Positive thinking is one of the few catchwords most often used by the current Human Resource Development pundits. Positive thinking process is regarded as the key to the success in life, the basic need for the mental and material development and the essential factor for personal and organizational growth. Positive thinking is not merely the positivism but the conviction that no problem is beyond solution. Similarly optimism, which is known to play a vital part in curing diseases and lessening the degree of physical disabilities, is only a result of positive thinking. In simple language, positive thinking is that which makes any person creative, peaceful, tranquil, balanced, happy and joyous. On the other hand, negative thinking is injurious to health on all levels - physical, mental and spiritual. A positive person is generous, while a negative person is selfish. Chemically, positive thinking produces GABA, an amino acid derivative known as a calming substance that makes the mind peaceful. Opposite to that, during agitated state of mind, the hormone cortisol released in the body suppresses GABA and causes stress. Thus the basic function of positive thinking is to produce a state of peace, which is essential for right decision and follow-up action.

All our actions are controlled by our thoughts and thoughts are controlled by our emotions. Thus any thought, whether positive or negative, is a product of our emotions. And the four primary needs, food, sex, sleep and self-preservation are causes of different emotions.

Although the Srimad Bhagavata is regarded as the confluence of the three streams of Bhakti, Karma and Jnana Yoga, the great Purana’s prime objective is to establish the supremacy of the first one. Bhakti, the easiest approach to the Bhagawan, is possible only when the mind is in peace. Tranquility of mind is the most essential feature of the Bhakti Marg. In fact the Srimad Bhagavata itself was the outcome of Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa’s academic pursuit for achieving peace of mind. Veda Vyasa edited and taught the four Vedas. He also taught the Puranas and Itihasas. Then he composed the Mahabharata. Even then he was not satisfied, as he did not have peace, the state of tranquility. When Vyasa narrated his situation to Narada, the latter advised him to sing the praise of Narayana, relate His Vishwarupa, his Vibhuties and of course his Avatars. ‘You will then reach the goal for which you have been striving, PEACE,’ Narada thus assured Vyasa. The outcome of Vyasa’s intense search after peace was the Srimad Bhagavata.
It is easier to identify the negative thinking than the positive one. That is why even before reciting the Bhagavata at Naimisharanya, Ugrashrava, the son of Vyasa’s favourite disciple Romaharshana, identified the six negative emotions: Kama (lustfulness), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed, avarice), Moha (delusion of mind), Mada (arrogance) and Matsarya (jealousy) as the six arch enemies of men and advised Shaunaka and his fellow Rishis to get rid of these evils. Then throughout the text of the Bhagavata, Vyasa projected the animosity of these emotions and suggested through different characters to shun them in order to develop positive thinking process for attainment of peace and Bhakti Yoga.

On many occasions, the Bhagavata demonstrates that egoism (Mada) makes people blind and as a consequence they fail to take the right decision. After the conclusion of the Pandava’s Rajasuya Yagna, Narada explained egoism to Yudhishtira: “Insult, praise, honour and dishonour are all terms which are associated with the body. When the feelings of “I” and “Mine” lodge in the heart, the ego begins to feel elated or angry according as whether it is praised or insulted. And this is the ego, which thinks of punishment or rewards for another man.”

Kapila Vasudeva, the propagator of the Sankhya Yoga, while teaching Brahma Vidya to his mother Devahuti assured: “When the feeling of “I” and “Mine” disappear, the mind at once becomes free from Kama, Krodha and other negative emotions.”

Cursing Nalakubera and Manigriva, the two sons of Kubera for their arrogance, Narada told them, “Because of arrogance, people lose the power of reasoning and at the same time a man free from the three Madas: Vidyamada, Dhanamada and Kulamada is almost impossible to find. Out of these Madas, the Dhanamada is the most powerful enemy of mankind.”

Indra was furious when the gopas and the gopis of Brindavan on the advice of Krishna worshipped cows, the Brahmins and the hill Govardhana and not him. Consequently Indra out of his Mada summoned the group of clouds, “Samvartaka” and ordered them to kill all the cows and destroy Brindavana. Krishna was able to discern Indra’s Ahankar or ego and lifted the hill Govardhana on his little finger and used it as an umbrella to protect all from the deluge, which continued for seven days and seven nights. Ultimately, Indra had to accept his defeat gracefully and surrendered to Krishna. Indra realized that he had to face this humiliation only because of his Ahankara, and then expressed his gratitude to Krishna for making him free from this great evil of ego. Krishna said that he did it only out of his kindness to Indra.

And here is the story of Vishwamitra. Pleased with Kaushika’s terrible tapas, Brahma made him Maharishi but told that he had not yet been able to be Jitendriya by conquering his senses. Hearing that, Kaushika started even more difficult tapas. Then on Indra’s instruction, Rambha attempted to disrupt Kaushika’s tapas, but she only turned to a stone on the latter’s curse. However, cursing Rambha, Kaushika realized that he had not yet been able to
subdue his anger. That made him to continue tapas. As soon as he was able to conquer his Krodha, Brahma came back and conferred the title Brahmari on Kaushika. Being free from anger, now the foremost thought in Kaushika’s mind was only to do good to others and he earned the name Vishwamitra, a friend of the universe.

Yayati who exchanged his old age condition with his son’s youth at last realized “So long as desire is alive in the heart of man, neither gold, nor grains, nor cows, nor women will satisfy man. This desire - Kama - is the most difficult thing to give up, but it must be given up if man wants peace and happiness.”

When Vamana asked Bali to give him only three paces of land, Bali thought the boy must be very ignorant and so asked him: “Revise your words and take from me land large enough to keep you in comfort through life.” Vamana replied, “If a man has not conquered desire, all the desirable things in the world will not be enough to satisfy him. A man who is pleased with what he gets is always happy. It is the discontent which causes sorrow in man.”

Very often the Bhagavata reminds that fear is one of the few greatest enemies. Kapila Vasudeva told his mother Devahuti: “Yogis who have conquered the world of senses are afraid of nothing and they reach me without any doubt.”

Shukamuni advised the king Parikshita to cast off his fear and steady the mind by practicing Ashtanga Yoga, made up of eight positive qualities: Ahimsa (not hurting anyone), Satyam (Truthfulness), Aṣṭheya (not stealing), Brahmacharya (withdrawal of the senses), Aparigrahama (not receiving gifts from anybody), Shaučam (inner and outer cleanliness), Tapas (penance) and Svādhyāya (study of the scriptures).

Krishna advised Uddhava to fill his mind with noble thoughts, which are the requisites of the Ashtanga Yoga, and also to cultivate the qualities like Asanga (non-attachment), Lajja (shamefulness at performing wrong things), Assančchaya (not hoarding wealth), Mauna (silence), Sthairya (Steadfastness), Kshama (forgiving) and Abhaya (fearlessness), which are the roots of positive thinking. Krishna further advised him to perform duties without any desire for rewards - a condition which helps in cultivating serenity of mind.

In a similar way, Prahlad advised his schoolmates: “Abandon the Asuric qualities, which are your heritage, and replace them with good ones like loving everyone, hating none, having nothing but compassion towards all living beings.” Love and compassion are the principal positive emotions.

Occasionally the Bhagavata deals with the rules of living based on positive thinking. Thus the king Rishabha taught his sons how to lead an ideal life: “While purity of mind is essential, equanimity of the mind is the one thing you should strive for. You should learn to receive gain or loss with the same calm frame of mind. Anger should be conquered and the mind should be brought under control. Man should desire only that much which is essential for the
maintenance of the body... Hate no one, Share the pain of others. Do your duties properly, speak sparingly and think more.”

Suniti advised her son Dhruva: “My child, remember one fact and that is, when one wishes someone ill, that ill visits the wisher, So never at any time think ill of others.” Further she said, “when you see one more fortunate than you, it is not right that you should be jealous of him. And if you see a man lacking in good qualities you should be sorry for him and not hate him. If you meet one who is your equal, you should then be friendly with him. Such a man will never be unhappy.”

During the fight between Vritra and Indra, on one occasion Vritra reminded the latter, “Victory and defeat, Indra, are daily happening in the life of everybody. One cannot win all the time...when faced with victory and defeat, fame and infamy. life and death, pleasure and pain, one should not be either too elated nor too depressed.”

While defining bhakti, Krishna told Uddhava, “Bhakta must have several qualities in him, the most important one is compassion, man should be full of compassion for the sufferings of others, and he should not betray anyone’s faith in him. He should be patient, truthful at any cost and without envy for anyone. He should neither be elated when happiness comes his way, nor should be sunk in the depth of despondency when suffering visits him. He should help others as much as is possible for him. His heart should be ready to melt at the sight of pain in others; on the other hand, when trouble visits him, he should be firm and unmoved; his mind should ever be placid. Equanimity is essential in my Bhakta. He should not let the different agitations of the mind to trouble his mental peace. Hunger and thirst, sadness and gladness, old age and death, these six should not appear fearful for him. He should never expect praise and honour from others, but then he should not fail in his duty, that of paying respect to others.” The Bhakta possessing these qualities, in current management-terminology is definitely a successful positive thinker. The Bhagavata advocating such noble human characteristics remains a unique textbook on positive thinking.


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The wise man in the storm prays God, not for safety from danger, but for deliverance from fear.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The successful person make a habit of doing what the failing person doesn’t like to do.

— Thomas A Edison.