

Swanvesha

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Smile - It's good.



“Yesterday, I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today, I am wise, so I am changing myself”

– AnR- Rumi



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

“When I lived in India, the idea of ‘back to school’ wasn’t quite the big cultural event it is in Canada. Of course, it carried its own excitement and joy, but in many ways it felt different. Here, September doesn’t just signal a return to classrooms—it marks a fresh start, as summer slowly bids adieu and people gear up for some of the most productive months of the year. That’s the spirit we explore in this month’s newsletter. In **Musings**, we reflect on an intriguing question: *Does inspiration come from within or outside?* A Zen story from Japan offers us some perspective. In **Novella**, we stay with the “back to school” theme — a little bit of thermodynamics and electricity to explore how balance leads to sustained growth. And in **Corporate Culture**, I share a simple conversation with a neighbour that left me saddened but also brought into focus, a fault line in how corporations treat employees.

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 OCEAN WITHIN

In the early days of the Meiji era there lived a well-known wrestler called O-nami, Great Waves. O-nami was immensely strong and knew the art of wrestling. In his private bouts he defeated even his teacher, but in public he was so bashful that his own pupils threw him. Seeking help, he turned to Zen master Hakuju, a wandering teacher, who was stopping in a little temple nearby. The master said, “Your name is Great Waves. Tonight, sit and become waves. Forget you are a man. Become the ocean.”

O-nami sat in meditation trying to imagine himself as waves. He thought of many different things. Then gradually he turned more to the feeling of the waves. As the night advanced the waves became larger. They swept away the flowers in their vases. Even the Buddha in the shrine was inundated. Before dawn the temple was nothing but the ebb and flow of an immense sea.

In the morning the teacher found O-nami meditating, a faint smile on his face. He patted the wrestler’s shoulder. “Now nothing can disturb you,” he said. “You are those waves. You will sweep everything before you.”

The thing with any story is not only in what it states, but in how we can look at it. O-nami saw the waves as inspiration – perhaps even destiny, since his name meant Great Wave. But did the waves truly change O-nami?

Think of the musk deer: mesmerized by the fragrance of musk, it roams endlessly in search, not realising the scent comes from within its own body. Inspiration works the same way. It is a spark, but the real transformation happens within.

Swanvesha – self-enquiry – is what brings growth and wisdom. You may find inspiration in mentors, coaches, children, nature, or circumstance. But never forget: the musk is within you. The true art is to pause, look inward, and let the wave rise from inside.

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Most of us know water boils at 100°C. But have you ever asked *why*? Heat alone isn't the full story—atmospheric pressure plays a huge role. At sea level, where pressure is 1 atmosphere, water boils at 100°C. As altitude rises, pressure falls—so water boils at lower temperatures. On Everest, for example, it boils at just 71°C. Fascinating, isn't it? Push the idea further: in a vacuum, with no pressure at all, water instantly vaporizes.

But here's the catch: boiling water at higher altitudes burns more fuel. Lower boiling points mean rapid cooling, so energy drains faster.

Why this detour into science? Because it's a metaphor for life. We all know that in the right environment, with purpose and resources, success should follow. Yet many don't reach their goals. Why? Because of the "altitude" we put ourselves at. As we rise in our careers, our egos rise too. That altitude pulls us away from being grounded. We end up burning more energy to prove ourselves, only to find the "vapour" of our effort collapsing back into water in no time.

As climbers know, altitude can be deceptive. The higher you go, the thinner the air gets. Energy drains faster, thinking becomes foggy, and simple tasks feel harder. The same is true in leadership — when our egos rise too high, we lose clarity and burn fuel just to stay upright. It's not the climb that defeats us, but the lack of oxygen. So, what is the solution? Balance. Think of electricity. Direct current (DC) pushes in one direction, straight and unrelenting, but it overheats and loses energy quickly. Alternating current (AC), on the other hand, flows back and forth, conserving power, creating rhythm, and carrying energy across vast distances.

That is grounded ambition: not ego at altitude, but energy in balance. Not burning harder but learning to flow. Real growth, like AC, isn't about pushing in a straight line — it's about finding the rhythm between drive and humility, ambition and rest. That rhythm is what sustains.

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Corporate Culture



THE 20 SECOND GOODBYE

Letting people go is never easy. Yet it happens often in organizations. A recent conversation with a friend, though, left me deeply unsettled.

They work at one of Canada's big banks, which has been laying off employees over the past year as part of a cost-cutting plan. On a Sunday evening, their supervisor called to ask them to identify someone on their team who could be let go. That alone raised questions in my mind: *How is this planned?*

What followed disturbed me even more. My friend explained that when it came time to share the news, they were given a short script – about 20 seconds long. It simply informed the employee that he was being let go and that HR would explain the details. Two years of working side by side, reduced to a single line. The entire process – including the severance explanation and paperwork – was over in about 25 minutes.

This conversation left me with a few reflections:

- If this is truly the transactional nature of work, then at least let's have the honesty to say it aloud.
- If companies can spend months on onboarding and engagement, surely, they can spend more than 20 seconds giving someone the dignity of a real conversation when they leave.
- If people are treated as headcount to be managed rather than human beings to be respected, we should not be surprised when employees stop believing in all the talk of belonging and loyalty.

I understand that organizations may be cautious about legal exposure, using scripts and agreements to protect themselves. But they miss the point: Every employee is more than a headcount, and how we treat people in transition shapes the trust and engagement of the remaining employees. Treating people with respect and honesty—even in difficult moments—builds a culture that survives far longer than contracts or policies ever will.

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Hasta Luego (See you later)



THANK YOU

Thank you for reading my newsletter. I hope you enjoyed it. As we wind down, here's something lighthearted.

Colleague 1: "How was your vacation?"

Colleague 2: "Amazing! Beaches, books, and zero emails."

Colleague 1: "Sounds perfect. What was the highlight of your trip?"

Colleague 2: "Honestly? The part where nobody asked me to share my screen."

Stay well and stay safe.

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