

# 'Yoga'kshemam

Corona, India at 4<sup>th</sup> Position. Curve is yet to start flattening. 8 million (325K) cases, 0.4 million (10K) deaths. Negative growth is confirmed. Migrants – quite a number - wondering what to do. Most of us are lost - 'new ways', 'back to old ways' or in-between hybrids.

Till some time, we need to follow – distance, mask, and wash – the corona mantra. WFA needs to be encouraged. Care of the vulnerable and stricter enforcement matters. We need to hurry slowly. We need to inch forward.

Let us also begin to initiate work under Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP) that has come into being in May 2020, across the country, may be, in a small way. Let us get back and hurry up on NF Platform and NF Coalition nationally and beyond.

## Rare Skills for us, the leaders

Shane Snow suggests that the leaders need to quickly acquire these rare skills. Increased interconnectedness universally, has the ability to make micro into macro in no time. It is not easy to suppress data. If authentic sharing does not happen, 'modified' data reaches via gossip, rumour and social propaganda. This can affect our work, our results and our purpose(s).

Therefore, we need to be system thinkers – understanding interconnectedness, ripple effects, synergy, human systems, teamwork to unlock larger potential of the system, team diversity and multiplicity, integration. Curiosity, Openness, Interpersonal Skills, Communication Skills, Asking right questions, Navigating complexity, Analytical ability and Tolerance for Ambiguity help in improving systems thinking.

We need to be intellectually humble and honest. Information asymmetry has to be reduced. We need to work for more transparency. We need to go 1-2 levels up in integrity norms. We need to be more adaptable and flexible. The realization has to be 'strong' that what we know is very little. Team knows more. World knows more. This would mean listening all views, no over confidence, separating ego and intellect, and revising viewpoints with new 'insights'.

We need to be generous to a fault. Kindness and ability to feel the state of others and respond matter the most. Can we 'not only refuse to shoot the opponents, but also refuse to hate them'? Then, we can innovate, discover, re-invent systems that work for us, all of us, all the life, in this universe.

Leaders with these skills are not utopian. They exist amongst us. We need more and more of them. And we can be these. We can

make hard choices. We can put people above money. We can put community first. We can be at the forefront of offering hope, faith, promise and love for the poor, vulnerable, marginalized, and addressing the crises they face and this planet faces. Windows are small, 10-12 years. We need to act now. This is not the last pandemic. We may have more. We may have more disasters.

Can we not invest in more of us becoming these leaders? In a big way.

## Skills for Living and Livelihoods

We need knowledge, skills, tools and/or resources and therefore to be gainfully employed, either working for someone/some entity or working for yourself, to achieve livelihoods, a means of living, in terms of arrows, capitals, and contexts of the livelihoods arena. Gainful employment is a continuum – casual, wage, job, self-employment, micro-entrepreneurship....

## Context

Yes, there is a crisis. This crisis is further accentuated by COVID19. A much larger crisis we ever imagined. The skewed resource distribution; the skewed skill distribution; the skewed information availability; growing middle and rich classes; widening gulf between the rich and the poor; reducing charity; business orientation in public services; increasing allocations to some programs like Employment Guarantee, Oldage Pensions, Public Distribution System, Subsidy for low-interest loans, etc.; dying and drying traditional occupations; some paradoxes – unemployment and underemployment co-existing with employers not getting candidates for jobs, money of the poor in banks is more than the loans they receive, large unutilized infrastructure and investments for new infrastructure, demand for the products and services we cannot give and no market for the products and services we can give; rapidly changing climate – ecological, social, economic and cultural; globalization and liberalization; changing (accelerating) pace of life and decision-making; low capacities of the facilitating civil society to teach the poor meta-fishing skills (beyond fishing skills), rather than fishing skills and offering fish.

We have, for example, grown from a mere 5 crore families in farming with a mere 15% labour to about 15 crore families with more than half as labour, in 70+ years. The well-being of 12-13 crore families depends on how well the remaining 5-6 crore families get absorbed in the lucrative and decent non-farm livelihoods quickly. That would mean a whopping 5\*2=10 Crore jobs just to rehabilitate farmers and farm workers. The crisis situation is more pronounced with other traditional livelihoods.

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Growing middle class wants products and services and these people have to produce/provide these products/services. As an economy, services have touched 50% of GDP, and primary sector is less than 20%. Workforce has to get distributed accordingly.

Fortunately, the parents do not want their children to continue in these livelihoods. The youth are reluctant to continue. If educated, the reluctance is higher. Unfortunately, the quality of our education is pathetic. A recent employability survey reveals that a mere 1% of our graduates and post-graduates are employable. This is slightly better for professional graduates. Our own experience in recruiting candidates reveals this amply. About 10000+ graduates/post graduates when assessed on four simple counts – writing 50-100 words in mother tongue about one self; reading a passage (in mother tongue) and responding to direct questions; translating a simple 2-3 sentences; and simple arithmetic problem – most of them could not score a minimum grade. Surprising but that is the reality we are living with.

In any case, it appears that the youth want to get into government service as priority. Otherwise, we are self-employed/enterprise-centric ('krishi'). Therefore, many of the youth are not wired to be 'slaves' doing a routine low-end job. They would like to be self-employed or run an enterprise for products or services. They seem to have 7R Skills – 3R+ICT, Reflect, unlearn, practice and pursue. They seem to have entrepreneurial competencies - Vision, Initiative, Result Orientation, Innovation, Critical Info Seeking, Inter-personal Ability, Tenacity, Self-control, Strategic Influencing, Concern with Impact, Learning Orientation etc. Because they have survival instincts.

With COVID, some migrants are back in native places. Some migrants go back to work locations to find that they are no longer needed. All of them need to be absorbed locally. Transient poverty is increasing to go beyond 60%. They need to be absorbed in the work force, either as skilled worker or as self-employed.

While Government may not absorb more people on its rolls, these poor, their organizations and the organizations that work for them need skilled workforce, skilled in community mobilization, collectivization, servicing their collectives, analyzing and planning for households, groups and collectives, pooling resources, providing market intelligence, sourcing inputs, pooling the produce and adding value, marketing the pooled produce, extension in managing natural and physical resources, social resources and financial resources, so on and so forth. They also need service providers. They need teachers. They need health workers. They need milk testers. They need book keepers. .. some 1 for 20/25 families – i.e. 30- 40 million! Some 0.5 – 1 million integrators, working as chief executives (or their deputies) of community

organizations, or the support organizations/units! They also need entrepreneurs to launch and manage enterprises. Some of these organizations/enterprises may have business turnovers in the range of Rs.100-1000 Million, comparable to medium size corporate!

### Paradoxes and Questions

There are crores of people, eagerly searching for jobs. Paradoxically, on the other side, employers are unable to find employees with suitable skills, and are facing difficulty in filling up jobs with suitable persons. A fraction of these people are accessing placements. Only 10% (2% formally, 8% informally) of total workforce avails skill training. Professionals are in job market without required skills. 80-90% of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, without formal training, are engaged in informal sector. Majority people are unskilled workers.

The schools are not able to offer life skills, foundation and core skills and soft skills. The students after going to school for a few years get a feeling that they should not be engaged in certain occupations including farming and other traditional occupations. Is not there a need for market need assessment of products and services consumers seeking, and the current skill status of people in

the market? Should they not be counselled deeply for getting ready livelihoods and marketable skills for gainful employment post-schooling? Should

not the counselling involve discussion on what market needs, what skills they have and what skills they can acquire based on your behavior competency profile and skillset?

Many more paradoxes exist – skills needed vs. skills available, employers need skilled persons vs. skilled persons need jobs, skills without certificate vs. certificates without skills, skills in abundance vs. skills that support/enhance our competitive edge, placement vs. admissions etc. Industry's ways of dealing with skilled workforce (blue collar) vis-à-vis other human resources (white collar) is under scrutiny and there is a consensual demand for treating everyone as human resource. With increased share of services in GDP, the concepts of service level agreements and full-time equivalents are heard more often and they find their way into industry too. This paves way for increased outsourcing, large units taking outsourcing from multiple units for increased scale and cost effectiveness, and need for multi-skilling.

It appears that all skills that can be thought of are in the schedule of wages for minimum wages – if not in the list, it is treated as part of others. With MGNREGS working, for unskilled, market has to pay at least the minimum wage for any skill. Under the circumstances, how can we absorb with remunerative incomes guaranteed, some 15-20 million youth every year from now on,

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after accommodating the existing 300+ million youth on the 'bench'? Tall order! It can be a long wait!

None of us know the future well. This would mean offering the youth multiple skills and meta skills so that they cope with not-so-certain future and future projections/forecasts. This would also mean: improving the foundation of 3R-7R skills to all; teaching and practicing dignity of labour; and increasing skill-schools, occupational/vocational gurukulams. These schools need initial funds to begin and for infrastructure and could become self-reliant in due course. Trainers need to be trained in the new and expanded curriculums that include soft skills, life skills, etc. There should be space for continuing education and career paths should be visible. They need to get paid well, better than an unskilled/ less skilled educated assistants. Then, the youth can professional education loans, and buy skills education. They need to be prepared - some could be employed; some could become self-employed; and some could be entrepreneurial - starting tiny enterprises that can take on outsourcing work, service provision. They can be collectives of service providers with multiple but interlinked/ integrated services. Yes, they need to be financed.

In addition, there is a need for place to stay, eat and socialize in the environment s/he is familiar with. This offers scope for 'temping' enterprises. In all this, identifying the people based on their competency and interests, inducting them, and mentoring them become the key processes forward.

Some BIG questions that come up – are we pushing 'migration' into cities? Where are the employers? Are we going to have skills that are required in rural areas? What about the unemployment in the 'educated'?

Skilling – how can we make it useful to Indian Rural Youth, to Rural India. How do we ensure that there is some understanding between the urban and rural players so that an integrated effort without unnecessary competition in the job market? Should we merge the rural and urban Skills Missions into one?

Can we tailor the Skilling to provide for Jobs and Self-employment? Can we offer entrepreneurial support, mentoring etc.? How do we bring in the existing self-employed? Family-employed? Can we finance them? Can we support value-addition? Can we collectivize the self-employed for achieving backward and forward linkages and value-addition?

How do we map the demand for Jobs? How do we map the demand for products and services? Do we have the counselling for the Youth for their current skill-set and aspirations? How do we ensure quality skilling for them? How do we show market for them? How do we involve and build ownership for the community

institutions in identifying the needy youth, matching skill needs with market skills, skilling, and placement?

Can we give vouchers to individual youth to choose her/his skill need and get skilled? Can we ask the Community Institutions to take charge of skilling? Or can we build a partnership between the skilling agency and community institution?

Can we achieve the scale we require? Some 2 Crore/year? Can we keep the entire framework engendered? Gender sensitive?

Skilling in India - on the whole, we have outlays increasing for skills without concomitant results. It is still surprising, employers are not chipping in big way to pre-sponsor skilling for placement. Similarly, financial institutions and banks are shying away from sponsoring would be 'entrepreneurs' and self-employed to skills, and helping them with grants and loans to establish product and service enterprises, on the scale we want.

What can be done?

- This is a wake-up call. For a life-centric economy. Faster recovery from CoVID and more crises. Self-regulation has to be learnt. To be rooted in, be in sync with nature has to be learnt.
  - Be electronic. But, beware of e-fatigue.
  - Services to PVM in access entitlements, rights, services and justice; Universal basic income
- Let us appreciate that there is an Education Funnel and only a few pass through it. When about 20 million children enter school (subsequently in workforce) every year, only a fraction (less than 2%) join the organized sector employment. About 80% have to join the agriculture and allied sectors as owners/labour, or become self-employed artisans or join the casual/semi-skilled/skilled workforce. Many of these have to be 'rehabilitated' in alternative sectors.
- Let us appreciate that there is a Continuum: Education, 3R Abilities, Skills, Experience; there is a Continuum: Traditional/ Existing à New/Emerging; Tribal/Rural à Urban
- Let us appreciate that there is an Employment (Wage, Job, Self-employed/Services, Entrepreneur) Continuum. Employability and Competency Continuum and Demand Continuum. Jobs can be in Individual or Collective Enterprise (s). Collectives of Workers are feasible.
- Let the youth exercise informed choice, based on appreciation of aptitude and ability. While the aspiration profiles of the youth, more or less, remain the same, the capability sets are very diverse. The differences exist in multiple axes –

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background (tribal, rural, urban), literacy (less, more), skills (less, more), security (security seeking, entrepreneurial – self-employed, running an enterprise, leading a team), sex, marriage, knowledge, skills and behavioral competencies etc. Many may have differential basic 3R (reading, writing and arithmetic) skills.

- Let us ensure that we choose youth with values – Hope (it is useful), Faith (can learn, have capacity), Promise (reliable, long-term), Love (care, discipline, concentration and practice)
- Let us be sure that they get remunerated well
- Let us ensure that they got high quality skilling so that a career path is visible
- All should get life/core/soft skills, market skills, leadership-management skills, in addition to training skills. They should learn to understand and manage oneself and teams.
- Let the training be residential, not less than 180 days.
- It is important that they get multiple skills, generalist skills and integrator skills.
- Let us offer 3F: F-F-F – fish, fishing and meta-fishing. Initial unemployment stipend and stipend during skilling; offering skills; offering meta-skills to market skills, services and products, discover the gaps and opportunities, and finding a way to address the gaps, and/or tap the opportunities, and learn new skills on their own or through finding appropriate sources, et al.
- Let there be some stake/investment by the trainee too.
- Big Skill Areas portfolio should include: Natural Farming, Integrated Farming and related; Enterprises; Education; Health; Self-help – micro-finance services; Community Institutions; Retail; Security; Delivery Boys; Driving-Transport; Home Management; Eldercare; '1000' days etc.
- Let us offer skilling portfolio of options – customized; videos; live examples; exposure to real job or enterprise; off-line and online; rigorous practice; career guidance, mentorship, internship, apprenticeship, handholding, funds and linkages
- Let us offer vouchers to youth so that they can buy 'skilling' programme wherever they want
- Let us increase skills for self-employment/entrepreneurship numbers vis-à-vis skills for jobs
- The offer should include: Knowledge, Skills, Tools, Practice, Apprenticeship and Resources
- Let the local community institutions in identifying and

tracking the trainees.

- Let us allow moving from Job skilling to Skilling for Self-employment, and vice-versa. Better still is hybrid.
- Let us nurture and take them till the end – till retained job, may be a year; or a well-functioning self-employment unit.
- Let us assess the entrepreneurial spirit: pursue opportunities relentlessly with limited resources, taking calculated risks. Remember Tea-Pakoda Enterprises!
- Let us teach the principles: we are an enterprise country; tribal-rural-urban-emerging (TRUE) is blurring; there are no real experts; we need to dig deep; purpose matters most, not the tools-skills; organizations and enterprises need social company.
- Let us teach: local, local market; quality-scale trade off; reach the consumer directly as far as possible; we cannot do everything – we need partners; enterprises, entrepreneurs and workers can come together; let us operate in a prosperity paradigm
- Let us remember that all enterprises are not formal; all are not big; all are not stationary; all are not having offices; some may be 1-5 number enterprises.
  - Let us remember entrepreneurs need support: counselling, training, mentoring, role models, Business Plan, Systems, Market Feedback, Technology adoption, Team, Risk cover, Equity?
- Entrepreneurial clustering for commodities, products and services is possible; entrepreneurs can service one another too.
- Angel Investors, Venture Capitalists, Financial Institutions, Banks et al are linkable.
- Let them go through visioning and planning for them individually and as an enterprise.
- Let them go 'meta'; Let them strengthen/build Existing Collectives, Collectivize and Communitize

It is time for our leaders to learn and show the rare skills of systems thinking, honesty-humility and generosity. Can we work on them?

Let us be with N. Let us be 7R and practice 7L-SHG. Let us help others amongst us to be 7R and practice 7L-SHG. Let us be skilled for robust portfolios of life. Let N take charge. Let N take and keep us there.

Join us in the world of yoga – jivanipunayoga for 7L. Krsna confirms he is watching us to take us there. ❖

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