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FOLLOWING THE 'YELLOW BRICK ROAD': MAPPING OF LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF MR. DIVYANSHU GANATRA

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Abstract:- 'Have you taken the leadership of your life?' is the question one must ask oneself.

The *Yellow Brick Road* is the concept adopted from the 1939 movie 'The Wizard of Oz'. In the movie, Dorothy and her friends are instructed to follow the yellow brick road in search of the magical Wizard of Oz, only to find that they had what they were looking for all along. The "Yellow Brick Road" popularized in the movie Wizard of Oz, signifies the quest for enlightenment, a pilgrimage into our selves.

Keywords: 'Yellow Brick Road', organization, psychologist, educationist.

INTRODUCTION :-

For Mr. Divyanshu Ganatra, the founder of the organization '*Yellow Brick Road*', "following the Yellow Brick Road" serves as the mantra on his journey to help making learning exciting, effective and experiential. Divyanshu, is the winner of the "National Award" for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities by the Honorable Vice President of India, as best self-employed entrepreneur. He is also the co-founder, trustee as also past vice-president of the Disability Network.

Divyanshu, a pune -based psychologist, educationist and researcher who is visually challenged is a mountaineer and adventure sports buff. Recently, he took a nearly two-minute flight in the skies as a solo paraglider, becoming the first visually challenged person in India to do so, according to his trainers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Secondary data collected from the published interviews and news highlighting some real life incidents or short situations of Divyanshu's life:

MAPPING OF LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF MR. DIVYANSHU:

"Leader is the one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way!" Here an attempt is made of mapping Divyanshu's leadership qualities; through some real life incidents or short situations of his life:

1. Intelligence

He is self-motivated, enthusiastic and endowed with an insatiable thirst for learning. It is this drive that has led him to accumulate experiences in the diverse fields of human potential optimization, rational thinking & positive psychology, IT for empowerment, personality development, counseling & therapy, psychometric evaluation, scientific research et al. He has collaborated on cross-cultural research with international psychologists at the University of Illinois as well as Ann Arbor, USA. He is trained in Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy and Adlerian therapy from Malta, Europe.

Anita Malik, business head of Temple Pilots, a professional organisation that offers courses in paragliding, says no

record of a visually challenged person undertaking paragliding exists in the country as of now. "In India, paragliding is still a small community and there are no records of a 100 per cent visually-challenged person ever undertaking paragliding. Divyanshu, as per our collective community knowledge, is the first person to do this and has turned out to be a real hero," she adds. Anita and her husband Avi Malik, who is the founder and chief trainer at Temple Pilots, provided a four-day intensive training to Divyanshu before his ride.

"Touch and feel were Divyanshu's plus points and we gave him his orientation considering these advantages in terms of senses. He learnt things quickly and carried out a successful ride, serving as inspiration to many," says Anita.

2. Emotional stability

2. a: The 36-year-old, who completely lost his eyesight due to glaucoma at the age of 19, undertook the flight over Kamshet, around 50 km from here. "I always wanted to fly and I was upto 700 feet high in the air. It was exhilarating. I was enjoying complete freedom. It was a very beautiful experience which I cannot describe in words. At the most, I can say I was experiencing oneness with nature and its elements," says Divyanshu.

The adverse conditions in which it took place made Divyanshu's ride more memorable. "The wind conditions were bad on the day the ride was planned. Eventually, it was decided that I should take the plunge by 6 pm. I could have flown for some more time had the wind conditions been more favourable," he said. Ganatra's first flight has left him thirsty for more and he aims at going for advanced levels of training. Ganatra had always thought of flying and was always searching for a place where he could pursue the sport safely.

2. b: In 1998, after a severe bout of tuberculosis, 21-year-old Divyanshu's health had started giving up on him. As he lay on the operating table with a ruptured lung, the doctors, unwilling to operate, were in a haste to declare him dead, before he blurted out, "Just hurry up and cut me open will you? I'm still alive!"

3. Building and Strengthening Human Relations:

3.a: He has worked in the field of IT for five years and worked as a senior HR executive in TATA Serwizol. He was awarded "Ten Outstanding Young Indians Award," for personal accomplishments and achievements, by JC's, an International Youth Organization. He is a voracious reader with over five thousand books in his personal collection! Divyanshu has so far offered psychological training to more than 10,000 individuals from corporate and social sectors. He has to his credit successful expeditions at Kumaon in the Himalayas and Milam Glacier among other adventurous places.

3.b: At 'Yellow Brick Road', besides providing corporate training and counseling, we offer parallel academia," he informs. "We teach students of Psychology the practical application of what they study in college, using case studies and role-plays. More importantly, we teach them that the person comes first. Nobody is a 'schizophrenic person,' one is a 'person with schizophrenia.' Sure he may have delusions and hallucinate, but there is so much more to him. He can be fun and lively as anyone else," he goes on, his voice giving away his heart's empathy.

4. Empathy:

"I only feel for the poor Sherpas. They're the ones who have to guide me uphill!" says Divyanshu. As a mountaineer, he has to take help of Sherpas. He has empathy towards them.

5. Objectivity:

An avid fan of adventure sports since childhood, Divyanshu says his latest achievement in the field of paragliding reinforced his belief that any disability is insignificant if one has the right perspective towards looking at challenges in life. "We can focus either on problems or solutions. It is up to our perspective towards looking at things. With this frame of mind, any disabled person can overcome any challenge in life," he said.

6. Communicative skills

Divyanshu was diagnosed glaucoma, when he was just in standard 12th. "I didn't believe it, I didn't want to. But when I lost my vision completely, I had to," he talks of the vision impairment that it later led to. It was a life-changing event and only the beginning of a series of challenges, first of which was to keep learning after quitting school.

Divyanshu facilitates in various corporates and business schools in the areas of emotional intelligence, leadership, communication and interpersonal skills, conflict management, entrepreneurial motivation and thinking and decision making. He also conducts psychometric assessments for recruitment, self-development and competency mapping.

7. Technical skills:

Around 1995, when India's IT sector had just begun its boom. Ganatra decided he would learn the intricacies of computing. But when all institutions shut their doors to him, he sought friends who would read out every command and screen. His hard work and of course the buoyancy of the sector bagged him an award from none other than the President of India. But "that was when I left IT. I had proved my point – people without vision are still people and can do much more," he comments. Another reason for his exit from IT was his penchant for conversation. While machines provided him with a challenge, friends and family provided joy. Understanding happiness and the human mind got him to make an intriguing turn towards degrees in Psychology.

8. Motivating skills

Divyanshu, who is already working towards promoting adventure sports among persons with disabilities, now has plans to take forward this effort.

9. A great combination of IQ, EQ and SQ:

Apart from Intelligence and emotional quotients, spiritual quotient of a leader speaks volumes. "It was a spiritual high; I did it like everyone does." This was his expression after undertaking his solo-paragliding flight.

10. Future forward thinking

"In our country, enjoying adventure sports is still a distant dream for the disabled given the lack of infrastructure. These kind of sporting activities are great energisers and equalisers and I want to promote these among persons with different disabilities," he says.

CONCLUSION:

Believing is seeing! The Clinical Psychologist by profession, trekker by passion, Divyanshu is undoubtedly, a self-made leader and a social entrepreneur. He is also a troublesome mountaineer by choice. At a time when athletes around the world are competing for that medal of gold, it is inspiring to know someone who has a heart of one. Indeed, the true achievers are marked by their passion more than their profession.

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