

On Aggression

One very much hears the expression “be aggressive” in America. This popular concept has reached the high level of aura and myth as that of “do your thing” and “get moving again”. All such inspirational slogans are supposed to cram within the space of a few words the wisdom of a generation, the distillation of profound thinking - an exhortation directed to melt the chains of centuries on human mind and set it free to ultimate achievement.

Supervisors at work never tire of admonishing workers of their feeble capacity for aggressiveness. Management consultants talk of the quality of aggressiveness as a necessary requirement for a successful manager. In business dealings, sales promotions and even in personal relationships aggressiveness is emphasized. It is considered the super catalyst and the super lubricant in almost all situations and therefore a highly desired part of human personality.

Aggression on part of a worker is supposed to set fire to his efforts and get the goals he has set for himself to be realizable faster. It makes him a high-achiever. It pushes efficiency to a high level. Also, an aggressive personality is considered possessed of a high level of purpose, straightness of direction and raw power to get things moving. An aggressive man is seen as a man without self-doubt. A man free of the psychological burdens produced by the complexity of the modern life is a hero in these times. An aggressive man appears to be already free of such burdens or on his way to achieve such freedom. Action has been glorified to a high level in our culture. An aggressive man is a hero because he possesses the anger of last few generations on the established values which are now considered irrelevant and repressive. Therefore, the image of an aggressive man appears to be a synthesis of the images of anger, action, and belief in arriving at an end without regard for the quality of means used to achieve it, and above all the unabashed worshipping of the virtues of selfishness. All these elements of aggressiveness are the evolved values of our culture at this time. Therefore, the faith in aggressiveness is no accident.

While the popularity of the power of aggressiveness remains at a mythical level at this time, it is unfortunate that not enough thought has been given about its value. The philosophy of aggressiveness has evolved over a period of time in man's ongoing search to find himself and the way to live. Many people believe that man has become over-civilized and in the process has lost the power to fight life. Also, the complexity of modern life has brought many psychological problems. The last few decades of popular thinking has found that self is the only tangible thing in life. This realization is considered the towering achievement of the new culture. Self is given supremacy above everything else. Self has become the ultimate reference point of man's physical and psychological life. No wonder we have such glorification of sex and selfishness. Narcissism is the underlying process of many popular fads, styles and thoughts. Serious thinkers believe that the psyche unleashing aggression unburdens itself of psychological complications and thus restores its primal health. Therefore, aggression is the ultimate catharsis.

The best definition of aggression is: an unprovoked attack or action intended to dominate or master. Why would such a quality become the most desired in a person in our corporate and social world? This is the dilemma of the times. The virtues of dynamism, initiative, patience and leadership are not very much talked about in corporate America these days. These are considered the slogans of the earlier generations, glittering but not useful in our times. Intimidation and aggression are supposed to produce more results. Results and above all instant results are the most desired things in our times. The quality of means used to achieve them is of lesser importance. The short cuts used to produce results are the most significant elements which reveal the state of a culture at any given time. Particularly, it is the selfish streak in man which has exalted the value of aggressiveness. One wishes it would be replaced by dynamism, courage, will and endurance. Aggressiveness has been too much of a shortcut for these great human values.

Like many false directions in man's history before this one will take its toll. Tensions among countries these days to a good extent exist because of the posture of aggressiveness each takes. It creates mistrust and suspicion, which

keep us apart. The alienation of many people and the breakup of many families is because of aggressiveness permeating too deeply and widely in our culture. When a mind gives up on patience, reasonableness, charm and humor it has already entered the door of aggression — aggression with itself and the world around it. It is the sickness of the times and the aberration of this age.