

useful part of the book. These lessons have been formulated based on the rich experiences of the author with HR outsourcing and the issues involved in it. The chapter cautions against some of the misconceptions the users might have, regarding, among others, not caring about the hidden costs, not appreciating the positive and negative points about service credits, etc. Some important caveats about the possibility of under-performance by Indian offshorings are provided in appendix. But I feel that there was a good scope for providing more comprehensive explanation rather than just the bullet points made in this part. Also, while the title of this appendix is India-specific, all the explanations are general and could be applicable anywhere.

I must mention that the case studies—projected as best practice cases—are useful but are not sufficiently comprehensive. They appear only as illustrations of some of the issues discussed rather than case studies as such. There was considerable scope for emphasizing limitations along with the utility of offshoring. The case narrations also end without any concluding messages. In the Orion Partners case, for example, there was a tremendous scope for including critical information in the working of the programme management team and the offshore resource team. It should be understood that the actual issues are not as simple as they are often made out to be. Issues of inter-personal relations, cross-cultural misunderstandings and complexities of working in different time-zones crop up in such arrangements. The author could have dealt with such issues as well, so as to provide a more comprehensive view to the reader. Most of the things that have been said look rosy. In reality, life is surely somewhat different from what it seems to be. In fact, in the Orion Partners case, for example, the author does hint or mention briefly (p. 86) some learnings, which include: need to address regional and cultural issues and the need to appreciate the discrepancy between the understanding of the functional systems analysts at the programme management site and of the functional analysts at the offshore locations. It would have been more useful if the author had included actual incidents of conflict, misperceptions and cooperation in the interest of a more comprehensive grasping of issues by the reader.

Overall, however, *The Indian Offshore Advantage* has addressed an area that is important to global companies in the contemporary business era. The language used by the author is simple and will especially appeal to the corporates from non-English speaking countries. The author's formulations are based on his wide experience of working in different companies. The

book contains a good overview of issues involved in HR offshoring. From that point of view, the book is useful and interesting. It is likely to catch the attention of company strategists and those desirous of outsourcing activities. It will be a good source of reference for academics as well, especially because little is known in this area at present.

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**Anjana Sen, *Get the Ego Advantage*, New Delhi, Response, 2006, 150 pp, Rs. 250, soft.**

Indian executives are a confused lot. They are caught in the transition between the tradition and modern. The strong cultural and parenting influences, rooted predominantly in the agrarian tradition, create an identity which finds itself lost in the modern urban ethos (Garg and Parikh, 1993). Many writers address this interface and provide ways and means of coping. This book addresses this specific need among the Indian executives to understand their intra-personal issues, their roots and change for personal growth and development. The book has taken the word ego, one of the most misused words in everyday English and developed an interesting self-help book, with a more appropriate and neutral definition and use of the term.

The author uses an imaginary character *Abu*, who plays the hero, in the very short enumerative stories. She has further creatively enhanced the impact with visual effects through cartoons based on everyday incidents and mythological figures and Superman. The book has highly relevant quotes strewn throughout from Khalil Gibran and others.

The book starts off with defining the individual's ego as a suit, much like the one worn by the Superman. "Picture the individual as a package of attributes, abilities, attitudes and intelligence. This "being" is delineated by an imaginary boundary, which defines the limits of the individual's powers and occupies space in the social framework of family, community and organization" (p. 18). The next chapter is devoted to the suit metaphor—its shapes and forms, antecedents and consequences.

The third chapter is on self-esteem and self-constructs. The following chapters take the reader through the concepts of love, parental impact on ego formation, narcissism, leadership and professionalism through the ego lens. These are followed by chapters

on the negative aspects of ego—lack of empathy, rigidity to change, cocooning, feeling of professional and personal immortality and ways of overcoming these.

The chapter on self-esteem traces the linkages from emotions and given values to the ego, self esteem and other self-concepts like self-love, self-confidence, assertiveness and self-importance. The author further elaborates on character disorder, neurosis and normal behaviour using the psychology and transaction analysis frameworks.

The chapter on love enumerates the importance of the ability to stretch and flatten the ego to be able to love and be loved, whether it is between parent and child or man and woman. “To love...first accept and respect each person’s personal ego, as we accept that they must wear clothes to protect themselves” (p. 56). The next chapter traces the evolution of the ego in a child and how the parents’ ego impacts it. Best practices on parenting are elaborated to prevent bloated or bruised egos among the children. The importance of learning one’s strengths and limitations to the ego development and ways of ensuring this in a child is further elaborated—“Parents need to stand by and help heal the rents and tears, rather than unwittingly do some damage themselves” (p. 72).

The chapter on narcissism and arrogance links parenting to these two attributes of human personality, the differences between the two and the need for healthy self-love for ego-building. A certain level of self-love leads to hard work, to be better than others, whereas in extreme cases, “removes a person from reality” (p. 80). They hardly ever have “close friends and lasting relationships” (p. 81). The chapter on professional ego differentiates the skills, abilities and achievements from their consequences like power, position and money. Professional ego is derived from “growing knowledge, successive achievements and self-worth...the wisdom derived from failure, as with recognition and success” (p. 85). It is important that one does not let the consequences of professional ego blow up the personal ego. Moreover, a flexible ego and the ability to accept and appreciate that others and even teams have egos is needed to work in teams effectively.

Leadership is the subject of the next chapter. Leaders are “self motivated, self-regulated, trust- worthy and balanced...must have no delusions about their abilities and have full knowledge of the extent of their powers and range of influence” (p. 98). Leaders have flexible egos that expand and include others’ egos and are never rigid or overpowering. The author goes on to elaborate

why it is important to be a good listener and how ego prevents one from giving importance to others and hence, listen less in the next chapter. Lack of openness comes with past experiences and an inability to accept reality which might be contrary to self-beliefs, leading to rigidity. Following rigidity, other chapters cover isolation, sense of personal and professional immortality, reluctance to seek and give feedback and ways of improving these.

The book’s strength lies in its ability to keep the reader engaged through cartoons and apt quotes. However, the author’s self-confessed lack of background is obvious, as the book lacks in terms of theoretical or conceptual foundations, as it is based on the author’s own experience as a trainer and speaker and most of which seems like common sense. The book takes a prescriptive tone and is loaded with statements of universal truth towards the end.

Overall, the book is interesting with a strong appeal through cartoons for light reading. The book is ideal as a companion for flights and train journeys, if you are looking for a book to keep you engaged—something lighter than a business magazine but do not like generic magazines or novels and have an interest in understanding human beings. If the readers expect to gain in terms of knowledge or conceptual understanding or a comprehensive “Do it Yourself” list for self-improvement, they are likely to be disappointed.

The book adds to the numerous self-help books available in the market, starting with “how to make friends”, catering to the vast educated middle-class work force, saddled with an education seriously lacking in character-building and social skills. This book is likely to find a niche between the theoretically strong self-help books (e.g., *I am Ok You Are Ok*, by Thomas Harris/*Emotional Intelligence*, by Daniel Goleman), short “How to \_\_\_” and “101 Ways to \_\_\_” booklets, the lighter anecdote-based books on universal truths (e.g., *Seven Habits Series* by Stephen Covey) and *Alchemist/Jonathan Livingston Seagull*-type of novelettes.

## References

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