

Reel life LESSONS

There is more to movies than just entertainment.
Films like Guru can work as case studies

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When written in Chinese, the word crisis is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity

—John. F. Kennedy

AS INDIA is poised on the upswing of exponential growth, many Indian corporates are busy working out blueprints for going global and making their mark felt on the industrial history of the planet. Many are joining in on the booming business scenario and young leadership is impatient to grow and prove itself. The tip of the iceberg shows that IIM grads too are chucking extremely lucrative jobs, to become entrepreneurs in businesses as exotic as women's lingerie.

Cinema too, feeds on the trends of today. Movies like *Guru* bring to life real case studies of successful leaders who made way for their dreams to be fulfilled. Many youngsters who identify with Gurukant Desai—the protagonist of the film—would do well to bring home some lessons to benchmark their efforts at learning successful leadership qualities to their professional lives. Some insights that are underlying principles of success in entrepreneurship:

It was a dream right from the beginning, not just to become another system worker secure in his blanket of monthly pay packet that feeds the family back home.

For Guru, the dream was to be the maker of his own destiny and carve out a "business" for himself. In days of yore, kings carved out kingdoms for themselves, today, it is such passion for business that creates corporate maharajas with empires of their own to build.

Just as ships were not meant to be kept in safe harbours, but to brave the high seas, so also, the instinct to leave a mark in the corporate white waters entails taking

risks. The nature of business enterprise is such that there are no safe options and taking the plunge into the water is the only way forward.

Guru's education was completed not in school, but in Turkey where he worked delivering petrol cans to remote areas. There is no substitute for native intelligence. Some are born diamonds and need no polishing. Sadly, some go through life collecting qualifications without truly educating their native intelligence. Guru was in the first category. The whole world is a

classroom and lessons for survival and success are everywhere. Like a sponge, Guru soaked up each learning opportunity provided to him and proved that management text books can be written without attending B-school.

When we were young, we were taught "try until you succeed". Somewhere along the line, things became so competitive that we forgot what it means to learn from our failures and move on. Success and failure is so deeply linked with feelings of self-worth that a single failure

leads to a doom loop of poor self-esteem and even poorer performance the next time around. Today's young entrepreneurs

need to know that there is a high probability that they will succeed only after having first tasted failure. They need to learn the art of bouncing back and bring firm in their resolve.

Knowing what the principle is behind the rules is an essential wisdom one needs to know before breaking them.

Making well informed and reflected judgment is

mentis

about the principles underlying good business sense is the first step to rewriting the text books. The true mark of a maverick genius is the ability to carve his path for himself based on his gut instinct and internal benchmarks. Guru did break many rules along the way, but was always in alignment with his business purposes and even rewrote the text books on investor management and market capitalisation during the growth phase of his business.

Ultimately it is the human connect that brings people together and the work playing field is no different. Building trusting relationships established on win-win partnerships with warmth of relatedness was a crucial leadership quality of Gurukant Desai. It was these relationships that created his network of goodwill as a fertile growth arena.

The definition of management as taught in B-schools is "the art and science of getting work done". Youngsters translate this literally and forget that they need to also know how to do it oneself. Gurukant spent a great deal of time with his ear to the ground and creating a vision from the reality of his experiencing, and added his managerial expertise to bring success to his business venture. At no stage was he unwilling to get his hands and knees dirty and live on a high horse of being the "big boss". This requires an essential humility and dignity of labour which gets extended to respect and trust for those who do it for you.

Even the man who owns the sandwich stall at the corner of your road knows how to run a business and make profits. The difference between him and the likes of Guru defines the essence of the "professional" entrepreneur.

Devoting his entire energy to creating his business empire, personal well-being was put at stake. Suffering a major paralytic stroke at the peak of his career was a heavy price to pay for his successes.

Stress and its effects will catch up sooner or later. Gurukant was oblivious of the damage he was doing to his body by pushing himself beyond the limit. But the price he paid did not deter him to further create and build. Today, life offers us many choices.

Secure jobs provide comfort zones but do not permit us to flex our wings the way Guru did. On the other hand, a life fraught with risks and potential failures, was the way he chose for himself and paid the price for it.

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GURU MANTRA

- Business instinct is the first prerequisite
- Risk taking is essential
- You can do business without qualification
- You may not get it right the first time
- First break all rules... then rewrite the text books
- Networking is essential
- You must know how to do it yourself
- Difference between an entrepreneur and a "professional" entrepreneur
- There is a price to pay for every choice you make

