

# Leading Through Turbulent Times

in Conversation with  
**Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**

May 23, 2020, New Delhi, India

Institute of Directors (IOD), India organised a special Webinar on May 23, 2020, on Zoom and YouTube Channel, from India, which was largely-attended from all over India and abroad, with distinguished speakers and over 500 guests. The Theme of the Webinar was “**Leading Through Turbulent Times**”.

**Mr. Nishant** from Art of Living introduced the Theme of the Webinar and welcomed the attendees.

**Mr. M. S. Sundara Rajan**, Chairman - Chennai Region, IOD, India and Former Chairman & Managing Director, Indian Bank and 'Moderator' for the Webinar, welcomed **Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**. He briefly mentioned the structure of the webinar and the impact of Covid-19 on the Indian economy. The GDP has dropped to nearly 5.40%. The increase in Covid-19 cases and days of lockdown has led the humankind into a most derailed stage experiencing different emotions. In these unprecedented times, people have demonstrated behaviour like aggression, acceptance of the situation, while some have been anxious and sad.

## “Leading Through Turbulent Times”

**Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar** – He shared that during World War II – Europe, Japan and many other countries were in similar state like the present situation due to Covid-19. Countries like Iraq are still trying to recover from 2003-04 war. This situation is nothing short of a war. It is a World War III. We should not sit, sulk and worry about it, instead it is a big opportunity for India to grow in the coming years. We should be prepared for hard-work life. He suggested the following measures to uplift the economy:

- i. Government should help the industries to survive this pandemic.
- ii. Support Migrant labour – They need to be re-assured and invited. We should alienate the fear which is clogging our population, especially migrant labour.
- iii. The whole economy needs to be re-build from scratch.
- iv. India is a very young nation which means a lot of opportunities in future. There is so much potential in these young minds. We need to bring up our innovative spirit.



## Gurudev's view on “Coping up with Depression”

As far as the depression is concerned, our ancient people have given many ways like yoga & meditation to counter depression. He suggested reading an article published in Forbes magazine, titled “7 ways in which meditation impacts the brain”. Many researches have been done in many American Universities like Stanford, Howard, Yale which gives hard evidence that 'How depression can be tackled by meditation'. We in 'Art of Living' are teaching in 58 universities in America in the form of 7 days program credit course.

Gurudev emphasized that Meditation helps in the following:

- i. Sharpness of mind
- ii. Alertness of mind
- iii. Allow thinking from a broader perspective
- iv. Helps in eliminating fear, anxiety and loneliness.

This ancient science of meditation is truly accepted by the world.

Gurudev shared his recent experience where he met 1700+ doctors who were scared for their lives for the first time due to Covid-19. Through the seminar, the doctors learned about meditation and felt relieved from issues like anxiety, fear and loneliness.

Gurudev emphasized that it is a time to have long-term plan and co-operation. There is no space for competition. Everyone (especially focussing on industries) should co-operate. If any one (industry) goes down, we all should co-operate. In the future, we will see more value-based education, to reinvoke the values, which are hidden in human beings.

Mr. Rajan welcomed

**Mr. T. T. Srinivasaraghavan**

Managing Director, Sundaram Finance Limited

**Mr. Srinivasaraghavan's** question to Gurudev

**Q. What are the qualities required in a leader during these hard times?**

A. Gurudev – Leader should lead without ascertaining their leadership. Ready to lead from the back.

Mr. Rajan welcomed

**Dr. R. Seetharaman**

Group Chief Executive Officer, Doha Bank (Qatar)

**Dr. Seetharaman's** question to Gurudev

**Q. How can we achieve sustainable value creation? How do we eliminate extreme poverty, gender inequality, bring universal education, institute green ambition and lead green environment? How can we embrace sustainable, spiritual and humanitarian values?**

A. Gurudev – This crisis is a big opportunity to look at sustainable development. Honouring and inculcating values is essential to achieve sustainable development. Younger generation understands that unethical means cannot sustain the business. He quoted “you do not do to your customers, what you do not want your vendors to do”. Simple formula for making a sustainable growth includes having “clarity in mind, purity in heart and sincerity in action”.

Mr. Rajan welcomed

**Mr. Rajendrakumar**

CA and Independent Director on multiple Boards in India

**Mr. Rajendrakumar's** question to Gurudev

**Q. We are living in times when existence of humanity is itself a challenge. Should leaders adopt autocratic, semi autocratic, inclusive or persuasive kind of leadership? To save those who are affected, to save those who are not affected. Prescribe the best form of leadership in most trying times.**

A. Gurudev – This situation demands someone to act from the heart and head. A leader should be more compassionate and sensitive. People doing business with heart fail. People who do charity with their head, also fail. So, I would say, 'you do charity with your heart, and do business with your head'. Both things should be there, like kheer and raita in a platter, you can have both, but you should not mix them because that will be a disaster. At this time, leaders should keep aside their own ambitions and personal gains. Leaders should look for what is needed, when and where. If you act on your intuition, you can never go wrong, your intuitive ability needs to be enhanced. With intuitive abilities you will be able to lead people where they want to reach.

Mr. Rajan welcomed

**Mr. Vidyashankar Krishnan**

Vice Chairman & Managing Director, MM Forgings Limited

**Q. Practising of Karma Yoga as surrendering of one self and all actions to God, whatever may be one's denomination by way of upbringing and faith, helps a lot in de-stressing the individual and also provides a lot of clarity and clinical efficiency. May I request your views on this.**

A. Gurudev - A role can be played two ways – 'Akarma Yogi' and 'Karma Yogi'. For e.g. a teacher can be 'karma yogi teacher'– who really cares for the student and puts their 100% attention and dedication for better results of their students. Whereas 'akarma yogi teacher' would perform their duty, however would not fret upon their student's success

**Q. Mr. Krishnan requested to elaborate attitude of 'Karma Yogi'**

A. Gurudev – A 'karma yogi' takes every action as a worship. Every action has their full attention with good conscience. Karma will never be free from dosha or imperfections, but the mind can be free from imperfections. Mind is fully dedicated; it is the actions where you will find flaws.

Mr. Rajan welcomed

**Mr. S. Santhanakrishnan**

CA and Board Member of TATA Group Companies

**Mr. Santhanakrishnan's** question to Gurudev

**Q. What do employees, customers and clients expect from the leaders? Is it our sins that we are facing in this crisis?**

A. Gurudev – There is a message we need to learn from this crisis. We have been into a rat-race that the nature had to force the humankind, to take a break, and remind that they are not in control of the planet. Nature wanted to rejuvenate itself.

In Mumbai – 'Art of Living' helped the daily wage workers by supplying monthly rations. Seven crore meals have been served to entire country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. There are a lot of human values coming to surface in these challenging times. In New York – this is the first time that doctors were crying because of lack of PPE kits. The 'Art of Living' organization volunteered to provide PPE kits to the doctors.

Mr. Rajan welcomed

**Mr. Rajendran Dandapani**

Director, Zoho Corporation, Chennai

**Mr. Dandapani's** question to Gurudev

**Q. How can we learn to be happy and satisfied in choices we make? I think more than ever, we are going to face the choices to make between education, jobs, etc. Can we be happy without chasing everything and the fear of missing out. Requested advice for post millennial generation.**

A. Gurudev – I suggest people to join 'Online Happiness Workshop' which runs for 4 days, 2 hours each day. Happiness is just a state of mind. Whatever we choose, we do it with a happy state of mind. We can get rid of anxiety, restlessness by focussing on our breathing practices.

We have seven layers to our existence: Body; Breath – We breath nearly 10000 litres of air per day; Mind – Nobody has taught us about our mind; Memory; Intellect; Ego and Something beyond ego i.e. a reference point for the changes in our life.

Today, the youth is hanging between two extremes – aggression or depression. Your smile cannot be taken when you learn the seven layers of existence. These are the ultimate source of energy and enthusiasm.

Mr. Rajan welcomed

**Mr. Shailesh V. Haribhakti** FCA

Chairman - Mumbai Region, IOD, India, Board Chairman, Audit Committee, Chair and Independent Director on multiple Boards in India and Chairman, Shailesh Haribhakti & Associates, India

**Mr. Haribhakti's** question to Gurudev

**Q. Has the time arrived for us to go back to our roots of learning and can that be done through the old concept of gurukul but with the modern technologies of virtual realities, remote and machine learning so that the responsibility goes back to learners?**

A. Gurudev - Technology has certainly made it easier for knowledge to be disseminated. We have already started this concept at 'Art of Living'.

The discussion was followed by a Global Meditation session where Gurudev defined meditation - "It's not concentration, it is effortless, a simple relaxation, letting mind be what it is."

**We would like to share some of our learnings and thought-provoking messages from Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar during this Webinar:**

1. We should not sit, sulk and worry about this pandemic. This pandemic has offered huge opportunity for Indian economy to grow in the coming years.
2. He emphasized and re-iterated the importance and relevance of practicing meditation in these extraordinary times.
3. A message for the Leaders - 'You should do charity with your heart, and business with your head'.
4. People should come forward to open their heart and purses to help the people in dire need as this disaster has really taken the whole world in its hand.
5. We should focus on our seven layers of existence.
6. Modern technologies - A powerful tool to disseminate knowledge.

**Mr. M. S. Sundara Rajan** thanked **Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**, the distinguished speakers and the guests who joined the Webinar.

Compiled by:

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Institute of Directors, India



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