers. ZeNLP teaches managers that learning through stories can be fun.



16

lessons learnt from Kohl tribals in Orissa

Travelling is learning, specially travelling to an unknown destination for the first time. In 2002, I undertook a journey to the villages inside the core area of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj District in Orissa. My objective was to study the lives of the most primitive tribes, namely the Mankadias and the Kohls who continue to live inside the core area of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve. I stayed at the leaf huts of these tribals while studying their dances, songs, sculpture and paintings. It was during this trip, that I was introduced to Buddhu Kohl. He invited me home to stay with him and watch the wildlife inside the core area of the forest at close quarters. I decided to accept his invitation and landed in his hut with my rucksack. They quickly built a comfortable leafhut for me and arranged for some wild fruits including bananas and papayas. I discovered that the Mankadias and Kohls were vegans who gathered the fruits of the forest and lived on sweet potatoes, potatoes and edible tubers. They roasted the vegetables on a slow fire and consumed the fruits raw.

Every morning at sunrise, I was accompanied by Buddhu's two sons, to the Baitarini River, which flows through Simlipal, for taking my bath. I was escorted at all times I stepped out of my house. They ensured that I was comfortable in every way during my stay with

them. I had a memorable stay with the Kohl and Mankadia tribals.

Every evening, all the village children gathered under a tree and one of the elders started singing a song and the children followed in chorus. I later came to know that these tribes did not have a written script and all teachings were through the medium of stories, songs and dances! As these tribes could not read or write and outsiders could not understand their tribal dialect, there was no distortion in their history, as the foreign invaders could not alter tribal history as they could do in languages which had a written script.

So, I learnt about how the universe was created and how millions of Sal trees grew on the hills that surround Simplipal. I learnt the names of the flowers, fruits and medicinal herbs found in the forest. Even their dances symbolise the triumph of good over evil. These tribes were nature worshippers and strongly believed that a divine force protected the forests. They worshipped the primordial elements namely fire, water and earth. I learnt all these concepts through their folksongs and during their story telling sessions every evening. Many a times my hosts would go to bed on an empty stomach but ensured that I did not stay hungry as they kept bananas for me outside my hut. They lived in harmony with nature and did not indulge in tree felling or hunting of animals. Here was a tribal community who were illiterate as they did not follow a written script but every tribal child could remember the medicinal properties of all herbs found in the forest,

thanks to the lessons learnt through the language of stories!

The harmony between the Kohls and the wildlife which lived in the forest adjacent to their leaf-huts was unbelievable. Spotted deer would calmly wander around their leaf-huts. Women folk would feed the birds by holding sunflower seeds in their hands. Jackals, hyenas and tigers would keep away from the tribal children who continue to play around their huts unmindful of the wildlife around them. Wild elephants used to pay a regular visit to the tribal hamlets and were rewarded with fresh bananas and papayas.

The Kohls and Mankadias were extremely hospitable to guests. They lived an extremely simple life and respected the laws of nature. Their diet comprised of wild fruits and vegetables collected from the forests.

The folk tales of the Kohls speak about the creation of the universe by God and his two sons. God created the oceans first and in the oceans, a small patch of land appeared which grew in size and spread through the oceans. Then, God's first son created the trees and populated the forests with animals, while his other son, created birds which flew in the sky and turtles and fishes which swam in the oceans. The tribal song which elucidates the creation of the earth is exactly worded in the same words that the ancestors of the present day tribals, saw them. According to their folk songs the earth and all its beings were created simultaneously, exactly 5000 years ago. Every evening the tribal elders

started singing their ancient folk songs to the younger generation, so that they remembered their divine origins and knew that they were connected to nature.



17

secretive lives of Brok-Pa Aryans in Ladakh

The experience of landing at Moonland Tourist Bungalow – my home at Leh for three weeks, sums up the landscape. The experience of landing at Leh airport and walking down to this traditional Ladakhi guesthouse, a kilometer away, was similar to what the first astronauts to the moon may have experienced. Large tracts of barren land, craggy rocks and mountains stretching from one end of the horizon to the other. The chilly September morning greeted us and the endless warm cups of herbal infusion, prepared by Mohammed Rasool, the caretaker of the JKTDC (Jammu and Kashmir Tourist Development Corporation) tourist bungalow, where I stayed, was the nectar I needed throughout my stay in Ladakh.

My objectives at Leh, were to address coordinators and teachers of the “Sarva Siksha Abhiyan” on “Learning can be fun.” Being a strict vegan (no animal products including wool, leather, meat, milk, milk products or eggs), I planned to face the biting cold with *sambhalpuri kurtas*, *khadi* jackets and cotton earplugs. I also planned some high altitude solo treks, armed with apricots, walnuts and assorted dry fruits. I also carried herbal teabags. Only biodegradable stuff would accompany me on this eco-tourism trek. My meditation

tapes, walkman and camera were neatly packed into my rucksack.

At the Tourist Bungalow, I kept insisting that I was a vegan and did not consume milk or any milk products in addition to being vegetarian and not consuming or using any products of animal origin. The Ladakhi's immediate question to me was, "Are you an Aryan?" When I replied that I was from Kerala, the caretaker at the JKTDC tourist bungalow explained to me that in Leh, there were a handful of villages where pure Aryans lived. These Aryans, did not rear cows or hens and did not consume milk or any milk products, in addition to not eating eggs, fish or meat. As these villages were located in inaccessible areas, surrounded by barren hills and at heights of over 15,000 feet, very few outsiders had visited or stayed at length with these Aryans.

As I had planned to trek around Leh for two weeks, I decided to spend one week to study the secret lives of these pure Aryans. I maintained a detailed diary of my visit and would like to share my experience with one of the most fascinating tribes of India. My destinations were the villages of Dah and Beema in Leh district and the villages of Garkun and Darchik in Kargil district. I planned to trek and visit the most inaccessible pockets of these villages and spend quality time with this historic tribe. Being a strict vegan and practitioner of ZeNLP meditation, I decided to meditate and chant regularly during my uphill sojourn.

We rose early and started our jeep safari at 7:00 a.m.

The journey was as pleasurable as the destination. The 130 km. drive took us through the villages of Khalatse (pronounced Khalsi), Dumkhar, Skurbuchan, Achinathang and Hanuthang. We crossed several high peaks before reaching Beema (14,350 feet). Every photograph we clicked enroute resembled a picture postcard. We played soothing ZeNLP music for relaxation throughout this seven hour drive over rugged terrain. The first glimpse of the Indus, from miles away was a very divine and spiritual experience. A speck of light blue amidst sandunes, rocks and stone. It resembled a stream nestling in the palm of Nature's hand. The closer we got to the river, the more beautiful it looked. We finally arrived at Beema, after a seven hour drive along the Indus. The ice cold bath on the turbulent waters of this river steeped in history, calmed my body, mind and soul. The tranquility experienced while meditating on its banks, on a bed of round pebbles resembling marbles, cannot be described in words.

Flocks of women, checked my bags as I got down from my vehicle. There is a self imposed prohibition in these Brok-Pa (Ladakhi word for Aryan or white skin) villages. The *sarpanch* had empowered the womenfolk to ensure that no alcohol was brought from Leh by locals, tourists or outsiders. After a thorough frisking of my bag by three women resembling Greek Goddesses, they let me enter the PWD (People's Work Department) Guest House. Here I met my first Aryan, the *chowkidar* (watchman) who went by the name of Sonam Thondup. He knew a smattering of Hindi and through a combination of sign language, body language, eye

movements and facial expressions, I tried to create rapport with this hostile Aryan, who told me in no uncertain terms, that my visit to Dah in September, was not welcome. I was the only occupant of the PWD guest house and I handed over my innerline permit and letter from the collector Mr. Satish Nehru, to Thondup. He reluctantly gave me the keys and after settling in my room, explored the immediate vicinity, but found few shops. The PWD (Peoples Work Department) Guest House at Beema is located on the banks of the Indus and the view from my room was picturesque and the gurgling sound of the river was soothing music to my ears.

The next day morning, I was summoned to the *sarpanch's* house for a purification ritual. I had to trek 10 km. over mountain streams, rock and stone to reach the *sarpanch's* house. Thondup had sent two tough looking escorts who accompanied me to the top. It took us almost two hours to reach Lavishing – the *sarpanch's* village. The landscape began to change and a canopy of green could be seen. Walnut and apricot trees stretched across the horizon and the fields were full of grain, ready to be harvested. I found out later that the staple food of these Aryans was barley, grown in these terraced fields and irrigated by the mountain streams that rush to meet the Indus flowing below. The ascent was rather steep and the altitude nearly 17000 feet. I kept replenishing my body fluids by drinking lots of natural mineral water from the countless streams that crossed on our way.

After an endless trek, we reached the hut of the *sarpanch* which crowned the peak of a hill. A group of women peeled apricots in his garden. Some of them were breaking apricot seeds to remove almonds. Hundreds of fresh walnuts lay on the floor. I resisted the impulse to pick up some walnuts.

As soon as I reached, my escorts spoke to the assembled women in Aryan and they began laughing spontaneously. Soon, two old women came out of the hut with burning roots of an unidentified tree in their hands (I later learnt that it was a Juniper tree). I chanted the *gayatri mantra* silently in my mind. I was about to experience the cleansing ritual of the Aryans. This was mandatory for all outsiders who entered their village. The old women, started chanting in unison (sounded like German) and the eldest one brought the juniper smoke close to my face and symbolically waved it across my body.

Later, I met the *sarpanch* Mr. Angmo. As I was trained in NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) or the art of creating rapport through non verbal communication, I started mirroring the body language, facial expressions and eye movements of Mr. Angmo, who knew only broken Urdu and Hindi. After an hour of developing nonverbal rapport, Mr. Angmo asked his wife to serve me herbal tea.

His wife poured me a cup of herbal infusion, which I relish. We began sipping our tea, when Mr. Angmo put some white powder into my tea (which I later learnt was barley flour). He asked me about my visit to Beema

and I told them about my being a strict vegan and that I had come to stay with them to know more about their food habits, music, dances and culture. The NLP had begun to work. The *sarpanch* issued instructions to my escort to take me to all the neighbouring villages and introduce me to the orthodox Aryans, who still followed their ancient traditions. I saw two books in English/German with the *sarpanch*. I borrowed the English book “The Aryan Dards” by Rohit Vohra for reading prior to my field trips.

The trek back was uneventful. As there is no electricity at Beema, I read Rohit’s book, cover to cover, in candle light, in order to discover the hidden world of the Aryans. German anthropologists had evinced interest in this pure Aryan race and a few had even visited and stayed with them. This book traces the ancestry of the present day Aryans to the pure Aryans who lived on the banks of the Indus, 5000 years ago. Presently there are about 1000 descendants of these pure Aryans, who live scattered around Gilgit, Hunza, Kargil and Leh. They are nature worshippers and believe in Brok-Pa traditions and celebrate the Bononah (Nature) festival and are strict vegans. These pure Aryans observe taboos against cows and hens and eat neither their flesh nor eggs or drink milk or consume any milk products. Hens and cows are not kept. This minuscule community bars both their men and women from marrying non-Aryans (to maintain their racial purity) and polygamy and polyandry is common. Couples who do not conceive are free to choose other partners to give them a better chance of producing an

offspring. 80% Aryans marry in their own villages, while 20% marry from neighbouring villages. These pure Aryans are nature worshippers and worship the Juniper tree (Cilgi Deuha). Two, ancient Juniper trees crown the village of Dah, which is the venue of the triannual Bononah festival (to be held on a fullmoon night during October) The Aryans, symbolically draw energy from these ancient Juniper trees by hugging them after a ceremonial dance. They also respect the *swastika* symbol (clockwise) and *Om* (symbolising energy).

I started my trek in the wee hours of the morning to trek to Dah, to visit the sacred Juniper groves. My escort shyly introduced himself. He was Tsewang Nurbu. The trek to Dah from Beema took us three hours. It was a dangerous trek, as we crossed several craggy peaks, holding on to tiny crevices to haul ourselves up. We could hear sounds of gunfire across the border. My innerline permit was checked at the army post. One wrong step on this arduous trek, could prove fatal, but I chanted continuously throughout this hairraising experience.

We reached the ancient Juniper trees by noon. I hugged these trees to soak in their energy. The energy aura of these trees was phenomenal. One could feel a new vigour in each and every cell of one's body, when you stepped onto this sacred grove of the Aryans at Dah. After spending several hours in this picturesque place, I visited a few of the elderly Aryans. They still observed their taboos of intoxicating substances, milk, eggs and meat. I shared a meal with these humble

villagers. The meal consisted of *jo* (barley) *rotis* baked in an earthen oven, lettuce leaves, roasted potatoes, spring onions, boiled cauliflower and wild mint. Women cooked in an open hearth, burning fallen twigs, collected from the trees in their courtyard. They worshipped trees and hence observed a strict taboo against tree felling. The simple meal was fresh and extremely tasty. It is no meaningful coincidence that we serve a similar raw diet at our ZeNLP based corporate stress management workshops.

They spoke in an Aryan language which was distinct from Ladakhi. Their numerals were as follows:

One=A
Two=DU
Three=TRA
Four=CHOR
Five=PONCH
Six=SHA
Seven=SAT
Eight=ONSH
Nine=NUE
Ten=DIS

The next week, I trekked to the other Aryan villages including Baldes, Samit, Garkun, Darchik and Hanu. The population of these Brok-Pa Aryans could not number more than a few thousands. But the surprising fact is that they have maintained their racial purity over 5000 years and continue to practice nature worship in one of the most hostile terrains at altitudes

above 15000 feet, subsisting on a vegan diet. Music and dance are a way of life for these Aryans. Both men and women wear colourful traditional costumes, decorating their hair with flowers and are full of *joie de vivre*. They live in harmony with nature, are cheerful and stress free inspite of living in small rock shelters. Both men and women trek long distances. Almonds, apricots and walnuts are part of their diet along with endless cups of herbal infusion fortified with barley flour. The weather in September is pleasantly cold, though temperatures in January can plummet to 20 degrees.

There are an unusually large number of Aryans above the age of 70. Many of the elderly were active even at 90. The most striking feature of these Aryans is their looks. Their blue eyes, aristocratic noses, round eyes, fair complexion and flawless skin, made them ethnically distinct from Ladakhis or Kashmiris. Aryans observe a strict taboo against marrying outsiders and have ensured a code of conduct to maintain their racial purity over centuries. They restrict their contact with the outside world and are happy in their isolated existence. Married women braid their hair, which makes them resemble Greeks.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the lives of these Aryans, is a belief in prophecies and the recording of dreams. Most elderly Aryans, meet in the morning at the Juniper grove and discuss their dreams as if nature was communicating to them through the language of dreams.

The fresh mountain air, the crystal clear water of the mountain streams, the nutritious vegan diet, trance

music, chanting, dream ceremonies, tree worship, dances and a way of life in harmony with nature could be responsible for the survival of this miniscule community, living in an Himalayan ShangriLa and continuing to practice their ancient religion over centuries of isolation.

One of the Aryan folk songs (creation myths) sung at the Bononah festival is translated as follows:

In the beginning there was water all over the earth and some of it froze. Dust settled on this patch of ice. Later, a small patch of grass appeared on the frozen patch and soon, a juniper tree sprouted from the earth.

The whole universe was created by Chag (Fire), Ser (Water) and Yun (Earth).

These Aryans worship the Sun, Water (Indus) and Earth (Juniper tree). They eat before sunset and sleep at dusk. They wake up at dawn, bathe in the ice cold water of the Indus (even in September), trek long distances over foot, work in their fields, celebrate festivals, pray religiously, avoid intoxicants, stick to a vegan diet, chant, sing, dance and socialise. In ZeNLP terms, they program their body through exercise, mind through music and soul through prayer.

The return journey took eight hours but a visit to the Aryan villages of Leh, is a once in a lifetime experience and the investment in the journey was worthwhile, considering that every moment spent was meditation in the truest sense.

18

trek to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet

I left Ahmedabad to New Delhi on April 20th'2004. My goal was to reach Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet armed with my Driving License, as the sole document which proved my identity. To some readers, this would have looked like an exercise in futility, but being a trained ZeNLP master, I knew that meaningful coincidences would propel me towards my goal, if I continued my meditation, creative visualisation, auto-suggestion and goal achievement exercises. My weight before I started was 66 kg. taken on 20th April'2004 at the weighing machine at Ahmedabad airport. The journey from Ahmedabad to Delhi on election day was uneventful. After spending three days at Delhi, I took the Ranikhet Express to Katgodam station. This train leaves Delhi at 10:00 p.m. and reaches Katgodam at 7:00 a.m.

At Katgodam, I was received by Mr. Vishnu Hari Bhatt of Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN). After a quick cup of ginger infusion at KMVN's Tourist Rest House at Katgodam, I left by car to Naukuchiatal (nine cornered lake 1218 metres above sea level) and Sattal (1219 metres) to meditate. I also visited Bhimtal (1371 metres) which was in the vicinity. I visited the *Jyotirling* at Jageshwar, which is home to a prehistoric, ancient temple and twin one thousand year old Deodhar trees. From Jageshwar, we proceeded to the forest sanctuary at Binsar, which would provide us

with a picturesque view of Panchachuli, Annapoorna, Trishul and Shivling peaks. I was provided accomodation at KMVN tourist rest houses, courtesy Mr. N. N. Prasad, secretary tourism, Government of Uttaranchal and Mr. Tarakendra Vaishnav, Managing Director of KMVN, Nainital. KMVN, provides clean, basic amenities with simple food at value for money prices for tourists. I must mention here that KMVN staff are courteous, friendly and helpful.

From Binsar, I went to Kausani (1890 metres) via Almora, where I stayed at the Anashakti Ashram for a week, in order to tone up my respiratory system before trekking upto 17000 feet (4000 metres) and higher. Kausani is a beautiful hill station to recharge your energies before taking 100 km. treks in the upper Himalayas at heights of over 17000 feet. At Kausani, I meditated for four hours per day, often waking up at 4:00 a.m. It is worthwhile to mention that the sunrise over Kausani is spectacular, especially when viewed from the Anashakti Ashram.

From Kausani, I went to Bagheshwar, Baijnath and Chakouri for short breaks. Baijnath is home to an ancient Shiva Temple, similar to the *Jyotirling* at Jageshwar. The unique feature at Baijnath is a huge round stone, which has to be lifted by nine people by using their thumb. It is believed that the wishes of devotees are fulfilled, if nine thumbs are able to lift the heavy stone. It is important to mention here, that I was among the few groups of nine, who successfully lifted the stone, and I mentally visualised myself infront of

Kailash, while suggesting to myself that “I am reaching Kailash Mansarovar”, as we were lifting the stone.

Chakouri is a small forest, with a closeup view of Trishul and a panoramic view of Kumaon Himalayas. The KMVN guest house at Chakouri is a great place for bonfires in the night, as there is a nip in the air, even in mid-May. I visited the Kali temple at Gangolihat (a *Shaktipeeth*) managed by the Kumaon regiment and Patal Bhuvaneshwar (a maze of underground caves with natural limestone formations), which are a short drive away from Chakouri.

Patal Bhuvaneshwar is nothing short of a miracle, as inside this labyrinth of caves, one sees natural rock formations representing Sheshnag holding the universe on its hood, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesha, Parijat tree, Nandi, Kali and Durga. The entire spectrum of creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe is depicted through the language of rock. It is a little difficult to descend into the cave owing to its tiny entrance, but once you are in the cave, minutes turn into hours, as you explore the natural rock formations.

From Chakouri, I went to Didihat, which is the headquarters of the 21st battalion of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). My objective in reaching Didihat, was to meet the commandant of ITBP and obtain more information about the trek to Kailash and arrange for my accommodation at ITBP camps till Nabhidang. I was fortunate enough to meet Mr. Kundan Singh Bisht, Adjunctant Commandant of ITBP, who sent a wireless

message to all their camps upto Nabhidang, informing about my proposed visit and making arrangements for my accommodation at ITBP camps enroute. I agreed to conduct stress management workshops for ITBP personnel at the camps where I stayed at. The next thing needed was an inner-line permit, which is mandatory for all Indian residents visiting Nabhidang. The inner-line permit is issued by the Special District Magistrate (SDM) at Darchula.

From Didihat, I proceeded to Darchula and met the SDM, Mr. Manoj Kumar, who issued me a two month long inner-line permit, so as to enable me to complete my research work on “eco-tourism in Uttaranchal”. After arming myself with this permit, I proceeded to Narayan Ashram, a picturesque Ashram, established by Guru Narayan from Gujarat, near the last motorable point enroute to Mansarovar. I recharged my energies through ZeNLP meditation for about eight hours, mentally preparing myself for the 100 km. trek that lay ahead of me.

I started the trek from Narayan Ashram to Mangti Nala via Pangu, a distance of 10 km. It took me 6 hours to do this trek, through the Valley of Flowers. The climate was pleasant to cold. I did not sweat even a little, though I was carrying my backpack weighing 9 kg. In addition to my clothes, I was carrying almonds, a torch, khadi jackets, a walkman, digital diary, meditation tapes, an empty water bottle, matchboxes, a digital camera, roasted potatoes and a jute bag. I made most of these purchases at Darsula in Nepal, which is

across the bridge at Darchula. One can walk across the bridge, shop and return. No permits are needed to go to Nepal from Darchula.

The trek from Pangu to Mangti, is along the banks of the river Kaliganga. I reached the ITBP camp at Mangti, where information about my arrival had arrived by wireless. After a quick cup of herbal infusion with the ITBP commandos, I started my slow and arduous ascent towards the next camp at Lamari. My objective was do the 13 km. Mangti to Lamari trek in 5 hours. I started at 4:00 a.m. from Narayan Ashram and descended 6 km. upto Gasgu by 7 a.m. From Gasgu, I took a slow and winding walk and reached Mangti via Pangu by about 10 a.m.

While trekking from Mangti to Lamari, I passed through Malpa, the site of the famous landslide in 1998. The debris of this landslide, is still strewn about Malpa, as the terrain makes it impossible to evacuate the huge boulders lying on the banks of the fiercely flowing Kaliganga. Malpa is 8 km. away from Mangti and 5 km. away from Lamari. There is a small teashop at Shantivan where several flat rocks dot the landscape, lying on the banks of the river. I must mention that I meditated on these rocks to the soothing, gurgling sounds of the flowing mountain stream. After a short thirty minute break, I began trudging the hill, as it is dangerous to trek after 7:00 p.m. (when it gets dark). A combination of treacherous terrain, wet and slippery rocks, and cascading streams make night treks impossible. I passed several small Shakti, Devi and

Shiva temples on the bridle path to Lamari. Some of the most beautiful waterfalls can be seen on this trek. It is worthwhile to make a note of the fact that, the other side of the river is Nepal. As the mountains of Nepal are uninhabited and the forests are reserved, it is a canopy of green, whereas the Indian side has thin forest cover, owing to rampant deforestation. I trekked the 13 km. between Mangti and Lamari in about 6 hours and reached the ITBP camp at Lamari by 3 p.m. I spent the night at the ITBP fibreglass hut at Lamari and left for Budhi at 9:00 a.m.

The 4 km. trek from Lamari to Budhi was completed by me in 2 hours and I reached Budhi by 11 a.m. The slope is gentle but the path is rocky and uneven. I passed an iron bridge over the river, just before reaching Budhi.. I was received by Havildar Johnson at the ITBP camp at Budhi. I stayed at the PWD (People's Work Department) Guest House, which offers a closeup view of the Annapoorna peak in Nepal. After a quick visit to Budhi village, I conducted ZeNLP meditation workshop for the villagers and ITBP commandos. I spent the day in silence, chanting and ZeNLP meditation. The temperature in mid-May rarely goes above 15 degrees centigrade and mornings are pleasant. It is extremely cold at nights and one needs thick cotton mattresses to keep out the cold. After taking a well deserved overnight rest at Budhi, I started early next day, to commence the toughest part of my trek. The distance between Budhi and Chia Lekh is a mere 3 km. but the incline is a right angle and one has to climb 1000 metres in this 3 km. ascent. The most

picturesque views of my trek were revealed to me during this torturous climb. Every step of this climb is a victory. Against all odds, I completed this 3 km. crawl in 6 hours. I started from Budhi at 6 a.m. and made it to Chia Lekh by 12 noon. My inner-line permit was checked by ITBP commandos at Chia Lekh and after a brief lecture to the commandos on "Simple ways to manage stress", I had some refreshing herbal infusion with wild mint and left for Garbhiang at 3:00 p.m. Garbhiang is a 4 km. walk from Chia Lekh. The lush green meadows, the grazing ponies, mountain goats and horses reminds one of Switzerland. This is a straight trek through meadows, most of the time. I did stop at a mountain stream to drink pure mineral water. I reached the ITBP camp at Garbhiang by 6:00 p.m., where I was received by Inspector Balbir Singh and Sub-Inspector Varghese who had arranged my stay at their guest room. I stayed at Garbhiang for two nights. On the first day, I conducted a six hour interactive session on stress management which was attended by about 30 commandos. This must be one of the first stress management workshops to have been conducted in India at the height of 10,000 feet. After two days at Garbhiang, I started my trek to the next ITBP camp at Gunji, 11 km. away. I started from Garbhiang by 9:00 a.m. and reached Gunji by 3:00 p.m. I stopped at a teashop at Seeti for several cups of herbal infusion with ginger and mint. The only vegetables available at Garbhiang and above are potatoes (*pahari alu*), wild mint, *bicchu* grass and wild spinach. I lived on water and boiled food throughout my sojourn. Once in a while, I had almonds. Daily, I drank more than 20 cups of

tribal herbal infusion (which I carried with me) to replenish the liquids lost during trekking.

I stayed at Gunji for two nights. There is a PWD (People's Work Department) Guest House with a watchman named Maan Singh, who roasted potatoes, and made herbal infusion on a campfire under the starry skies in the backdrop of Mount Annapoorna. The lush green meadows across the river in Nepal, are a picturesque sight. The climb from Gunji to Kalapani, is a torturous one and is almost a 90 degree incline. It took me six hours to complete this trek on foot. I stayed at the PWD guest house at Kalapani for a week to adjust my lungs to the rarefied atmosphere, where oxygen levels are so low that only a few shrubs grow on these rocky heights. The source of the river Kaliganga is at Kalapani, and a temple dedicated to Goddess Kali is run by ITBP here. I met a Gujarati lady named Kinnari Parikh from Ahmedabad who had come along with the regular KMVN *yatra*. I also met some other yatris from the first batch. I distinctly remember a commerce professor from Kolkata named Chatterjee and a retired forest officer from Nagpur, who were in the first batch.

I stayed at Kalapani for four nights. There is a PWD guest house with a watchman named Prem Singh, who roasted potatoes, and made mint chutney on an open hearth. The most challenging trek is from Kalapani to Nabhidang. It took me nine hours to do this 9 km. trek at heights of 14000 feet and above. Nabhidang is famous for the "Om Parvat", which is a mountain near

the tri-junction (where India, Tibet and Nepal meet). The miraculous fact about this mountain is that the Sanskrit symbol Om is etched on the surface of this mountain and this Om is covered with snow throughout the year. I reached “Om Parvat” on June’2nd’2004. This moment was the most satisfying moment of my 40 years of existence. I had reached one of my goals set as far back as January’1995.

I stayed at Nabhidang for two nights. After addressing ITBP commandos on “Simple meditations to manage stress.” I crossed over into Nepal through Seetapul. From Seetapul, it is a weeklong trek to Tinker Pass, which I completed accompanied by a group of Nepalese tradesmen, who were going to Taklakot in Tibet, for trading. I used my expert knowledge of palmistry to convince them to take me as a part of their trade delegation. We stayed at wayside inns, living mostly on roasted potatoes and water.

At Tinker Pass, we were issued a 7 day permit to visit Tibet. We drove to Kailash Mansarovar, through Taklakot and after a quick ‘darshan’ and dip in the holy lake, we returned to Taklakot. I completed the return trek from Nabhidang to Darchula in three weeks. From Darchula, I drove down to Katgodam via Nainital, Almora and Ascot. I boarded the Jan Shatabdi Express to New Delhi from Katgodam and flew down to Ahmedabad on 31st July’2004.

Whatever goals are set in the mind, including the most impossible of dreams, can be actualised through

creative visualisation, autosuggestion, chanting, prayers and ZeNLP meditation. My miraculous visit to Mansarovar is a living example of the fact that the power to succeed is within us. I have more than 100 photographs of my visit to Kumaon.

My weight on reaching Ahmedabad on 21st June'2004 was 59 kg. I had lost 7 kg. during my 100 km. trek in the Kumaon Himalayas. I strictly followed my vegan diet (no products directly or indirectly sourced from animals and no milk or milk products, no leather, no woolens, no leather footwear and no woolen shawls). Just a *khadi* jacket, cotton pyjamas and *sambalpuri kurtas*, protected me against the biting cold and strong winds. A synthetic jacket and jute sandals completed my attire. I sincerely hope many of our readers will be motivated to trek to Kailash-Mansarovar after reading my experience.



19

you will live on in our memories

In May 2004, my book “ZeNLP-the power to succeed” was launched by Sage Publications, New Delhi. Review copies of my book were sent by my publisher to all national newspapers as usual. On 11th May 2004 I took a well deserved break from my four year long stint writing my book and dividing time between Kerala, Orissa and Gujarat. I decided to trek to Mount Kailash and met my publishers at Delhi enroute to Kathgodam. My publishers wanted me to meet them on my return to New Delhi, as they would fix up meetings with the press. I successfully completed my Kailash Mansarovar trek through Kumaon and returned to New Delhi on July 29th. I spoke to my publishers after reaching Delhi and they gave me a list of media persons who had been sent review copies of my book and who had expressed interest in interviewing me. Among the names were Ziya Us Salam and of Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty at “The Hindu”, Sabina Sehgal at “The Times of India”, Madhumita Chakraborty at “The Financial Express” and Swagata Sen at “The Telegraph” and K. P. K. Kutty at Indo Asian News Service. (IANS).

I called up Sabina who was very impressed with my book on ZeNLP meditation and wanted to know more about my 100 km. trek to Mount Kailash through the Kumaon Himalayas. In spite of her busy schedule, we met at a South Indian restaurant near her office and

spent thirty minutes discussing less about my book and more about my trek! It was her heartfelt desire to visit Kailash once in her lifetime. I remember telling her that she had age on her side and could do the trek in the next three to four years. I also told her to visualise mentally that she was reaching her goal, as everything is created twice, first mentally and then actually! Nearly eight years have flown since that short meeting at Delhi but it will last for a life time. After our meeting she assured me that she would arrange me to be interviewed and she kept her word as promised. My interview appeared in the Economic Times on the 14th of August 2004. I was hoping for the best when reports first came in that Sabina Sehgal was a guest at the Taj, Mumbai, during the Mumbai attacks on 26/11/2008. After three days of silent prayer and hoping for a miracle and believing in her never say die attitude, I waited. However, I was in for a deep shock when my worst fears were confirmed after reading what I never wanted to read. Today, I treasure the memories of my short discussion with her about my trek to Mount Kailash. After I got the tragic news about Sabina's death, I could not believe it. May her soul rest in eternal peace.



20

lessons from African Siddi tribals

In December'2005, I undertook a journey to the only home of the Asiatic Lion in the Gir National Park and Sanctuary, located in Junagadh District of Gujarat State. Located 60 km. away from Junagadh town, the Gir National Park is a protected sanctuary stretching across 2400 square kilometre. The terrain is hilly and covered with thick deciduous forests. The forest is home to several species of birds and animals. The most unbelievable fact about Gir is the existence of a village named Shirwan inside the sanctuary, which is populated by African tribals who were brought to India by the Arabs, four hundred years ago, during the era where African tribals were traded as slaves.

These tribes are known as Siddi Badshah by the locals and trace their ancestry to Kenya, as they speak remnants of Swahili, even today. The base camp for entering into these forests is Sasan Gir, which is located on the outskirts. The Siddi settlement of Shirwan is a 12 km. trek through a dirt road which winds its way through thick forests from Sasan.

The trek to Shirwan from Sasan is fraught with risks. Panthers, leopards and cheetahs abound in the forests and could attack wayfarers. Wild monkeys, snakes and wild boar are also commonly seen and represent mild danger. More often than not, one could also come face to

face with the lion, whose population in Gir is around 400.

The Siddis have lived in this village since 1600 A.D., when they were brought to India as slaves by the Nawab of Junagadh, to convert the thick forests at that time into tillable land. 3000 Siddis continue to live in the forest, existing in the same circumstances as their ancestors, following the same traditions and existing in self imposed isolation. Almost 100% of Siddis have married amongst themselves and maintained their ethnic purity over 400 years.

The Siddis respect the law of the forest and do not indulge in hunting though they live adjacent to several hundred spotted deer. Addiction to alcohol is rare as Gujarat is a prohibited state and brewing or sale of alcohol is illegal. Siddis are forced to live off the land, in extremely inhospitable conditions. Wild fruits and berries are available in plenty. Fresh water is available in plenty as the Hiran river flows through Gir. In addition to this, there are several watering holes across the forest.

The Government of Gujarat has offered the Siddis houses outside the park, but so far, none of the 100 Siddi families of Shirwan have accepted the generous offer of the Government. They continue to exist inside the forests, cheerful and facing the harsh realities of life. Music and dance are a way of life for the Siddis. They continue to sing their ancient tribal songs in Swahili and sway to the beat of their ancestral drums.

This tribal trance dance is known as *dhamal* in Gujarati. Siddis have also preserved their ancestral costumes, and every family has preserved one set of tribal costumes which they don during ceremonial occasions, marriage or other festivities. The tribal drums, tribal flute and other musical instruments played during this trance dancing have also been maintained in working condition.

The beat of the drums and the swaying steps of the dance transport the viewer into a bygone era. The dancers move in synchronicity, men, women and children dance together in reverie and camaraderie in a community gathering. One of the important aspects of Siddi culture is their existence in the present moment. They think only about the here and now. They do not dwell on the past or contemplate the future. They are always aware of the present. If they get a meal they are happy, but they continue to remain cheerful, even if forced to go hungry to bed. During monsoon, most of the Siddi tribal houses are swept away by the rains. However, the Siddis remain extremely stress free and rebuild their huts after every monsoon. They continue to live inside the forest during the rains and do not migrate to higher ground. It would be an understatement to say that the Siddis are free from mental stress or worries. Smiling children, laughter, music, boisterous chatter, trance dancing and cheerful faces are the highlights of the visit to this inaccessible Siddi village in the heart of lion country.

One of the most important lessons one can learn from

the Siddis is to shut out the past and forget about the future and continue to exist in the present. The learning experience from the Siddi tribe is aptly conveyed by this ancient Swahili Siddi proverb:

*Do not pursue the past,
Do not lose yourself in the future;
The past no longer is,
The future has not yet come;
Looking deeply at life,
As it is;
In the very here and now,
The Siddi lives in stability and freedom*



21

a bite of Orissa in Kerala

Being a Malayalee born and brought up in Gujarat, whose tryst with Kerala was limited to month long vacations at our ancestral home at Palakkad, I developed a dislike to food cooked in coconut oil. Thirteen years back, I got married to a girl born and brought up in Orissa and I was introduced to the world of mustard oil. Surprisingly, I liked mustard oil and got used to traditional Oriya cuisine. It was under these circumstances, I found myself back at my ancestral home for some ceremonial duties. As soon as I reached home, I found my cousin brothers, aged 18 and 20, waiting to receive me. Their mother (my aunt) had gone to her ancestral house, on hearing about the demise of her mother and would not be back for a week. I got a feeling that my culinary skills were going to be tested! I had barely entered the kitchen during my childhood, bachelorhood and post-marriage phases. I could not cook to save my life!

However, I was a careful observer and had familiarised myself with certain traditional Oriya dishes like *Baingan Bhaja* and *Kakharu Kasha* (Pumpkin) by observing my wife in the kitchen. Soon, I took charge of the kitchen and made a list of ingredients to be purchased. Kundu, the older one rushed on his bicycle to the village grocer. On his return he had got everything in the list except groundnut oil or

mustard oil as these were not available there.

Coconut oil was the only oil available at this shop. The other ingredient Kundu could not get was *Amchur* powder (Dry Mango Powder) as the grocer had never heard about it. Soon, we reached a consensus over the oil. Srinath the younger one borrowed a friend's bike and rushed to Palakkad to return with a 500 ml. pack of refined sunflower oil.

I began the ceremonies. I cut the tender pumpkin into uniform squares and finely chopped the onions. I heated the sunflower oil in a pan, which had certainly seen better days, when my grandmother used to cook! I spluttered the mustard seeds and fried the onions till they acquired a golden hue. A pinch of turmeric powder, coriander powder and red chilly powder followed in quick succession. I kept frying this mixture on a low flame with intermittent stirring. I remembered my wife's frantic search for tomatoes and the hastily cut tomatoes went into the pan next. Two freshly cut green chillies plucked from our kitchen garden followed. The golden pumpkin went in next. This mixture was covered by the aluminum cover from the vessel to cook 'idlis' and we allowed it to cook for about 15 minutes on a low flame. In the meantime Srinath had climbed our backyard tamarind tree and returned with a handful of green tamarind. We powdered the tamarind in the "Dubai" mixer and liberally sprinkled it over the pumpkin.

As soon as we removed the lid, a little bit of Orissa

wafted into our nostrils. If it tasted as delicious as its aroma, it would be over in minutes. I added salt to taste and garnished our creation by sprinkling coriander leaves. Kundu and Srinath had managed to cook rice in the traditional earthen pot and this fusion of boiled red rice, Kakharu Kasha and *pappadums* was one of the tastiest meals I have ever had in my life!



“Tell me a never ending story”

– My 9 year old niece Ria to me...

22

a memorable meeting

Being a regular contributor to magazines, newspapers and having written my own column in leading newspapers and magazines, I never hankered after publicity. After launch of two books with lots of press coverage thanks to the efforts of my publishers, I decided to conduct “Fun weekends” for journalists at Mumbai, New Delhi and Bangalore during my visits to these cities. I would email my journalist friends the date and time of the meeting and we would meet at the “Press Club” for a few hours of palmistry, tarot reading and numerology as these were my hobbies and I always found that my journalist friends were interested in these esoteric arts.

In May’2006, I was scheduled to travel to Bangkok for conducting a stress management workshop for the “Expats Club of Pattaya.” As my flight was leaving Mumbai for Bangkok at midnight and I was reaching Mumbai from Ahmedabad in the morning, I invited a few of my journalist friends to a hotel near Mumbai’s domestic airport for a session on palmistry, jokes and tarot reading. We were about 15 of us in the room when I was introduced to a smart looking gentleman in his mid fifties by the photographer of one of Mumbai’s leading dailies. He introduced himself as Pradeep Vijaykar, sports editor. He enjoyed our sessions filled with fun and laughter and we had a private meeting

before I returned to the international airport enroute to Pattaya.

Pradeep informed me that he was associated with the “Press Club of Mumbai” and he would organize my session on palmistry, tarot reading and jokes at the “Press Club”, during my next visit to Mumbai. A few years later, I got an email from Mr. Gurbir Singh from the “The Press Club of Mumbai” which said:

“We regret to announce that past president of the Press Club of Mumbai, and a well known sports writer of the country Shri Pradeep Vijaykar, passed away on Saturday January 01, 2011 midnight just 5 days before his 60th birthday.”



23

a meal to remember

I have stayed at many international hotels during my frequent trips abroad but here is a real life experience which gives us a lesson on how customers can expect to get better customer service. A few years back I undertook a visit to the Cambodian-Vietnam border to visit the Kraeng – one of the world's most primitive tribes who live inside the Virachey National Park in North-East Cambodia. I reached Phnom Penh via Bangkok and stayed at Hotel Cambodiana, one of Cambodia's finest hotels, located on the banks of the Mekong River. I left for Kratie after three days at Cambodiana. After watching the dolphins on the Mekong River at Kratie, I took the dirt road to the remote province of Ratanakiri. An eight hour cross country drive through a dirt road led us to Ratanakiri. I checked into a small hotel, named "Tribal Hotel" (as Ratanakiri is home to the Kraeng tribe) which was priced at U.S. \$ 5 per night.

The room was large with an attached bathroom. There was a young housekeeping boy named Kim who along with his younger sister Kin were posted on my floor. Their duties included, cleaning the room and the bathroom, once a day, changing the bedsheets and ensuring that the fan was in working condition. I rarely saw Kim and Kin, as I left the hotel in the early hours of the morning and returned late. As I am a

strict vegan and lived on fruits when I am abroad, I used to buy lots of bananas and keep them in my room. One day, as I was leaving my room, I saw Kim and Kin playing with their pet cat.

At night, I used to see them sleep in the corridor on the bare floor. Through sign language I came to know that they were orphaned when they were young and were working in the hotel since their childhood. They could sleep on the floor and were given food in exchange for work. Both Kim and Kin were honest to the core and I never found anything missing from my bags, though I used to leave my bags open and keep my laptop and camera on the bed. After knowing about their struggle for survival, I went to the market and got them a dozen bananas. They refused at first but shyly accepted my offer.

That night, when I returned to my room, I had a surprise. My room was as good as new. There was no trace of dust in any corner of my room. My bathroom, washbasin and toilet were sparkling. I had never seen a cleaner room in my life though I have stayed at several luxury hotels abroad. One evening, I spoke to them in broken English. They asked me the reason I ate bananas. I explained to them that I was a vegan and did not eat any animal products and did not eat food where animal products were cooked in the same kitchen. As there are almost no fully vegetarian eating joints outside India, I was forced to subsist on fruits and vegetables.

I got bananas regularly for Kim throughout my long stay at Tribal Hotel. On the day I was leaving, I told Kim, that I was going back to India. I tipped him and his sister generously, without letting the owner of the hotel know. Soon, my car arrived and Kim was there with my luggage which he placed in the boot of the car. As the car started and was leaving the main gate of the hotel, there was a shrill cry in Khmer and the driver stopped. A diminutive figure ran towards the car with a small parcel wrapped in a banana leaf. It was Kin. She shyly handed me the banana leaf and a small note and bid me farewell. As we pulled into the dust road towards Kratie, I opened the note. It read "I am Ann, an Australian living in Cambodia who can understand Khmer. Kin came to me yesterday and told me in Khmer to pen this note for you."

Sir,

All these days at our hotel, you have eaten only fruits. On the long drive back to Kratie there are no shops. And there are no bananas in your bag. So, I went to the market, dug out some sweet potatoes from our garden, roasted them on an open fire, peeled the skin and mashed them and added sesame seeds. This is perfectly vegan and you can eat them on your way to Phnom Penh.

Please do visit us during your next trip to Cambodia

Love
Kin

A MEAL TO REMEMBER

I wiped the tear in my eye and the roasted sweet potatoes with sesame seeds cooked with genuine love and affection by a teenage Cambodian girl is one of the tastiest meals I have had in my life!



24

synchronicity at Angkor Wat

It was in school in my 8th grade, that our History teacher showed us the pencil drawing of the temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia. I immediately visualised myself visiting the temple. I was only 12 years old at that time. As I grew older, I passed out of school got into college, worked with some of India's best multinationals, completed my MBA, and got into training. In 2006, I was invited by the Expat's Club, Pattaya, to conduct a ZenNLP based stress management workshop for their members.

At this seminar, I met an expatriate journalist from Cambodia, who invited me over to his house in Siem Reap. I flew to Siem Reap via Phnom Penh and spent four weeks exploring the temples of Angkor Wat.

On the first day of my trip to Angkor, I visited the main temple of Angkor. Here I decided to hire a *tuktuk* (a three wheeler similar to an Indian autorickshaw) to visit the farflung temples of Angkor. As I was walking towards the temple, I met a young Indian boy. I asked him if he was from India. He said, originally, he was from India, his name was Aditya and he worked and lived in Canada. I asked him if he too would like to share a *tuktuk* with me for the next two days to visit the temples around Angkor. Aditya agreed instantly. It was at this moment that a middle aged man

SYNCHRONICITY AT ANGKOR WAT

approached us and introduced himself as John Fernandes who was originally from Goa, but was a citizen of Australia who lived in Perth. We invited him to share the *tuktuk* with us and we decided to split the fare equally into three.

The next three days, we visited all the temples around Angkor in the *tuktuk*. On the second day, I asked John if he was a Sagittarian like me. He agreed and said he was born on 15th of December 1956. I exclaimed it was an unbelievable coincidence as I too was born on the 15th of December but in the year 1966. Then, Aditya who was listening to our conversation said, I can't believe it either because I am born on the same day as both of you. My birthday is on the 15th of December 1976. Synchronicity had brought the three of us from three different continents, to the main temple of Angkor Wat on the same day. We confirmed the coincidence by comparing our passports, which coincidentally, all three of us were carrying with us!



25

lessons from Bon-Pa tribals in Tibet

The anticipation of trekking a hundred miles on foot through some of the world's most beautiful bridle paths, along the banks of a snowy mountain stream, is as exciting as the trek itself! Why does one choose to trek to Holy Mount Kailash in Tibet from India? Being a vegan, I not only consume only plant based foods (just vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and grains) but also avoid travelling on animals. As there are only two options to reach Kailash Mansarovar from Kumaon, a horse ride or a trek, I chose the latter. Also having trekked in countries as diverse as Indonesia to Laos, I knew that trekking was the best way to gain knowledge about local customs, traditions, food habits and weather conditions. The locals were also the best guides to overcoming hidden dangers, avoiding treacherous paths and finding safe places to halt for the night. Also, it is much easier to befriend fellow-travellers trekking to the same destination. As ZeNLP believes in constant learning, I wanted to learn something new during every step of my 100 km. trek to Mount Kailash from Darchula in India. The other bonus of a painstaking trek is to be able to photograph local flora and fauna at close quarters and having the liberty to wait for perfect lighting conditions for picture-postcard photographs all throughout one's trek.

One of the advantages of trekking to Kailash is that

it also gives one an opportunity to meet village elders and gain small nuggets of ancient wisdom. This traditional wisdom has been passed down generations through folk-tales, anecdotes and songs. Hence, one cannot find such jewels in books. One has to be there and learn it for oneself. Many secrets of the universe are waiting to be discovered! During one of my overnight stays at Nabhidang on the tri-junction, where India, Nepal and Tibet meet, I was fortunate enough to be hosted by a 90 year old Kumaoni grandmother, who after coming to know of my proposed trek to Kailash Mansarovar, revealed to me some amazing truths. Her grandfather had trekked to Kailash several times and brought back *atma-lingas*. I learnt from her that if a devotee reaches the base of Mount Kailash and chants three *malas* (rosary with 108 beads) each of the *gayatri mantra* at dawn, noon and dusk, small parts of Mount Kailash, break away from the mountain and roll down towards the chanter. These are known as *atma-lingas* and these *atma-lingas* are charged with divine energy. The objective of the ancients during their trek to Mansarovar was to collect and bring these auspicious *atma-lingas* to their respective villages and homes.

In Tibet, I met a Bon-Pa family who were circumambulating Mount Kailash along with me and who collected pebbles and cobble-stones from the banks of Mansarovar. The Bon-Pa's are Tibet's original inhabitants who are nature worshippers and consider these pebbles auspicious.

At the Dolma-La shrine at Dolma-La pass in Tibet,

which is located at 22,000 feet and is the highest point one crosses during the Kailash parikrama, I met an ascetic who told me to take a dip in Mansarovar lake at midnight and collect the water of the holy lake between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. and drink it and carry it back home. According to him, this was what was taught to him by his ancestors. The Bon-Pa tribals worship fire, water and earth (the pri-mordial elements) and lead an ecofriendly existence, enduring unending hardships in one of the world's harshest terrains.

Needless to say, I chanted 9 malas of the *gayatri mantra* at Mount Kailash at dawn, noon and dusk and yes, small rocks from Mount Kailash rolled down this majestic mountain, which I collected and carried with me all along the tough return trek to India. Also, I did take a dip under the clear starlit skies, on the magical fullmoon night at Mansarovar. I also collected the holy pebbles from the banks of the lake between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. and a litre of pure water. I was careful enough to drink water directly from the river, all along my return trek and jealously guarded the *atma-lingas*, pebbles and holy water till I was back home at Ahmedabad. I also collected *rudraksh* from the trees I encountered along the return trek through Nepal and India. Thus, one can learn a lot of new things along the way through stories, anecdotes and real life experiences during one's travels.



26

inner life can change outward events

I am fond of trekking and have trekked in five countries other than India, in the last fifteen years. I would like to share an anecdote on how inner life can change outward events. In 2006, I spent four weeks in Southern Thailand, trekking through some of the world's most beautiful rainforests. Inside the Khao Sok National Park, there are several treks with varying degree of difficulty. Having successfully trekked to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet, twice, I chose the most difficult of the treks, which was a 5 km. trek to Ton Gloy Waterfall. All treks inside Khao Sok are solo treks at your own risk! I started at 5 a.m. with a small torch and enjoyed the trek along the forest path surrounded on all sides by thick tropical rainforests. Along the way, I took a dip at Tam Nam, where there was a beautiful clear pond formed by the passing mountain streams. As I went deeper into the forest, I lost all sense of time. I reached the waterfalls by noon and on the way back, it became quite dark at around 4:00 p.m. and by mistake, I found myself lost! There were no other trekkers along the route and inspite of tryng to find my way out, the more I tried to find my way back, the more I started to find myself back at the same place.

But after an hour of aimless wandering, I came to a clearing in the forest, quenched my thirst at a small rivulet and thought about spending a night inside the

forest and trying to find my way back the next morning. However, I had stayed for many months with the Kohl tribals, inside the Simlipal National Park in Orissa and decided to follow their survival strategies. According to the Kohls, when you are lost inside the forest, follow the mountain stream and it will lead you to settlements on the fringes of the forest. I had followed the flowing waters downstream while trying to find my way back. Being used to many days of fasting, I was not worried about surviving in the wild without food. There was plenty of water to drink from the numerous waterfalls that crisscrossed my bridle path. There were no wild animals in the forest except for monitor lizards, gibbons and wild monkeys. I was used to sleeping outdoors as I was an avid trekker.

However, I knew that I could reach my tree-house outside the Park by following a simple tribal meditation technique I had learnt from the Kohls. I sat under the canopy of the thick bamboo groves and started to focus my attention on the gurgling sounds of the mountain stream. I listened to the sound of the water as if that was the only sound that existed. After about an hour, I was in a deep trance. I gently closed my eyelids, rested against the bamboo and creatively visualized myself back in my tree-house. I saw myself walking up the steps of my wooden house, taking exactly the same time to retrace my footsteps, as I would have in real life. Then, I opened the lock of my door, entered my house, saw my notebook computer on my writing table. I went into the bathroom and took a shower, taking exactly the same time, as it would have taken me in real life. I kept

on visualising the future as if I was the one creating it.

Soon, the cool breeze, the soothing sounds of the water and the twilight hours put me to sleep. When I woke up, I was back inside my tree-house. I had seen a realistic dream. In ZeNLP meditation, if you follow a vegan diet, listen to sounds of nature and creatively visualize your goals, meaningful coincidences will propel you towards your goal!

I awoke from my dream and could hear some voices in the darkness. Soon, I could see a flashing torch. I started shouting and clapping my hands and pointed my torch and repeatedly switched it on and off indicating to the trekkers about my presence. As soon as they saw my torch light, three Thai men managed to reach me in the darkness. They were local tourists who had entered the park at noon and were returning to their guest-house. Soon, they escorted me back to the main gate of the Park. They shared their peanuts with me and I bid them goodbye.

Needless to say, I was back in my tree-house, taking a shower with a strong feeling that what I was experiencing at the present moment had been experienced once before. This is known as *déjà vu* in French. This experience proves that inner life can change outward events. My creative visualisation, while listening to the sounds of nature had created a series of meaningful coincidences which led the Thai tourists towards me, in the twilight hours.



27

a memorable foot massage ...

Perched on a quiet hill, in a secluded corner of Phuket, overlooking the blue waters of the Andaman sea, is the right ambience to get away from it all. The location of Solitude Spa at the Mangosteen Resort at Phuket itself is an indicator of the serenity and calm one experiences as one walks into the spa. The fresh morning breeze charges your lungs with oxygen, as one awaits the pampering to begin. One is served light herbal infusion, which is good for our respiratory system, one is told.

At this spa, one runs into several health tourists from Switzerland to Canada, who are here to experience the miracle detoxification effects of the Mangosteen wrap. The mangosteen is a fruit not unlike the litchie, but with a strong odour. When mangosteen pulp is wrapped on the skin, it removes the dead cells of the skin and rejuvenates the breathing properties of the pores. It also rejuvenates the skin and the enzymes in mangosteen act on the free radicals that ravage the body and have potent antiwrinkle effects on the skin.

I decide to go in for a Mangosteen Deluxe Massage, which includes a dry Thai massage, followed by Nuat Beran herbal hot compress, warm jacuzzi and ending with a herbal bath. If one really wants to be pampered

from the top of the head to the tip of one's toe, Solitude Spa is the ideal place to head for.

I am gently introduced to the team of therapists at Solitude Spa which includes Khun Swan, Edd, Ben, Mam and Ueyui. Incidentally, all therapists are female. As I enter the therapy chamber, soothing strains of traditional Thai instrumental music wafts into my ears, instantly putting me in a highly relaxed mood. Khun Swan introduces herself shyly and hands me the traditional Thai sarong to be worn during the therapy. Later, she leaves me alone to go and prepare the herbal hot compress.

She returns and starts a tiny foot massage in an effort to increase blood flow to my toes. Later, she asks me to lie down face up and stare blankly into the ceiling while swaying my head gently to the tune of the music. She asks me if I want a strong, medium or mild Thai massage. Whenever in doubt choose the middle path! I settle for medium. A floral towel is gently placed on my eyelids with a request to concentrate on feelings rather than sight. Khun Swan starts by delicately stretching my toes starting from the little to the big toe. The ankles and palm of the feet are next. I must admit that she was exercising parts of my feet, I never knew existed.

Using her thumbs to stimulate the accupressure points at times she gently slapped the muscles in an effort to coax them to relax. The precision and accuracy by which the masseur proceeds is unbelievable. The

scientific skill by which she stretched each and every muscle group in my body is admirable. Years of training had perfected her massage techniques. I could feel her stretching my calf muscles and moving to my knees. The massage of my hands was mildly painful at times and it looked more like a synchronous exercise rather than a massage. After several twists and turns and gentle snapping of the joints, one is asked to lie down on the stomach. The expertise by which the muscles of the lower neck and back were massaged is commendable. One finds oneself so relaxed that one's eyelid begins to droop and one almost dozes off on the massage table.

Soon, she leaves the room to return with two herbal massage bags, steamed to a few degrees above body temperature. An aroma of fresh herbs rent the air, as she begins to mildly press these steamed herbal bags over the charka points of one's spine. One can actually feel the blood rushing to the spots where the herbs are pressed. After about an hour of this hot compress, one comes to one's senses. The sensation after the hot compress is nothing short of euphoria. Endorphins, adrenaline, thyroxine and all hormonal systems seem to be working optimally as one experiences a deep sense of calm. One's muscles have been stretched, exercised and finally relaxed by the herbal hot compress.

It is now time for pampering as one steps into the floral hot Jacuzzi, where jets of warm water massage your wrists, back and back of one's shoulders. After another hour, one is handed fresh herbal soap, which

smells like mangosteen for, a needle spray of mildly warm water from the giant shower.

One comes out of the spa with every cell of one's body breathing a new breath, having renewed energy in every sinew and one feels more alive. Some of the other treatments offered by Mangosteen include Swedish and Egyptian massage, Sandalwood salt scrub, Mangosteen body detox, mud body wrap, marine body scrub and Thai white clay body wrap. Mangosteen Resort and Spa also offers a rejuvenating health package which includes spa treatments along with a seven day stay at one of the 40 individually designed villas. And finally, the picturesque view of the surrounding hills separated by the turquoise sea is no less a massage for the eyes, as one steps out of the spa and walks to one's Garden View Villa.



28

lessons from long-necked Karen tribals

The mystery of travelling to an unknown destination is like learning a new language. One reads numerous dictionaries, books and even “Learning Languages for Dummies”. After mastering a few short sentences, you locate a native speaker to practice speaking and start parroting your rehearsed lines. As your sparring partner stares blankly at your monologue, you do not know how your accents have turned out to be and if what you said was what was understood or whether you made a complete fool of yourself by mispronouncing niceties as insults!

One is writing this from one’s thatched roof-hut on stilts inside Huai Suea Thao village on the outskirts of Mae Hong Song district on the Thai-Burmese border. This village is nestled on the edges of a steep cliff overlooking several mountain streams that rush down to meet the Pai River flowing through Mae Hong Son. One is surrounded on all sides by mist covered evergreen coniferous pine forests at an altitude of 5000 feet above sea level. The natural beauty of the surroundings is breathtaking. Every bit of the landscape is covered with teaks, pines, conifers, oaks and birches stretching their arms as far as eyes can see.

The buzzing sound of the flowing mountain streams and waterfalls are soft music to one’s ears throughout

the night. One wakes up at dawn awakened by the natural alarm calls of wild roosters living on the edges of the jungle. Even in the twilight hours in early November, one can see the mist hanging heavily on the mountain tops. One also comes across a few scattered clouds that have descended on your hut made entirely of palm leaves, coir and bamboo. There is no electricity in this tribal village populated by the Karen tribe who has lived in these forests since centuries. The Karens are also known as Kayans.

The most unique aspect about the tribe living in this village is the elongated necks of the females! After a girl child is born, she is made to wear a brass neck-ring. Every year, two more rings are added to her neck till she is five. As she grows into an adult her neck gets naturally elongated as the rings are never removed. The long-neck decorated with golden coloured brass rings make the Karen women look incredibly attractive and they strut about like graceful peacocks. They also wear their hair in a topknot with a pointed silver pin in it and a necklace of a chain of silver coins.

Karen girls start wearing rings at the age of four or five. More spirals are added as the girls grow older. The neck is continually stretched with more coils added each year till the length of sixteen inches is reached, though many older women have greatly exceeded that. At the base of the main neck coil, married women wear a five coil winding; a complete set of neck coils worn by grownup women, including the neck, knees and ankles weighs about 10 kilos! The diameter of the brass coils

are winded by local Karen women with their strong fingers. The deci-sion whether to wear the rings or not is left entirely to the girl after she attains maturity. However, this tradition has survived in this era of globalisation only due to the fact that Karen women have the greatest reverence for their Mother Goddess. The Karen long-necked women do not travel outside their villages and have spent their entire life in their small communities.

The Karen village of Huai Suea Thao is nestled in the middle of a hill overlooking a multitude of uninhabited hills. Several small mountain streams criss-cross through these hills, providing a constant water supply for their needs. The Karen shun contact with the outside world and are happy in their isolated existence. Language is a barrier as their native dialect is different from Thai or even Bur-mese. They hand cultivate rice, in their tiny fields in their back gardens. Vegetables like carrots, cabbage and cauli-flowers are also grown. One of the unique aspects of Karen culture is their food habit. Due to their elongated and delicate necks, they have to be very particular about what they eat. Lots of wild lemon-grass infusion is drunk, without sugar or milk to keep the effects of the cold away. Crushed ginger is added to the lemon-grass leaves. The Kayans are extremely hard working and do not rear cows or bullocks. Ploughing the rice-fields is done by digging by hand. The mountainous terrain, the fast flowing mountain streams and ancient Karen myths have combined to ensure the absence of cattle. This means milk and

milk products are cut off from their diet which is rich in cereals and vegetables.

Music and dance are a way of life for Kayans. As there is no electricity, all the Karens gather under a tree at dusk followed by lots of singing and dancing. Their food habits are frugal and dinner is no more than rice soup washed down with a few glasses of home made rice beer.

The Karen tribe call themselves “Ka Kaung” which loosely translates to “people who live on top of the hill.” They are sometimes called long-neck Karens or giraffe women because of the custom of encasing their neck in brass coils. When a girl is aged between five and nine, her neck is rubbed with traditional herbs dipped in coconut milk and the first brass ring is fitted. After two years, the next set of rings is added and every year thereafter she gains a new set till she is married. Below the chin, they wear a square cotton pad decorated with beads. These brass rings are said to be centuries old and handed down over generations, passing from mother to daughter to grand-daughters. Karen women also have two set of leg rings, one above the knee and one below, but this does not seem to hamper their daily work in any way.

Karen women are said to have descended from the ‘Goddess Mother Dragon’ (Ka Kwe Bu Pe) and women wear these rings to give respect and tribute to the deity and to resemble a real dragon. As Karen myth goes

when the grand-daughters Mu Don and Mu Dan visited Ka Kwe Bu Pe, they were presented with winding gold coils which they wrapped around their hands, legs and neck! Karen people celebrate the “Kan Khwan” ceremony, when all Kayans gather in celebration with lots of folk dances and traditional music and singing. These community gatherings often get Karens from all farflung villages to come together in a mood of festivity and happiness.

The other villages on the Thai-Burmese border where one can find long-necked Kayans include Hwa Phu Keng, Karen Tha Yar Hsu Htaut and Noi Soi. All these villages are located inside thick coniferous forests and are accessible after trekking on foot for long hours.

Successful managers have the ability and humility to learn from each and every experience. Observation of the secret lives of long-necked Kayans offer several lessons.

Team work:

Organisations are nothing better than a collection of tribes who have come together to achieve a common objective. Managers should sacrifice their individual egos and becomes cogs in a wheel to achieve organizational goals. Successful managers are good team players rather than brilliant geniuses. The ability to work as a team is one of the most important ingredients of successful organisations.

Relaxation:

Evolved organisations realize that stress is far too

important a factor to be ignored. Every employee is under stress and stress management activities must be built into work schedules. Music, dances, community gatherings and social meets help employees to meet under relaxed conditions in a lightened atmosphere. Such gatherings promote unconscious bonding and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of employees. Music and dance and community gatherings are a way of life for the Kayans.

Training:

Tribal meditation based stress management workshops need to be conducted for employees at regular intervals. Such workshops bring participants from diverse functions together and generate a community feeling and foster a sense of belonging. This directly contributes to increased productivity through collective exercises, meditation and prayer

Fear:

Fear is an important factor in failure. Fear of the known and of the unknown needs to be banished from the mind. Both real and imagined fear is equally harmful.



***“The best way of teaching children is
to tell them a story!”***

– Ancient saying among the
“Brok-Pa Aryans in Ladakh”

29

we will always be united

Childhood memories are always deeply imprinted on the unconscious mind. Here is slice of life from my childhood, which I find has a great relevance today. My father was born in Kollengode, a small village located in Palakkad in Kerala. At the age of 15, my father left his village and came to Mumbai, as he was scolded by my grandmother for getting poor marks in his S.S.C. exams. My father started his career in Mumbai selling pens and ultimately was working as a spot boy at Mehboob Studios. In Mumbai, he met a Gujarati colleague who invited him to come to Ahmedabad. At Ahmedabad, my father stayed in the old city at 'khiskoli pol' and rose up the ranks to become manager of one of Ahmedabad's finest movie theatres (Prakash Theatre) in the 1950's. Among the staff at the theatre was Lala Iqbal Khan. (A *lala* is the person with a *lathi* who controls the crowds outside the theatre).

Iqbal Khan had migrated to India from the North West Frontier Province in Pakistan. As a child, I spent considerable time at the theatre, as it was near my school and my classmates and teachers used to take me along when they needed tickets. All I had to do was take them to Iqbal *chacha* and he would always manage to get them a seat. When the movies were *house*-full as it used to happen in the seventies, Iqbal *chacha* used to put his stool for us to sit and watch the movie. He was

fair and had a golden beard. He was always smiling! He was extremely loving and caring and was always full of 'joie de vivre' inspite of his day with the *lathi*. He was a gentle giant. Only Iqbal Khan could have disciplined the crowds which thronged the advance booking windows for the first day, first show tickets of 'Kati Patang.'

I still remember the day when the actor Sanjeev Kumar visited our theatre on the first screening of 'Man Mandir', it was Iqbal Khan who proudly introduced me to Sanjeev. "Hamare sahab ka beta hai" he told Sanjeev, as if I was no less a celebrity than the star! Iqbal *chacha* made a child feel proud on that day!

Iqbal Khan used to talk in a peculiar accent and used to call me "Lale ki Jaan." No sooner had I settled in my seat, Iqbal Khan used to be there with a glass of fresh lime juice. During the riots in the old city at Ahmedabad, he used to escort me to school. Every time he returned from Peshawar, he used to get walnuts, almonds and raisins from his village without fail. Iqbal Khan used to collect all the kites that used to land on our theatre and give them to me and my friends. He used to be happy to see smiles on the face of children. Many a time, he used to pay from his pocket to buy tickets for children who could not afford to buy tickets and who used to spend their time looking at the still photographs outside the theatre.

In Janury 1980, I had a close escape from death. While flying kites on "Uttarayan", I fell from the terrace of our six storey apartment. Due to the grace of

the Almighty, I escaped the 60 foot fall, with minor injuries but spent a month at hospital. Almost all the theatre employees were on night duty outside the ICU. I still remember it was Iqbal Khan who used to bring hot home cooked food and fruits for me throughout my stint at the hospital. Iqbal Khan was a devout soul and I used to see him pray, rolling his mat on the hospital floor. He used to constantly say, "Sab khuda ki marji."

Friends who hardly used to know me used to proudly claim at school, "I am friend of the boy whom Iqbal Khan Saab comes to drop!" After the theatre was shut in the nineties, Iqbal Khan returned to Peshawar and must be in his late seventies today. I am sure he is spreading the message of love, brotherhood and universal peace among his brothers. One of my goals in life is to go trekking to Iqbal Khan's village near Chitral in North West Frontier Province and thank him for treating me like a prince during my childhood years!

This is my message to all those who want to divide India. Hindus, tribals, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis and Buddhists are strands of a rope, deeply entwined. No one can break our unity. Five fingers come together to make a fist. Every true Indian understands the language of love, peace and brotherhood. These bonds have formed over centuries. A few of your crackers cannot shake our faith in the unity of our nation.



30

the story of Bhuriyo

In 2008, my wife and I, shifted into a first floor apartment in one of Ahmedabad's greenest patches. On the first day, as we walked up to our first floor flat, we noticed three stray dogs resting under one of the trees near our apartment's gate. The unique feature of our apartment was the presence of these three darlings. The first one was black in colour and hence was called *Kaliyo* (Black in Gujarati) by the residents. The second one was spotlessly white in colour and hence was called *Bhuriyo* (*white in Gujarati*), while the third one was brown in colour and was called *Tommy*.

Being a strict vegan, who loves animals and who does not consume, wear or use any products of animal origin, animals are naturally attracted to me. As animals have a sixth sense which helps them to identify vegans, I became friendly with all these lovely canines and spent my evenings taking them for a walk in the neighbourhood park. After about a month, I developed an excellent rapport with Bhuriyo.

Soon, he was merrily wagging his tail like a flag waving on a windy day on seeing my scooter approaching.

Every evening he was there to receive me as I returned from my evening walk. Every morning, he

used to accompany me to the garden where I used to drink *neera* (juice of the palm tree), after my morning walk. After about a month, our bonding grew and Bhuriyo started to escort me home after my morning walk. One day, he came up to my apartment door continuing to wag his tail. The next day, I opened my apartment door and let Bhuriyo in. He roamed around my apartment and found a cozy place in my verandah to rest.

Then, it became a routine. Every day, Bhuriyo used to accompany me for the morning walk and wait at the garden while I finished my walk and quenched my thirst and he started accompanying me home and spent the morning with us. My wife too became used to Bhuriyo's presence and started talking to him. Within about two to three months, Bhuriyo had become a part of our family and he was always there to receive us and escort us during our walks.

I distinctly remember many occasions where Bhuriyo shielded me from other stray dogs who were barking at me. But after seeing me with Bhuriyo daily, the other strays in the neighbourhood also became friendly towards me. Though Gujaratis are mostly vegetarian and are friendly towards animals, the municipality dog-catchers are not and protecting Bhuriyo, Kaliyo and Tommy from their cruel and heartless techniques to catch and forcibly sterilize stray dogs needed a monumental effort.

Every week, we got the news that several stray dogs

in the neighbourhood were taken away by the dog-catching vans. I used to see tears in the eyes of Bhuriyo,

who used to hide under a car on seeing the dogcatchers. It is unfortunate but a majority of the stray dogs caught by these contracted dog-catchers, die before they reach the veterinary hospital for forcible castration without anaesthesia. Only God knows, how many countless million stray dogs are killed every day on the pretext of sterilisation.

In the meantime, we were successful in keeping our trio, out of the arms of the dog-catchers by training them to stay within our apartment when the dog-catching vans arrived. There are several occasions when we went to the authorities and requested them not to use barbaric methods like a pair of tongs to capture and torture stray dogs. However our requests made no impact on the insensitive dog-catchers.

My friendship with Bhuriyo grew over the months and I started sharing my vegan meals with him. Bhuriyo was extremely fond of whole wheat *chappatis* and Kerala potato curry and *idls*. I also started to give him boiled mashed vegetables and Bhuriyo just relished his meals. In our native village in Kerala, we always had pets in our ancestral house. Bhuriyo reminded me of my childhood days where I used to play with our family pet that was lovingly called Kuttan.

After about a year, I had gone for a six weeks trek to

THE STORY OF BHURIYO

Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet. On returning to Ahmedabad, I got some devastating news. Bhuriyo had wandered out of our apartment in the wee hours of the morning. As our watchman, watched in horror, a dogcatching van was hidden behind some trees. On seeing our innocent Bhuriyo crossing our apartment gate, three ruthless dog-catchers their heart full of hate, started to attack Bhuriyo with tongs, iron rods and pipes. As he lay bleeding on the road, they ran the van over Bhuriyo's legs to cripple him, so that he would not defend himself. Finally they took Bhuriyo away after shackling him in chains and in a cage with hundreds of other unfortunate victims.

After about a week, the same van came to our apartment and threw Bhuriyo's dead body into our apartment's garden. The residents could do nothing except give Bhuriyo a decent burial. It has been four years since I last patted Bhuriyo and fed him with my hands. Kaliyo and Tommy have escaped these sadistic dog-catchers of Ahmedabad till today. But every day, when I leave my apartment, I wonder, if I will hear that the dog-killers of Ahmedabad have found two new victims.



31

let us sleep in peace

Having been born and brought up at Ahmedabad in Gujarat, most of the people who grew up in the old city of Ahmedabad are known to me, as my father was the manager of a popular movie theatre from the fifties to the nineties. My parents have lived in the same house, since the last 30 years. They do not want to go back to our native village in Kerala. But today, I decided that I will leave “Lion’s own country” and move to our ancestral village of Karripode in “God’s own country!”

The reason for my decision is summed up by this anecdote. Outside our apartment at Ahmedabad, a Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) is being introduced. I go for a two hour morning walk at 4:00 a.m. every morning! The contractors who have been awarded the contract for building the road have not provided any accommodation to the casual labourers, who toil day and night to build the road. After 12 hours of backbreaking work, these innocent tribals who have been transported to Ahmedabad from Panchmahals, sleep under the starlit sky on the bare earth, without a quilt!

Volunteers, at sleep experiments in America who were forcefully kept awake for more than 48 hours to study the impact of sleeplessness, refused to participate in the experiment any further! Our research on sleep

after interactions with nearly 9000 participants who have attended our ZeNLP workshops hailing from more than 50 countries, tells us that sleep is far more important to humans than food. One can live without food or water for extended periods but one cannot do without sleep!

Every human being on this planet deserves the right to six to eight hours of deep uninterrupted sleep during the darkest phase of night.(between 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.). Having lived with the most primitive tribes across India, Thailand, Tibet, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Burma and Vietnam since the last 15 years after starting my consultancy and having had first hand experience of sleeping on the bare floor, under starlit skies in freezing temperatures, I am aware of the importance of pin drop silence during the REM (Rapid Eye Movement) phase of sleep. Sleeping on the bare earth is a tough experience. I can vouch for it. I have slept on the banks of the Holy Mansarovar in Tibet, on the banks of the volcanic lake in North-East Cambodia in a Kraeng Hut and inside the leaf-hut of the Mankadia tribals inside the Simlipal forests in eastern Orissa, I have slept on the bamboo huts of the Kareneni long-neck tribe on the Thai-Burma border and inside the cave like rock-shelters of the Brok-Pa Aryans near Batalik. I have also slept in a tiny canoe of the Murut tribe in interior Kalimantan in Indonesian Borneo. Sleeping on a tree-house inside the Mount Kinabalu National Park in Kota Kinabalu, at the PWD (People's Work Department) guest-houses at Kalapani and Malpa.(on the trek to Mount Kailash) and inside an

ITBP (Indo-Tibetan border Police) fibreglass hut at Nabhidang on the Indo-Tibet border were my unique experiments with sleep.

I know it is tough to get sleep in winter, especially while sleeping on the bare earth without a quilt or blanket. While I was returning from the walk, I found the women-folk baking *bajra* rotis on an open hearth and trying to keep themselves warm. The men-folk were fast asleep in their deepest phase of sleep. I too moved closer to a cooking pot and was enjoying the warmth of the fire, when a gentleman started playing a Gandhi *bhajan* (*vaishnav jana to tene kahiye*) on a loudspeaker mounted on a bicycle! He was cycling close to the pavement where these tribals were fast asleep. So I gestured the cyclist to stop. I walked up to him and requested him (in Gujarati) to switch off his loudspeaker till he cycled far away from the sleeping tribals. This gentleman refused to identify himself and replied in Gujarati that he was a Gandhian and was playing Gandhi *bhajans*!

I could not help but think of Kabir's *doha*:

*“Kankar Pathar Jod Ke, Masjid Layi Banay
Tachad Mulla Bang De
Kya Behri Hui Khudai”*

(Why do you need loudspeakers to communicate with God, Is the Almighty deaf?) I could see that many of the tribals had been disturbed by the *bhajan* and had woken up! This incident has also made me determined

LET US SLEEP IN PEACE

to go back to our ancestral *tharavadu* house in Palakkad where I always get to sleep like a baby. Presently our house is locked. Our ancestral house is located at Karripode village in Palakkad District. The world's biggest teak tree is a four hour drive from our village!



32

learning through folk-tales

After having spent the last fifteen years travelling to the most primitive tribes of the world including the Khadia, Mankadia and Kohl tribals in Orissa, the long necked Karen tribals on the Thai-Burma border, the Kraeng tribe in North-East Cambodia, the Siddis living inside the Gir forests, the Brok-Pa Aryans living in Ladakh, the Bon-Pa tribals of Tibet, the Kadazandusns of Malaysia, and Muruts of Indonesia, the Isans of Thailand, the Hmongs of Vietnam and the Prau tribals of Laos, I took a deep interest in their folktales, songs, dances, plays, sculpture, masks and paintings.

The common factor that emerged out of all these tribes who have never had any physical contact with each other, were their stories. Most of these tribes do not have a written script and all knowledge was passed down from generation to generation through the language of stories, folk-songs, dances, ballads, plays, sculptures, masks and paintings. There were several factors which were common among these tribes. They were all nature worshippers and worshipped the rivers, stones and the rising as well as setting sun. Thus, they worshipped the primordial elements of fire, water and earth.

The second factor was that all children were taught

by the elders through stories, paintings and sculptures. Every evening the elders used to sing their folk-songs and explain their meaning to the children. There were songs which helped a child remember the names of the edible fruits and vegetables found in the forest. There were folk-tales which introduced the children to the animals living in the forest. But the most interesting and informative folk-tale was the truth about creation.

According to the tribal folk tale, the whole universe was created by God and his two sons. First, God created the oceans, on which a patch of grass appeared. Soon, this patch of grass spread over the oceans and turned into land. Then, God created the mountains, rivers, waterfalls, meadows and valleys. Then, God's first son created animals who started living in the forests. And later God's second son created the fishes, turtles, whales and sharks who started living in the oceans. After a while, God created the birds which started flying and living on the trees of the branches of the trees. Then, God created the trees and covered the earth with thick evergreen forests. He then created the five major races, the white (American/European), the black (African), the red (Red Indians, Mexicans, Peruvians, Mayans), the brown (Asian Indian) and the yellow (Chinese / Japanese / Vietnamese / Cambodian / Thai). God then created the tribes and populated them in the forests to live in harmony with the birds, animals, trees and aquatic life. God created fruits, seeds, grains and nuts, so that they could satisfy their hunger. In the beginning God created the potato, pumpkin, tender coconut, mango, papaya. Then, God

gave them seeds of rice, wheat, millets and pulses. The forefathers of present day tribals planted these seeds and continue to farm in the forests over the last five thousand years, following the instructions laid down by their ancestors in their folk songs! Here is a true story, I heard from an old man who was seated next to me in a train during my travels across India.

A man went to a barber shop to have his hair cut as usual. He started to have a good conversation with the barber who was cutting his hair. They talked about many things and various subjects. Suddenly, they touched the subject of God. The barber said, "Look man, I don't believe that God exists!"

"Why do you say that?" asked the man. "Well, it's so easy, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God does not exist. Tell me, if God existed, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be no suffering or pain? I can't think of loving a God who permits all of these things."

The man thought for the moment, but he didn't want to respond so as to cause an argument. The barber finished his job and the man went out of the shop. Just after he left the barber shop he saw a man walking down the street with long hair and a long beard. It seemed that it had been a long time since he had his hair cut and he looked so untidy.

Then, the first man again entered the barber shop and

he said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers do not exist!"

"How can you say they don't exist?" asked the barber. I am here and I am a barber."

"No!" the man exclaimed. "You don't exist because if you did there would be no people with long hair and a long beard like that man who walks the streets."

"But, I do exist, and that is what happens when people do not come to me."

"Exactly!" – affirmed the man. "That's the point. God does exist, and see what happens when so many people don't go to Him and do not look for Him? That's why there's so much pain and suffering in the world."



33

a tearful reunion

The oldest memory of my childhood years is about the festival of Holi, when my neighbors sprayed colour on my mother and I cried after seeing her coloured face. The next thing I remember is the face of this Parsi girl in my kindergarten, who was my bench-mate at the Daisy School at Ahmedabad. Presently, the quaint little school, located in the midst of Parsi cottages in the sixties, has given way to a monstrous multistoried building. I also remember watching the hawks fly in the air over the Sabarmati, when I was young. I remember sitting with feverish excitement every 13th January with a lit incense stick tying the kites with strings and keeping them ready for the next morning, so that I could fly them. I also recollect playing on the banks of the Sabarmati behind Borsali Apartments, till the floods inundated the city in the seventies. I remember the furious Sabarmati flowing like a gushing mountain stream carrying utensils, cots and houses and causing untold destruction.

I remember going to Sunday Market near Victoria Garden to buy Phantom and Mandrake comics to exchange with my friends at school. I remember walking to St. Xavier's Mirzapur School with my friends and returning home to eat my lunch. One of the most unforgettable incidents in my life and the lives of all residents of Ahmedabad and all my classmates at St.

A TEARFUL REUNION

Xavier's Mirzapur School (which is located in the old city) and our family and friends throughout the world happened on 12th January 1980. As a 13 year old schoolboy, I was flying kites on the terrace of our building named Khemani Chambers, at Shahpur Baha'i Centre, when I lost my balance and fell head down from the 6th floor to the ground. Rev. Father Ascotia visited me at the hospital and so did the Gujarati actors Asrani and Arvind Rathod as they congratulated me for my daredevil long jump!

I too would have become a statistic like the hundreds of deaths which are a regular feature of Ahmedabad on the 12th, 13th and 14th of January every year, but thanks to the Almighty I survived this 60 feet fall with minor bruises and a broken leg. Though it is 30 years since that fateful afternoon, I remember that fall as if it happened yesterday. That's not all. I completed my schooling (I had a special reexam for my 8th Standard and being among the toppers in class, I did not lose the academic year.) and joined St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad for my graduation in Biochemistry in 1985. We were introduced to our teachers at the icebreaking party and that was the first day I met Father Jose Changanacherry S. J. He was to teach us Nutrition and Dietetics. He was tall and well built with jet black hair which is the characteristic of all Malayalees who regularly oil their hair with dollops of coconut oil. Soon, I passed out of college with top honors and got a job at Bayer Diagnostics at Kochi and joined them even before my results were declared. I took Father Changa's (we used to call him by this nickname) blessings and left for

Chennai to start my training. I still remember that unforgettable moment in the month of June 1987 when I left Ahmedabad.

After joining Bayer, I forgot all about college and after spending two years with them, quit Bayer to join Boehringer Mannheim (India) Ltd. at Bangalore. After two years with Boehringer, I joined a leading Indian company in product management for a year. During this stint, I cleared the tough MBA (Masters in Business Administration) entrance test and obtained admission to join the Institute of Management Development and Research at Pune. I completed my PGDM (Post Graduate Diploma in Management), missing the 1st Rank by a few marks and immediately got an offer to join Astra-IDL Ltd. (presently named Astra Zeneca India Ltd.) as a Product Manager. On New Year's night in 1995 I had a head on collision with a truck while returning home from a new year party hosted by a few of my students at Mount Carmel Institute of Management where I was a visiting faculty for Product Management. Though I was wearing a helmet, I slipped into coma and the left side of my body became paralysed due to permanent organic damage to the front temporal lobe of my brain. I was declared a vegetable and epileptic by medical professionals. However I was trained in NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) and was practicing Zen meditation before my accident. Combining NLP with Zen, I orchestrated my recovery through creative visualisation, auto-suggestion, meditation, prayer and

exercise. I set 20 impossible goals to harness the infinite power of the mind.

I put these goals down in writing and have achieved all the goals I envisaged effortlessly. I have also documented my travels on our website tips4ceos.com besides authoring two books and getting numerous travelogues published in Indian and international travel magazines. In the last five years, I have authored three internationally selling books on ZeNLP, which is a documentation of my recovery from paralysis. I lost track of Father Changa after leaving college and after 24 years, I happened to meet one of my friends, who mentioned that Father Changa had returned to Ahmedabad and was the Provincial of Gujarat State and was staying at Premal Jyothi.

One evening, I set out to Premal Jyothi and met Father Changa. He had grayed a little but retained his characteristic gait after 24 long years. The last time I had met him, I was a gawking 20 year old. He recollected me and we chatted till the late hours of the night, catching up on the long years since our last meeting in 1987.

The most interesting bit of our conversation was my explanation of the origins of his name Changanasseri. In the days of the yore, Changanasseri in Kerala had a temple, church and mosque adjacent to one another. Every day residents could hear the sound of the *shankha* (Malayalam for conch-shell) emanating from the temple, followed by the clanging (*nada* in

Malayalam) of the church bell and followed by the call of the muezzin (*seri* in Malayalam) at the mosque. Thus this tiny village with the three places of worship was christened Shankhunadaseri which metamorphosed into the anglicized Changanasseri. I had picked up this interesting anecdote from a fellow passenger on a flight from Thailand to Cambodia. By the time we finished catching up on the 23 years it was late into the night. I learnt about Father Changa's journey from Ahmedabad to Pune to Goa where he spent the passing years. And this was his second stint at Ahmedabad as the Provincial. I had tears in my eyes when we parted.



“Stories can put into a trance....”

– Ancient tribal saying among the
Khadia tribals in Orissa

34

Baba

It was fifteen years ago that I fell in love with a dusky damsel, who was staying at Ganga Hostel at JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University) studying International Re-lations. After getting to know each other better, it was decided that I would meet her parents at Bhubaneswar and if they approved, we would have a traditional Oriya wedding at Bhubaneswar. I was a Malayalee born and brought up in Gujarat and had never visited Orissa till then. However I believed that once in a year, go to a place you have never gone before and the next morning I travelled from Ahmedabad to Hyderabad. At Hyderabad, I caught the Falaknuma Express and landed at Bhubaneswar on the next day!

Having graduated in Biochemistry from St. Xavier's College, I had risen up the ranks to become a Product Manager with one of India's leading pharma companies which I quit to do my MBA (1992-94) and set up my own consultancy in 1995. Little did I realize that I was going to be interviewed by Deepika's father Dr. Gangadhar Sahu, who had a doctorate in Chemistry and who had retired as Principal of BJB College and had been a Chemistry professor. I met my prospective father-in-law and convinced him that I, a *Gumlu* (combination of *Gujju* and *Mallu*) was ideally suited to marry his dainty daughter. After an hour long interaction with him, I was introduced to my mother-in-law, who fired a volley

of questions which I answered to her satisfaction. I returned to Ahmedabad, unsure of the outcome. A week later I got a call from Deepika in Delhi, that I had cleared the interview and we fixed up the wedding date. As we enter the fifteenth year of our friendship and thirteenth year of our marriage, we recollect the treasure of memories of our time spent with Baba.

Whenever I visited Orissa, Baba would be there at the airport or Railway Station to receive me. He would go out of his way to ensure that I got vegan food whenever I stayed in Bhubaneswar.. I felt Bhubaneswar was my second home. He arranged my visits to the interior pockets of Orissa and became my friend, philosopher and guide. He would always encourage me to write and I acknowledged his efforts in all my books. Almost on every visit to Bhubaneswar, Baba would drive me down to Puri, Konark and Chandrabhaga. He even attended one of our corporate training workshops we conducted at NALCO, Bhubaneswar. I have trained more than 9000 managers since I started conducting ZeNLP workshops in 1995 but the performance at NALCO in 2004 with Baba in the audience was my best ever session till date!

Baba was extremely loving and took extra care to ensure that I was comfortable during my frequent visits to Bhubaneswar. He used to rush to the markets, early in the morning and get fresh button mushrooms for me as he knew I liked mushrooms. He was always reading or writing whenever he got time. Whenever, I returned to Ahmedabad, a gift hamper full of cashewnuts awaited my departure. He was caring to the core and

once, during my visit to the tribal areas of Jharkhand, I had my toe pierced by a giant thorn during my jungle trek. I managed to reach home but was hopping in pain. Baba, looked at my injured foot and immediately set out to bandage it. With his granddaughter Sigma playing nurse, *Baba* cut through my wound, cleaned it and bandaged it with the finesse of an expert surgeon. My wound healed fast and within a week I was back in action.

In 2011, after Baba passed away, I visited Jahania beach at Puri to watch the Olive Ridely Turtle migration. After spending four weeks at Jahania beach, I made a trip to the “Sun Temple” in Konark on my way back to Bhubaneswar. As I entered the temple and walked to the main gate, I was stopped by the security, who asked me to buy an entry ticket worth Rs. 10/- from the ticket counter. That is when it hit me that I had been visiting Konark, escorted by Baba, innumerable times since I got married to Deepika in 1998, but not even once had I bought an entrance ticket! Baba had ensured that he got my tickets on each and every visit to Konark!

In 2005, I had to edit the manuscript of my second book and needed to stay in an isolated place. Baba, happily took me to one of his students who was a forest officer and he arranged my stay at the “Forest Guest House”

at Chandipur. Once, I was talking to him on phone, and told him about my visit to Malaysia, Thailand and

Indonesia. His reply still resonates in my ears. “*Kansara ghari para, kula dhau dhau ki dara,*” he replied over the phone. My wife translated this Oriya proverb which meant we are pigeons who stay in the house of a blacksmith, we do not hear whispers! In other words my achievements were equivalent to whispers!

Almost, every trip to Bhubaneswar, Baba used to drive us down to Puri and Konark. He was an early riser and used to religiously water the Ashoka trees he had planted around our house at Baramunda. He was proud of his terrace garden with several rose bushes and other colourful flowers. Every time I visit Bhubaneshwar, I can see the canopy of Ashoka trees around our house and feel Baba’s presence.

I miss the spontaneity of his laughter, his large heartedness and his devotion to duties as a teacher, father and grand-father. I have never seen him lose his temper. Not even once in the last thirteen years since I have known Baba.



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management lesson from turtles

There are seven types of seaturtles in India. These include the Green turtle, Hawksbill, Loggerhead, Leather-back and Olive Ridley. The Olive Ridleys indulge in mass nesting, once a year, on a full-moon night every March. There are only three beaches in the world, where Olive Ridley's choose to nest. Coincidentally, all these three beaches are located in Orissa state in India. These mass nesting sites are located at Rushikulya beach in Ganjam District, Devi beach in Puri district and Gahirmatha beach in Kendrapara district of Orissa.

One has just returned after a close encounter with nature at Rushikulya beach at Ganjam District in Orissa State. Ganjam is a three hour drive away from Bhubaneshwar, near Berhampur, on the fringes of Chilka Lake. After Rushikulya, one also witnessed this mass nesting at Devi beach. The Olive Ridley turtles are an endangered species and they need to be protected at all costs.

One passes the historical village of Balugaon along the way from Bhubaneshwar to Ganjam. We are welcomed by a group of flamingoes flying in formation, as soon as we enter Ganjam Town. We start our trek to Rushikulya Beach which is 3 km. away and soon find ourselves in the middle of a flat beach with rust

coloured sand as far as eye can see. After thirty minutes of cruising through the beach, one sees a large water body in the distance. We are informed by our guide that the water body is the Rushikulya River which meets the sea at Ganjam. The nearest village is Gokharguda which is about a kilometer away from Rushikulya beach. The other villages on the periphery of the beach include Purunabandha, Palibandha and Nuagaon.

Devi beach is an uninhabited beach which stretches to about 10 km. at Jahania village located about 100 km. away from Bhubaneswar. Gahirmatha beach lies inside the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and is accessible only by boat.

We come to the edges of the beach to find hundreds of cattle egrets lined up on the edge of the water. It is a pleasure to watch a multitude of colourful birds at close quarters, as they flock to the edge of the water. The water is shallow and the sand is swampy. The unique feature about Rushikulya beach is the softness of the sand. As the river empties into the sea here, the beach is made up of soft sand. It is possible to dig deep into the soil with one's bare hands. The deep blue sky, reflected in the crystal clearness of the waters is a joy to behold. Watching the crimson sunrise over the rust coloured sands is the highlight of one's visit to Rushikulya.

Every year, between January and March, about 300,000 Olive Ridelys land at Devi, Rushikulya and

Gahirmatha beaches for mass nesting! These giant turtles are 70 cm. in length and weigh 45 kg. The seaturtle is a marine reptile which has to surface in the ocean to breathe. Sea-turtles spend a large part of their lives in the ocean but as they lay eggs, the females have to come to the shore once a year. It is no coincidence that every year these turtles choose Rushikulya beach for mass nesting. The other two sites where one can witness mass nesting are Devi river mouth near Puri and Gahirmatha Beach in Bhitarkanika sanctuary in Kendrapara district of Orissa. There are few events in the history of Indian wildlife which is worth watching and seeing thousands of turtles crawl out of the sea and lay their eggs after digging a deep pit and cover the pit with sand to protect the eggs from predators is a miracle which tops the list.

Thousands of turtles emerge from the sea at the same time and nest on the beach together, for two to three days. Only the females come ashore. The males continue to remain in the ocean. Nesting takes place in pitch darkness between 12:00 midnight and 4:00 a.m. The female digs out a deep pit, using her hind flippers to dig the soft sandy soil. She digs a two feet deep pit, lays her eggs into this pit and covers it with sand with her front flippers. Every female lays about 80 to 100 eggs at a time in a time period of 45 minutes. The mother turtle returns to the sea and after 45 days the eggs hatch at dawn, the infant turtle breaks the shell and crawls on its own into the ocean to join his parents. The baby turtle breaks out of the egg and burrows through the sand, reaches the surface and opens its

eyes to see the reflection of the stars on the ocean and moves in that direction to enter the ocean. The sex of the hatchling depends on the temperature. More females are born at higher temperatures and more males are born at lower temperatures.

Sea turtles return to the place they were born to nest. It is indeed amazing, how these turtles manage to find their way back to the beach they were born after migrating thousands of kilometers away from their “natal beach.” Watching thousands of infant turtles hatching from their eggs and entering the ocean enmass at the exact moment the first rays of the sun strike the earth, is an extremely emotional experience, which demonstrates the interconnectedness of man, animals and nature. The turtle hatchlings break the shell of their eggs with a tooth designed for the purpose and emerge out of the shells and sense the reflection of the stars on the ocean and move towards the brighter horizon and enter the ocean. The nesting turtle is sensitive to light and needs pitch darkness for nesting. Any natural or artificial lighting on the beach disorients the turtles, who may return to the ocean without laying eggs if disturbed. Hence is imperative to ensure minimum movement on the beach, especially during the nesting season.

Olive Ridentles come to nest on a full-moon night after midnight, till 4:00 a.m. To watch the nesting one has to sleep on the starlit beach in temporary straw-huts, scanning the coastline for unusual movement. As soon as one sights a turtle crawling away to the soft sands or

spots the tracks of the turtle on the sands, one follows the tracks to spot the turtle, who lays about 100-140 eggs in a space of about 45 minutes and returns to the sea, only to return the following year! Olive Ridley turtles have a life span of 100 years and nest after they turn 25.

After spending a week each at Rushikulya, Devi and Gahirmatha beaches, observing the mass nesting of the turtles, one can suggest the following remedial measures to protect these gentle and delicate darlings. Jackals should be prevented from entering the beach and eating the turtle eggs by fencing off the mass nesting sites with nets. Developmental activities including ports, oil refineries and steel plants should be located far away from the three turtle nesting sites in Orissa. All commercial activity, including movement of ships and boats should be restricted during the three months when mass nesting takes place. No offshore drilling must be allowed along the route of the turtle migration. Illegal sand mining on these beaches should be stopped with immediate effect. The female sea-turtle requires absolute privacy and should be undisturbed while laying her eggs. As mass nesting always takes place after midnight in pitch darkness, all flashlights, torches and camera flashes should be avoided while observing the turtles. The female turtles return without laying the eggs if they are disturbed slightly! Radio-tagging of turtles for research purposes should be banned too! All mechanized fishing should be banned on the Orissa coast with immediate effect.

The enemies of the Olive Ridley Turtle include a port which has come up near Gahirmatha sanctuary, two offshore drilling platforms which are directly in the middle of the migration route of the turtles, 50 km. away from Devi mouth and Rushikulya beaches. Large trawlers kill mother and baby turtles in a heartless manner. As turtles come up to breathe every 45 minutes, they are caught in the fishing nets of these large trawlers who fish in the waters off the Orissa coast. The trawler owners kill the pregnant mother turtle by first blinding it by piercing their eyes with hot iron rods heated in the boiler room of the boat. Then, they pour hot water on the mother turtle to stun it and then in a macabre ritual, they behead the mother turtle with a giant knife and throw the dead turtle into the sea. Every year 100,000 dead turtles are found on the beaches of Orissa. Every Indian fishheater is directly responsible for killing these innocent, pregnant, mother turtles when you eat fish.

As I return after spending a memorable stay at Rushikulya, I am reminded of an ancient saying of the Oriyas:

*“Turtles are my friends,
Make them your friends today”*

What are the lessons to be learnt from these turtles?

Every organisation is like these Olive Ridleys with one single aim, knowing where they are going and determined to get there, every one of the same mind and

realising how important each of us is to the rest. Team work is the key ingredient for organisational success.

As each turtle follows another in formation, it creates an 'uplift' for the turtle immediately following. By migrating together in a large group, turtles can cover longer distances than if each turtle swam on its own.

Employees who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going more quickly and easily because they are travelling on the thrust of one another.

When a turtle goes out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go alone. It quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the turtle in front of it.

If we have as much common sense as a turtle, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others. It is harder to do something alone than together.

When the lead turtle gets tired, it rotates back into formation and another turtle swims to the point position.

It is sensible to take turns doing the hard and demanding tasks and sharing leadership. As with turtles, people are interdependent of each other's skills, capabilities, and unique arrangements of gifts, talents or resources.

MANAGEMENT LESSON FROM TURTLES

The turtles swimming in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

In groups where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values and encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking we seek. We need to make sure our honking is encouraging.



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touching story

Ever since the day Ravi turned 21, Ravi had been dreaming of getting married. But marriages are made in heaven and till 27, Ravi remained as single as the nose on his face. It was not that Ravi didn't meet girls. But the girls Ravi liked, didn't like him and Ravi didn't like the girls who liked him. Finally, Ravi decided to make things happen. Getting up early in the morning one day, Ravi wrote down an innovative matrimonial ad for himself. The next Sunday, Ravi found himself reading his creativity "Nair guy, 28, MBA, Manager MNC, interested in poetry, environment and philosophy invites matrimonial correspondence from good-natured, independent and caring girls. No bars. Reply to....." One week later, Ravi reached the newspaper office to collect his replies. Ravi found them too many to carry in his hands. So Ravi put them in his bag and holding his bag close to his chest, Ravi reached home.

1,2,3,4,..... Ravi started counting them on his table and the count ended at 50. Being a person who studied handwriting analysis, Ravi began sorting them out into two piles based on whether the address on the cover was handwritten or type-written. Ravi studied the hand-writing on the handwritten ones and arranged them in neat piles according to the kind of qualities reflected in their handwriting. After meticulous sorting,

Ravi selected a handwriting which appealed to him and opened the envelope. It was from a girl named Sharanya Nair from Mumbai and the tone of her letter was very friendly. Later, Ravi continued opening the other letters and in the end, Ravi had the names and addresses of 50 of the most eligible damsels in India. Ravi chose to reply to only those girls whose handwriting appealed to him.

There were only ten such letters and Ravi sent his personal profile to each one of them. Attached to his profile was a small note asking them to reply to his residence address, if they found his profile interesting. From that day, every trip back home from office was an exciting trip. Ravi used to feverishly open his mailbox expecting lots of letters. Soon, the deluge of letters reduced to a trickle and Ravi was writing to only a handful of girls. Sharanya wrote to him relentlessly and her letters grew lengthier one after the other. After about six months of correspondence, they decided to meet. She flew down to Bangalore and spent a day with Ravi. They got to know each other better and Ravi was convinced that Sharanya was the woman with whom he wanted to spend the rest of his life. She returned to Mumbai the next day. They began calling up each other almost every other day. Then, on the 1st of January something happened. Ravi was returning home from a party when Ravi got hit by a truck. His friends rushed him to hospital where a CT (Computerised Tomography) scan revealed the formation of a few blood clots in his right brain. Ravi spent few days in the intensive care unit before Ravi was discharged.

Ravi soon got back to his normal activities. Ravi informed his prospective mates about his accident. Some of them stopped writing the day they received the news of his accident and head injury. Very few including Sharanya continued writing. Just when Ravi was sure everything was well and the accident was in the past, Ravi had a paralytic stroke which paralysed the left side of his body. This stroke was a result of one of the blood clots formed after his accident, putting pressure on his brain.

Ravi was bedridden for months, but managed to inform his prospective mates about his stroke with the help of the nurses. Ravi arranged for his mail to be brought to his hospital room. His letters were read out to him by the nurses. Three weeks later only one letter was being read out to Ravi. It was Sharanya's. All the others had stopped. Sharanya continued to give him hope, assuring him that Ravi would be normal very soon and her feelings for him had become stronger after his accident and she was prepared to be his companion for life in spite of his bedridden state. Ravi spent three months in bed and every day Sharanya's letter arrived unfailingly. She sent cards, crosswords, books and Sudoku puzzles.

Ravi took solace in religion and one day miraculously regained back sensation as well as power in his left arm and leg. Three months of physiotherapy followed and at the end of that Ravi became normal. The first Sunday Ravi got, Ravi called up Sharanya and informed her

that he was back to normal and was flying down to meet her at Mumbai, soon. Ravi went down to Mumbai as soon as the neurosurgeon certified that Ravi was fit to travel.

Sharanya received him at the airport and they spent all their time talking to each other. At the end of the day, they had decided to go ahead and marry, but as per the Malayalee tradition they thought of calling up each other's parents and asking them for permission. They got the green signal from both sides and they were happy that it would be just a matter of time before they got married. After consulting the astrologers, their parents decided that Sharanya and Ravi should get married on the 15th of December, the same year, as it was the earliest auspicious date.

Ravi came back to Bangalore, happy that his dream was being fulfilled. Ravi spent the next six months in euphoria. The world seemed more colourful than ever before. Time flew and it became December. Ravi called up Sharanya to ask her to come down to Bangalore by the 10th of December with her parents so that they could meet his parents and they could go to Guruvayur. On the 1st of December, Sharanya's father informed him that Sharanya was admitted to Gayatri Hospital as she was unwell. She was in room number 108 of the hospital.

Ravi called up one of his MBA classmates Ranjit at his office (which was located adjacent to Gayatri

Hospital) and asked him to rush to Room No.108 with a getwell card and a bouquet of flowers for Sharanya. Ravi also asked him to find out about her illness and phone him back. Ravi impatiently waited for his call. Ranjit called and said that he was speaking from the hospital's telephone booth. He had delivered the get well card and flowers but no one could tell him exactly what was wrong with Sharanya. Coincidentally, Ranjit had met his brother-in-law who was an oncologist at Gayatri Hospital, while coming out of Sharanya's room.

When Ranjit inquired about what was wrong with the patient in room No.108, his brother-in-law had taken Ranjit to his consulting chamber and had told him that the patient was in advanced stages of leukemia which was discovered by chance, the day before, when the patient had come for a corporate health check up. The pathologist had done Sharanya's blood cell count to calibrate a new blood cell counter being installed. The pathologist had hoped that as Sharanya's sample had come for a routine blood glucose estimation, for her routine health check up, her cell counts would be normal. Hence, he had run Sharanya's blood sample for blood cell counts and had found them very high. So for cross checking, he had sent the same sample to three of the best labs in Mumbai but all the reports were identical. Sharanya was diagnosed, as suffering from advanced leukemia. The fact that she had leukemia and that she had only three more months to live was hidden, from the patient and all her friends and relatives. Ranjit's brother-in-law made him

promise, that he wouldn't disclose this secret to any living soul. Ranjit kept his word. He told Ravi that Sharanya was admitted for a fever of unknown origin.

From October to December, Ravi continued getting Sharanya's letters and each letter was full of cheer and how she was looking forward to their marriage. How she would set up their house at Bangalore. She had also written that she planned to open a boutique selling mirror-work skirts in the garage of their house after she shifted to Bangalore and how she was looking forward to seeing Mysore, Ooty and Kodaikanal with him. They spoke to each other on the phone often and their hearts were full of love and hope. In the first week of December, Ravi asked her to come down to Bangalore with her parents so that they could meet his parents and all of them could proceed together to Guruvayur for their marriage set for the 15th of December. She agreed and said that her family would be coming down on December 10th. As they did not arrive on the 10th and as they didn't call him either, Ravi rang Sharanya's house to find out whether there had been change of plans. Her mother informed him that Sharanya was readmitted to Gayatri Hospital after another bout of fever. Ravi was very worried and the next four days seemed like four years. Highly dejected, Ravi was back at work on the 15th morning, thinking that God didn't want him to marry Sharanya on December 15th. Maybe, the astrologers had picked up an inauspicious date. The same afternoon Ravi got a telegram. Ravi could scarcely believe himself as he read it. It read:

*SHARANYA EXPIRED ON 14TH NIGHT AT
GAYATRI HOSPITAL.”*

Fate had intervened and had won forever.



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about the author

Murli Menon is the President of phenoMenon consultants inc, Ahmedabad, which conducts stress management workshops for senior managers based on Indian, Buddhist, Zen and Vedic scriptures. These are often week long workshops on stress management which are attended by senior management, company directors and CEO's. Conceptualised and conducted by Murli these workshops are result oriented with a focus on stress management using creative visualisation, tribal trance music and trance forming tribal meditation. phenoMenon's clients include Jubilant Organosys Ltd., Trident Group, Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizer Company Ltd., Zydus Cadila, Recon Healthcare and Narmada Chematur Petrochemicals Ltd. among numerous others. Murli addressed delegates at the TAAI (Travel Agents Association of India) convention at Genting, Malaysia, in September 2003 and FHRAI (Federation of Hotels And Restaurants Association of India) convention at Kolkata, in November 2003 about "Practical ways to manage stress". Murli has conducted ZeNLP workshops for teachers and students of "Madras Dyslexia Association" at Chennai, in 2006. Murli Menon set up tips4ceos.com in 1995 which offers online stress management tips to clients across the world. <http://www.tips4ceos.com> has many national and international clients including Fortune 500 listed

companies. You can visit tips4ceos.com by pointing your browser to <http://www.tips4ceos.com> and register for a free 30 day trial.

phenoMenon consultants inc also conducts weekend, outdoor residential stress management workshops at beach resorts, country clubs, hill stations or forest resthouses for corporates. These can also be conducted at plants, factories and project-sites with residential and conferencing facilities. Tailormade workshops are conceptualised and conducted for clients with specific training needs. Murli's other interests include ecofriendly trekking and he has successfully trekked up to "*Om Parvat*" in Kumaon. Murli reached "*Om Parvat*" on 2nd June 2004. Murli holds a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad and an MBA with specialisation in Marketing from Institute for Management Development and Research (IMDR), Pune. He is currently engaged in advanced research on the effect of tribal trance meditation on the unconscious mind and conducts ZeNLP workshops for teachers, homemakers and corporates. Before founding phenoMenon consultants Inc in 1995, Murli worked as a Product Manager with leading multinationals including Astra-IDL Ltd.

Murli is also a poet, environmentalist and storywriter. His travelogues regularly appear in Hindu Metro Plus, Jade Magazine, Alive, Woman's Era and "By The Way" magazine. His articles on travel to Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Tibet have also been published in Woman's Era, Alive

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Magazine, Power Politics, Tourism Asean, India Today (Tourism Special) and Hindu Business Line among others. He is also the author of an anthology of poems titled "*Environment Friendly Poetry*". Murli's first book titled "*ZeNLP-the power to succeed*" has been published by Response Books (Sage Publications) in June 2004. Murli's second book titled "*ZeNLP-the power to relax*" has been published by Sterling Publishers (New Dawn Press) in June 2005. Murli has successfully completed solo treks to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet in 2004 and again in 2006. He completed the inner *kora* and outer *kora* (circumambulation) on foot. Murli has also conducted ZeNLP workshops at Pattaya for Expats Club and at Malaysia for Gurney Hotel, Cititel Hotel and Berjaya Tioman Resort and Holiday Villa, Langkavi among others.

Murli is presently working on a cookbook on ZeNLP vegan recipes titled "*ZeNLP and the science of vegan cooking*", a manager's handbook titled "*Management Lessons from Nature*" and a travelogue about stress management destinations in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Tibet titled "*Tranquil Travel Destinations*". Murli also consults on *tribal vastu* which is based on the ancient, traditional tribal knowledge of building science which teaches the art of generating positive vibrations. He can be contacted over email at ceo@tips4ceos.com



***“ Stories are easy to remember,
touch the emotions and are ideal tools for
teaching. All folk-tales, ballads, songs,
art, sculptures, masks and dances are
tools for learning.”***

– Ancient tribal saying...

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