

Part- I

Despite all odds the truth alone triumphs

"It is much easier to swim with the tide than go against it. In a country where corruption is often seen as a rule rather than an exception it is extremely difficult to take an honest and principled stand as the whole system gangs up against you and tries to drown you like a tsunami. But there are some rare individuals, the mavericks who do not believe in short term compromises to achieve long term objectives. For them, means are as important as their goals and they do not mind taking the whole system headlong even at the cost of severe hardships and sacrifices. Prof Arun Arya the Director of Aakaar Management Institute is one such rare individual"

Reading this news which featured him and appeared in a national magazine some time ago; Arun Arya, perplexed and tensed; sitting in his office recalling those days of hardships and his current problem. Sudden, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) enquiry against him was not a total surprise to him. He anticipated something similar. But his tension was not only handling this CBI enquiry but to chalk out a plan to handle the adverse consequence of this enquiry.

Admissions to his institute have already affected. Now, it can go even worse. "There is an ever-increasing rampant corruption everywhere; all kinds of shortcuts and unfair means are employed. You cannot grow fast unless you compromise. People talk about values but they adhere to the core

values as per their convenience and compromise as per the convenience – directly or indirectly. It is the nexus of politicians-bureaucrats-bribe payers who are responsible for corruption. The demand side exists simply because the supply side exists,” Arya recalled his ten years of struggle against the corrupt system.

Despite all odds, in last ten years he has gained good will from people of all walks of life. He has created a strong network of supporters and a sustained Aakaar Management institute to provide values based education.

“I always talked about three aspects which are of utmost importance for an individual to enable him/her chart path forward for career and life – a dream (destination in life), fire in the belly (passionate commitment) and strict adherence to certain core values (creating unique identity of a person).” Arya recalled. His own life since 2000 has an example of these three aspects. “In last ten years I fought against all odds and stood courageously to live my vision of creating and developing a world-class management institute” At this juncture he recalled the meet which he attended in 1999 in Jaipur and has become his life turning point.

Background of Aakaar Management Institute (AMI):

Aakaar Management Institute was started in 2000 by Arun Arya with a mission to provide quality and values- based management education. “It was during grand event organized by my alma mater in Jaipur to launch its Rajasthan chapter. Many government officials including the chief minister of the state was present; they address to the gathering saying that people who belong to this state and have achieved in their life they just see their own growth. They have not done anything for

their homeland" Arya remembered. "I believe that people who have done well in their career and life should go back to their roots at a suitable time to do something constructive and substantial for their home state," Chief minister's address fondled the emotional chord of him.

Arya left his well-paid reputed job with leading American multinational in 2000 to transform his dream into reality by starting 'Aakaar Management Institute(AMI)' in a rented building with just 5 students.

About Arun Arya:

He was born in 1959 and brought up in a small town of Abu Road in Rajasthan. His father studied till second grade and his mother was illiterate. He lived his childhood in poverty but that did not stop him from dreaming big and achieving. He was the first from his village to finish schooling. His dedication and perseverance got him the admission into one of the most premier institute in technology from where he did his applied physics. After gaining the degree he went to the top management school in western India and studied the management education. Soon after passing from the management school, he joined corporate life and worked for 16 years in senior positions with the leading companies. He has been the President of prestigious IIT Alumni Association - the apex body of over 20000 member alumni based worldwide.

The struggle

His first struggle was in acquiring the land for the institute. Then chief minister promised him the land under educational quota. Land and support were provided initially and then withdrawn. "Land

was finalized. Then I was asked to meet people to 'negotiate' the deal," Arya recalled. He refused to meet any middleman. "I knew great institutions are built on strong foundations of ethics and not bribes. I was very clear that I was going to be in the education of business and not in the business of education. There was no way I was going to pay a bribe to get the land," Arya recalled.

As he was not willing to give things under the table he decided to go for buying a private land. He bought approx. 100 acres of saline barren wasteland in Village Dhaga, Tehsil Jilora, and District Badmer in 2004.

He faced lot of hindrances from state politicians and bureaucrats who demanded their pound of flesh in return for permission to use this land. When he refused to pay bribe again he received a notice for auction of the land which he timely managed and applied for land conversion¹. Arya paid necessary conversion charges as per the rules and submitted all relevant documents to the government and awaiting his conversion approval letter.

His present dilemma:

Arun Arya after this entire struggle with the system for establishing an educational institution of excellence, he has become fatigue, tired and frustrated. Centre Investigating Bureau local officers have approached him for personal favours. "Somehow we persistently refused to change ourselves into being what people call as 'practical' and the vested interest in the government have consistently continued to undermine the national interests," As he refused entertaining any

¹ In case a self-acquired land is to be used, it must conform to the proposed use. Agricultural land would need to be converted to the required land use. Change in land use is regulated under the Rajasthan Land Revenue (Conversion of Agricultural Land for Non-Agricultural Purposes in Rural Areas) Rules, 2007, and is governed by Rajasthan Land Revenue Act, 1956.

personal favours one day 22 persons large CBI team including SSP, DSP and two Inspectors landed up in their Institute.

"They did not look at the quality of our faculty, quality of our courses, quality of our pedagogy, quality of our educational aids or the quality of our corporate networking - perhaps because they were incompetent to understand these. They came armed with measuring tapes and started measuring the sizes of various rooms, classrooms, library, computer centre, toilets, etc. Based on this, they started making out a case against us,"

CBI Badmer informed Rajasthan state government about the enquiry and because of which their campus land use change approval was held up.

Today, Arya is pondering upon the consequences he faced because of sticking on his own principals of not pleasing anybody. He was looking back and thinking his past struggle and current struggle to get his land conversion and gathering resources to construct a world class infrastructure.

He knew that if he would have listened to those officials and abide by their corrupt conditions, he could have save time just by listening to these officials and abide their corrupt conditions. However, that may not cost him when compared to lost time and energy in fighting the corrupt system. "Little did we realize that the passage of time, the corruption would only increase and therefore, our hardships, risks, sacrifices and struggle would not only continue but also increase," Arya realized.

Tensed and perplexed he is thinking was he mad always taking less travelled road? "whether all this hardships, sacrifices and struggle is really worth? Arya paused. Sitting in his office, he scribbled: "We would be rather be foolish and stay hungry than grease somebody's palms"

He read what he just wrote and started thinking how to deal with this situation without compromising his core values and without inviting much trouble for him and his institute. He needs a foolproof plan without compromising his values

Part 2- Perception of the Case Writer

Despite all odds the truth alone triumphs

Arun Arya, a management postgraduate who served first 16 years of his career as a corporate executive in reputed companies decided to return to his home state to create a world-class management institute. His ten years of establishing the institute is an example of his heroic efforts in refusing to pay bribe and standing up against all odds.

The case narrates his struggle and dilemma with regard to Aakaar Management Institute. When he refused to pay bribe or reverted to unruly demands of powerful people of the local community, he had to face the CBI enquiry. The present case describes his dilemma to determine an action plan to tackle with the situation without compromising his morals.

Arun Arya took help of the RTI act and filed an appeal to the Central Information Commission. The CIC reverted to his appeal stating that case against him was closed. There is no present inquiry pending against him in CBI.

With regard to land conversion issue, the case protagonist sat on a 'Dhanrna' and after his non-violence agitation; Transparency International India formed a committee to look into dispute over institute. The case got national and international media attention and then a high powered committee was formed to tackle the issue.

Intended course

The case is intended to use at the postgraduate level in courses on Leadership and Ethics and can be used in the Strategic Thinking courses.

Learning objectives

The case is designed to help students learn how to:

- Adhere to one's principles and values in the face of pressure.
- Think differently to take strategic actions.

Research Methodology

To develop this case, the author interviewed the case protagonist and used factual information but many of the case details, including the protagonist, school, and district names have been disguised for confidentiality and teaching purposes.

Assignment Questions

- In groups, discuss the case and craft an action plan for Arya.
- Assume the role of case protagonist 'Arya'. If you would have been in his place how you would have dealt with this? And why?

Executive Summary

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Arun Arya, a management postgraduate who served first 16 years of his career as a corporate executive in reputed companies decided to return to his home state to create a world-class management institute. His ten years of establishing the institute is an example of his heroic efforts in refusing to pay bribe and standing up against all odds.

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