

Swanvesha

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Surprised vs
Astonished

“In the golden glow of the summer sun, Dreams are woven, and life’s joys begun”

– *Anonymous*



WELCOME TO SWANVESHA

Swanvesha (*Swa-Anvesha*, Sanskrit for *Self-Inquiry*) offers insights, stories, and actionable strategies to help leaders grow and adapt in an ever-changing world. Stay informed, inspired, and lead with purpose.

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TALLY HO



WELCOME NOTES

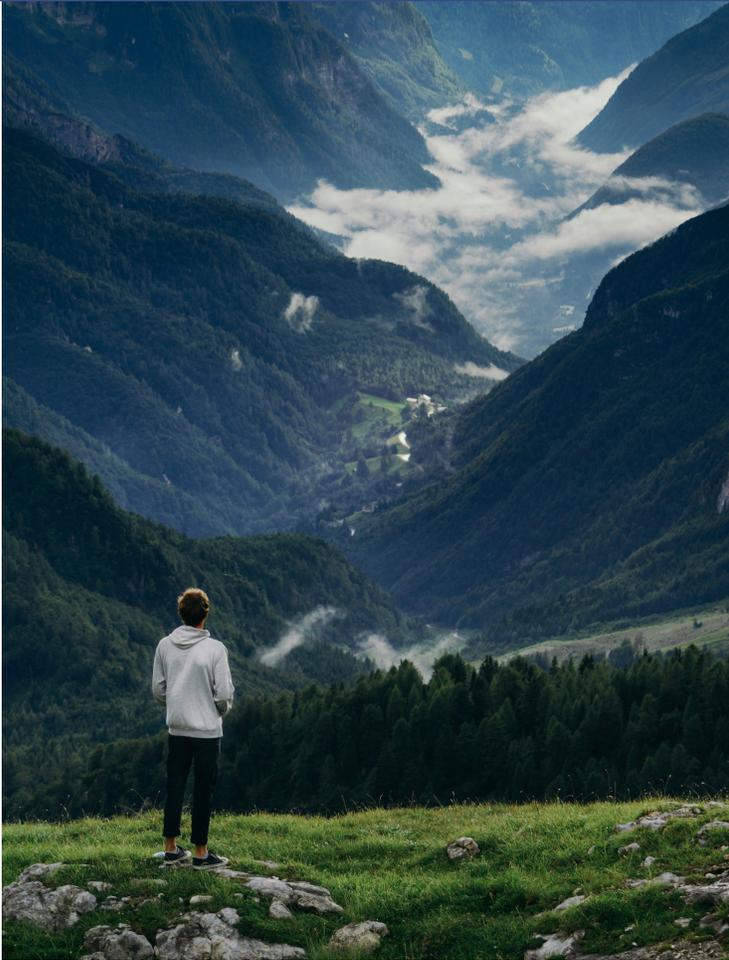
Summer is finally here, bringing with it the promise of longer days and brighter moments. As the mercury rises, let your spirits soar and embrace the vibrancy that only this season can offer.

In **Musings**, we delve into a thought-provoking story by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore about a man's search for God's house and the unexpected fear of finding God himself. In **Novella**, we explore the transformative power of epiphany in breaking habits, illustrated by a fascinating tale from a century ago. Finally, in **Corporate Culture**, I share a personal, first-hand account of a pivotal moment in the early success of the Indian IT industry.

I am an Executive and Leadership Coach. Connect with me on my website www.swanvesha.com for more resources. Or write to me at swanvesha@gmail.com Happy reading.

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Musings



THE SUCCESS PARADOX”

A seeker, consumed by the desire to find God, embarks on a relentless journey across vast lands, deserts, and mountains. Each step is driven by the belief that finding God’s house will bring ultimate fulfillment and answers to life’s deepest questions.

One day, the seeker arrives at a house marked **“God’s Home.”** Ecstatic and trembling with joy, they approach the door. But as their hand lifts to knock, doubt and fear arise. What if this truly is God’s home? If I meet God, my search ends—my journey, purpose, and thrill of discovery—all gone. What remains but eternity without challenges?

Paralyzed by this realization, the seeker steps back, removes their shoes to avoid making noise, and descends the marble steps, fearing even an accidental encounter with God. They flee, running faster than ever before. Later, they reflect: *“I know God’s home, yet I avoid it. I search elsewhere for the excitement, the challenge, and the nourishment it brings to my ego. Deep down, I know my search is not for God—it is to preserve myself.”*

And so, the seeker continues, finding meaning not in reaching the divine but in the endless pursuit of it.

This story was originally written by the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore in a poem with a different purpose. However, there are many leadership lessons from this parable.

- Leaders often chase big goals like promotions or market share, but after achieving them, the thrill can fade, leaving a sense of emptiness.
- Leaders resist change, fearing loss of identity. True growth comes from taking the plunge and welcoming the new, when it comes.
- Sometimes leaders focus on achievements for self-validation or driven by ego. True leadership shifts focus to serving others, fostering collaboration, and creating lasting impact.
- Effective leadership requires understanding one’s purpose, fears, and drivers, enabling alignment with long-term values and purpose.

What is your leadership lesson from this story?



This story, attributed to many, dates to the era of ships with masts, sails, and massive ropes to maneuver them. On one voyage, the captain faced a peculiar problem. The ship was stranded at sea, and the crew had run out of tobacco. The sailors grew restless—they could survive on a meal a day, but living without tobacco was unbearable.

As days turned into weeks, the craving for tobacco consumed the crew and they became restless. Soon, they became increasingly resourceful in their attempts to find a substitute.

Some sailors began sneaking out at night, cutting ropes, and smoking the fibers. Before long, the entire crew was smoking ropes. When the captain discovered this, he was stunned. Without ropes, the ship couldn't sail back to land. Despite threats, bribes, and desperate measures, they barely managed to limp back to port.

Years later, in faraway Utah, a foreman read the captain's memoirs. A chain smoker himself, he was holding a half-burnt cigarette as he came across the passage. He set his cigarette in the ashtray and told himself, "I will only pick this up, when I get this kind of desperation to smoke dirty old pieces of ropes."

Decades later, when the foreman passed away, the same ashtray with the half-burnt cigarette was removed from the center table in his study, untouched since that day.

Habits are repetitive actions or thoughts performed almost automatically. Some habits are beneficial, while others can be harmful or irrational. Breaking a habit is often difficult. People often cling to habits—even harmful or irrational ones—because they provide a sense of comfort or relief. To break habits, first you must become aware of the habit, then cultivate a strong will to change it, followed by consistent, conscious effort over days and months to rewire the behavior. This is the scientific method.

And then you have such things like the foreman's epiphany.

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Corporate Culture



POWER OF SILENCE

In September 1989, GE Chairman Jack Welch visited India, intending to sell airplane engines and turbines. He was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, but instead, the PM sent Sam Pitroda—his Advisor on Technology Missions—along with Jairam Ramesh (Sam’s PA at that time and later a Minister) and others, to meet Welch at a breakfast meeting at Delhi’s Taj Mahal Hotel.

Welch was clearly displeased at not meeting the PM. But what really stumped him was when Sam surprised him by saying, *“We want to sell you software.”*

Welch responded sharply, *“I’m not buying engines... then what do we do?”*

Sam calmly replied, *“I guess we have nothing to do—let’s have breakfast.”*

Jairam was horrified. The directive from the PM was clear: sign a deal. He looked at Sam, who was calmly eating his breakfast as silence filled the room.

Finally, Welch snapped, *“Okay, tell me what you want to tell me about software.”*

Sam then laid out an ambitious proposal: \$10 million in Indian software contracts. Welch agreed to send eleven GE executives to India within 30 days to evaluate local software talent. That visit led to GE’s first major software order in India.

But there is an interesting footnote to the story. As Sam told me and a few of my colleagues during a meeting.

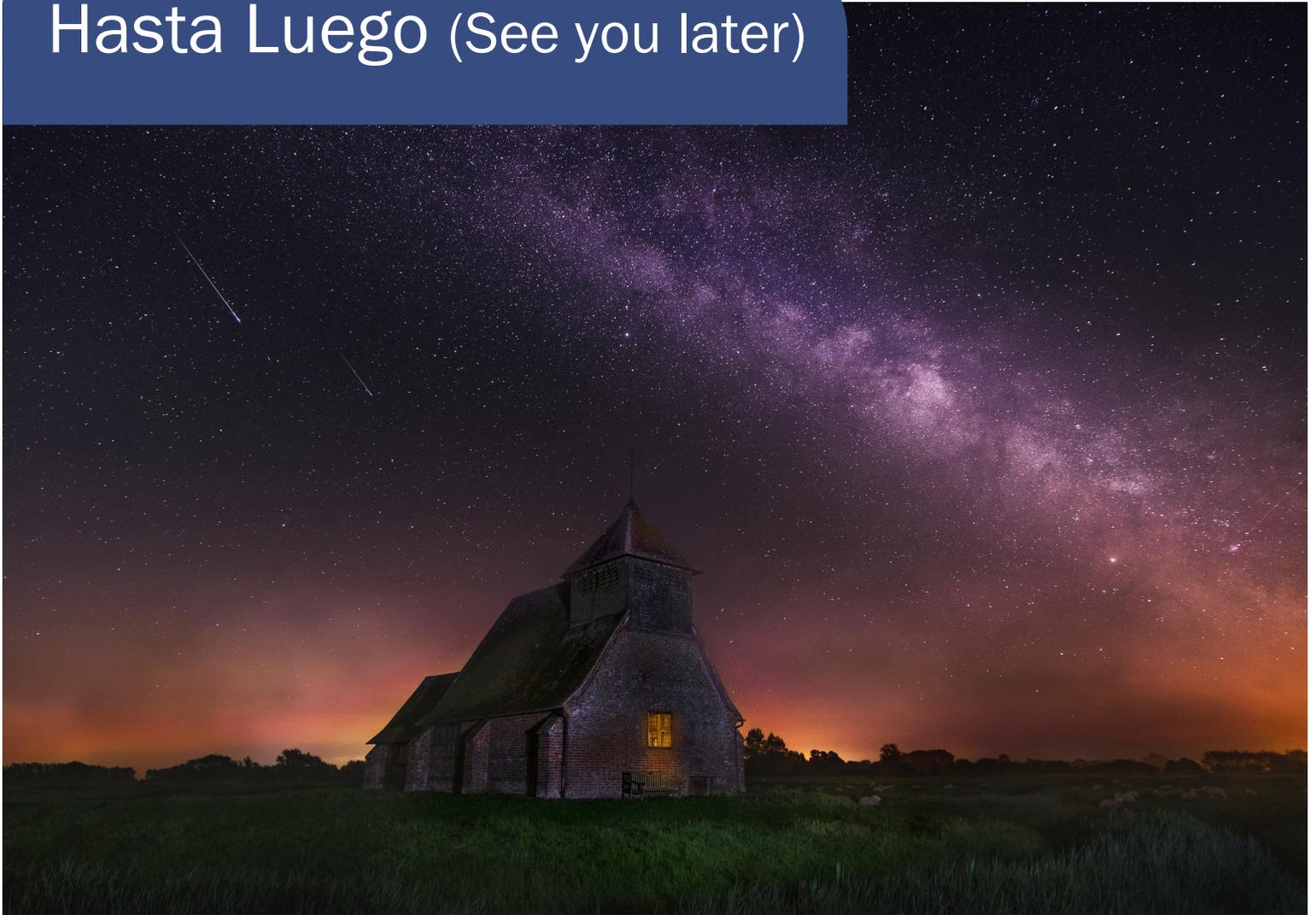
At that time, no Indian company had office space suitable to host the GE executives. Sam and his team discovered a group of seven entrepreneurs who had formed a company in 1981. Sam reached out to them, and they quickly arranged office space and infrastructure to impress the GE visitors. That company was **Infosys**. And that, my friends, is one of the stories of how the Indian IT industry was born.

Here's the link to the WSJ article (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB111151806639186539>)

As Sam told us, there was a lot of pressure on him to sign the deal. But the fact that he was able to handle the silence and Welch could not, changed everything. The power of silence helped in the creation of a \$300 billion industry employing more than 5 million people.

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Hasta Luego (See you later)



THANK YOU

Thank you very much for reading my newsletter. I hope you enjoyed it. As we wind down, here is something lighthearted.

Dr John Doe was a Lexicographer and was extremely particular about the usage of words. Though professionally he was doing extremely well. Things were not so good on the domestic front. He suspected his wife of having an affair. One day he caught her with her lover.

*“I am **astonished**.”* said Dr Doe

His wife, who was also quite the wordsmith replied, *“We are **astonished** – you are merely **surprised**.”*

Write to me if you get it

You can contact me on swanvesha@gmail.com or on www.swanvesha.com

Enjoy the beginning of Summer.

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