

Courage of Conviction

By Anil Shrivastava “Musafir”

Looking for a New Year resolution? How about having some courage of conviction? Courage of one’s convictions means putting one’s opinions into practice. The definition of courage is: *the quality that enables a person to meet dangers without giving way to fear*. Most of us do not practice what we feel due to fear of conflict with others’ opinions, ridicule or consequences. Whatever the circumstance, one needs courage, determination and strength of character to defend his or her viewpoint and not be beaten into submission by other people’s opinions.

Most people I meet have the right ideas about life in general. They talk sense on a one-to-one basis, but when it comes to practicing those ideas, they lose their conviction and succumb to the norm of the collective group over their own individual idea. I understand that it is a daunting task to swim against the current, but how about doing it in small steps? Here are some suggestions based on my personal observations:

1. **Whenever you read or hear an idea or opinion, just ponder to see if they really make sense.** We always used to hear, “A person of color can never be elected to the office of President of the United States.” Now we know that those statements were nothing more than the hyperbole of naysayers.
2. **If another person’s ideas are different from yours, it is not necessarily a put-down.** The US auto companies were warned for years by auto analysts to revamp their cost structure and number of brands. This was always treated as prejudicial and a dysphemism at the best. Ultimately, the same companies now agree with the auto analysts. In other words, do not get upset on hearing criticism; every one of us makes mistakes, and sometimes we need others to help us see them
3. **Do not blindly follow the maxims of organized religion.** All the religious books, dogmas and rituals are written by men and

women on earth. Nothing is written by God Himself. Everything is someone’s opinion or interpretation. Unfortunately, more people die due to so-called religious wars than any other type of conflict. In the past century alone we had the Sino-Japanese War, the Holocaust, the Indo-Pakistani separation, the Arab-Israeli wars, and the Shia-Sunni rebellions in Iraq. I can go on and on.

4. **Believe in the essence of religion.** Every religion believes in God. God is one. Every religion teaches us to love each other and treat others as we wish to be treated. If you know someone who is difficult to deal with, you may not be aware of the reason why that person is being difficult. Strive to learn more about the person. You may be surprised to find that he has undergone some personal tragedy or other circumstances which have affected the way that he relates to others.
5. **Live within your means.** God has created all of us differently. We are all rich in different ways. Material wealth is not the only measure of success. We are all aware of the housing market bubble burst of 2007. The main reason for the debacle was that people were living beyond their means. Again, too many refused to think independently and allowed the so-called experts to do their thinking for them. But almost all of those experts failed to forecast the last recession, and they missed the stock market bubble – the largest financial asset bubble in history and we still believed them. “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.”

My opinions expressed above are by no means an extension of existentialism, absolutism, empiricism or any other “ism.” All I am emphasizing is that we should practice our convictions for the greater good of the society and world at large. “A ‘No’ uttered from the deepest conviction is better than a ‘Yes’ merely uttered to please, or worse, to avoid trouble.” (Gandhi) Happy New Year!