

THE OASIS OF ABUNDANCE – IDEALISTIC, DOGMATIC OR PRAGMATIC?



Stephen Covey referred to the term **Abundance** mentality or **Abundance** mindset in his 1989 best-seller, **The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People**. He defined the term simply as "a concept in which a person believes that there are enough resources and successes" He contrasted it with the scarcity mindset. The mindset of limited opportunity, fierce competition, scanty resources and options.

In our world of competitive exams, limited job opportunities, shrinking market shares for the practicing professional, the small enterprise or the transcontinental corporation; is **Abundance** really a practical, pragmatic idea? Is it a dogmatic premise? An idealistic aphorism? Or a fancy hallucination?

The ginormously disproportionate number of aspirants in contrast to the available seats in a competitive exam is real, the jobs are actually few and market shares are truly limited. **True! Or is it?** Think again.

Well! for 'that particular exam' the seats are finite, limited, even scarce. But is it the only exam we can appear for? While the jobs in 'that company' or vacancies in 'that sector' are limited, are the chances of your being employable so remote? Are your options of becoming employable so restricted? While there are so many substitutes for the products in a small consumer segment rendering the market shares to

become unattractive and ever shrinking, is it the only market you can serve? Is it the only consumer need you can satisfy with your product? Is it the only geography?

More often than not scarcity is not in the situation or in the options we have. It is probably in the choices we give ourselves. If we limit the scope, size and space of what we are viewing, it perhaps becomes tiny, if we limit the time available to us to seize the opportunity, the time window appears very narrow, in today's world of transcontinental fungibility if we limit our geographical space we are perhaps diminishing our potential....if it is not available today, how about tomorrow? Day after? If it not possible here, how about there? If these people don't need it, how about them? Will it really be the end of the world if we choose another, equivalent or near equivalent alternative today and chase that precise option tomorrow?

I am not sure if this course of action will be readily acceptable and will be considered an appropriate choice in a world that is clamouring for quick success and instant gratification. In an age when becoming a CEO at the age of 40 is considered 'late' maybe giving ourselves another choice, another space, another path to success is very anachronistic.

An **Abundance** mindset tells us, that there are other opportunities. There are other timeframes. There are other geographies. There are other paths to the same goal. Even that, there are also potentially other equally interesting goals!

Recently I was asking someone about the Mumbai Marathon. For the uninitiated The 17th edition of the Tata Mumbai Marathon 2020 saw the participation of 55,000+ athletes and people on Sunday, January 19. The Mumbai Marathon is the largest marathon in Asia as well as the largest mass participation sporting in the country. I had missed reading the news that day and when I asked, the response, I received was "*40+ plus runners had medical complications and one person died of cardiac arrest*". Nothing else. Nothing about 55,000+ participants. Nothing about the phenomenal timing of 2:08:09 by the first place winner, Derara Hurisa!

On another occasion I was speaking to my colleague and we were talking about the sales enquiries we had received after participating in a business event. We were not expecting any spectacular success, but it turned out that 44 customers had enquired. My colleague however chose to report it thus "*We got 44 enquiries, but only 35 gave us cards the other 9 did not give us their business cards. Also these were casual conversations during the networking breaks so I don't know how much of it will translate into business*". Nothing wrong in the accuracy of both the narratives. However a different narrative would have, perhaps painted a less gloomy picture.

A whole lot of **Abundance** mindset operationalises with the language we use. Language is more than just a defining human characteristic. According to Russian

Psychologist Lev Vyogotsky, the learning of language, our first utterances with peers or adults are for the purpose of communication but once mastered they become internalized and allow “inner speech”.

Language is more than a complex, highly effective medium for sharing information. Once humans learn their first language, it becomes inextricably interwoven with the patterns and contents of their thoughts. In acquiring a language, Vygotsky suggested, we as children gain a tool for thinking. Its not different when we grow up. As he put it, ‘Humans solve practical problems with the help of their language’. He went on to argue that humans gain a cognitive advantage over other species not only because individual experiences, realisations and solutions to problems can be shared much more explicitly, but also because the fusing of language with thought provides human beings, with the means for a unique kind of mental and psychosocial development.

What we say and hear have a profound impact on what we perceive. And our perceptions **first inform, then influence and then instil what become beliefs. We perceive what we believe.**

An **Abundance** language could perhaps create a more healthy ecosystem for all of us. When we think, hear and speak the **Abundance** language, we may be able to jump out of our scarcity delusions and see for ourselves that the world has many options to offer, life has many paths that it can take, and there are many roads to salvation. Perhaps instead of saying that I have failed my competitive exam, I could probably say that I have other exams to attempt, other timeframes to consider. Or if I am facing competition, I could perhaps discuss that I have other consumer segments to consider, or other markets or even reposition my product to address another needs the consumer is likely to have. I can make a choice between looking for a range of solutions for the problem, look for a solution with in the problem, find help to solve the problem, redefine the problem or even look for another problem to solve. When I use an **Abundance** approach, I seem to have opened up a plethora of options.

What I tell myself changes the choice set I have, What I tell others changes the scenario for them, what we all tell each other and listen from each other changes our world.

No wonder the wise have said, **Words create Worlds.** Choose **Abundance!** Perhaps what you are seeking, is also seeking you. **The Oasis of Abundance** can be real for you. Create it, with your words!

(All views expressed here are the views of the essayist and does not represent the official standpoints of any organisation the essayist is associated with)