

**Dharma Empowers...**

Swami said to me, "Do public work, you will be happy." So I decided to go back into local government. I was really strongly motivated and determined to practise Swami's principles. I was soon elected as Mayor. Initially I had wonderful support from the community. Then I sold my dairy farm business and set up a property development business. Half the community decided they didn't want a property developer as mayor. Then the people on the conservative side of politics, who generally supported me, found out that I was chasing a Guru in India and abandoned me. I was put under tremendous pressure. My whole community had abandoned me; they didn't want the mayor they had elected. This was the most challenging experience of my life in a leadership role. I was attacked savagely from evening to morning in meetings and in the press. I was trying to love all and serve all; love those who hated me and wasn't responding to the attacks. For those who wanted to bring me down, it was a free kick. I had to learn to handle this. In one meeting I stopped and said "If you have any complaint against me or evidence about my corruption, please do your duty and take this information to the authorities. Do your duty". Once I got hold of that response, things seemed to be managed well.

**Dharma Protects...**

Elections were coming up again. I thought that I was going to be defeated as mayor I was under constant attack and felt that the whole community was against me. I realised what I had to do was to follow dharma. If I was going to be thrown out as mayor then so be it



but I was going to follow Swami's teachings. I wasn't bound to a party as people in politics are. I did what I felt was right on every occasion – doing what I felt was good for the community without favouring one group over the other. We finally went into elections and I topped the poll. That is the beauty of Swami's dharma. Have faith that dharma will protect you.

**Dharma Brings its Own Reward**

I was influenced by Baba's teachings in business. I owned a property development company and we were building an office block. Just before finishing construction, our financier became insolvent and I couldn't make the final payment. The builder and many of the contractors were facing ruin because of this. My advisors told me that this set of circumstances was outside my control and advised me to let the company go. But after reading Swami's teachings I felt this was not right and was praying to Swami for advice. A thought came to me that if I was to profit from the company by letting it go then why should others fall into difficulty when it did badly? That was really a transformative night for me when I realized that I have to have regard for the well being of all. The next day I arranged a meeting with all the subcontractors.

I told them I didn't have enough money but would personally undertake to pay them all. It took me about 2 years of borrowing, selling, and pleading with bankers before everyone was paid. I was left with a crippled company and a mountain of debt and I thought that my company was going to become insolvent. Then suddenly out of the blue I got an offer from a building society who wanted to start a joint venture with me in property development and split the profits 50-50 providing all the resources. Would that offer have come to me if I had let those others down? No. This is the power of following Swami's teachings. The joint venture with the building society returned more than 10 times what I had lost by voluntarily supporting those contractors. Dharma brings its own reward!

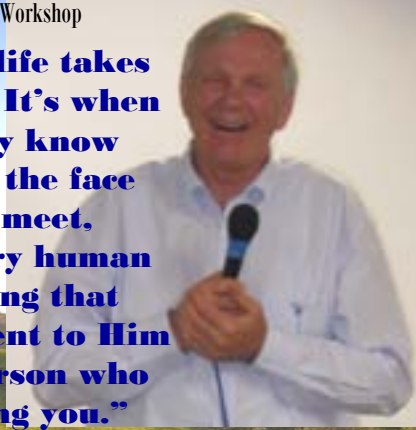
**First Common Sense then Spiritual Sense**

I went to Swami in the depths of despair in my period as mayor. Swami called us in for an interview. As He walked past me, He said, "Too much confusion. First common sense, then spiritual sense. You have to live in this world." I realised then in retrospect that I should have been more firm on those people attacking me in meetings. I was applying what I had thought were spiritual principles, but it was my duty as mayor to be firmer. So leadership brings with it an obligation to be firm at certain times.

**Fair Go Mate**

In Australian society, when do people get upset? I look to the conduct of my own son and daughter. They get upset when they see someone being mistreated. They don't mind if they themselves are dealt with inappropriately. That's fine. "Fair go mate" is part of the culture. I think understanding the culture of the community is an important part of being a good leader. We should develop our social intelligence so that we can work within and be responsive and sensitive to the culture of our community.

**"Our spiritual life takes us into society. It's when we wholesomely know that Baba is in the face of everyone we meet, residing in every human heart, and having that deep commitment to Him in the other person who may be attacking you."**



**Weed out the Ego**

Watch the ego when you take a leadership role. It springs up sometimes just when you think you've suppressed it and you think you've got it controlled. Swami says that just like the garden bed, when you've taken the ego weeds out in the garden bed of your life, along comes a shower of praise and you can watch the weeds grow. We have to be careful of that. "I did it, this is mine", Baba says that these are two fangs which makes an individual poisonous. Humility is the essence of good leadership because we know what we truly are when we practise humility.

**The Collective Wisdom**

To me an important part of good leadership is listening to what people are saying. If you are leading a group of people, always have your ear to the ground to gather their collective wisdom. Realise that when you are appointed to a position of leadership that you don't have super knowledge. The collective knowledge is always greater than that of the individual. So listen carefully to what everyone is saying - try and find consensus, and then take the decision, even if it's unpopular.

