

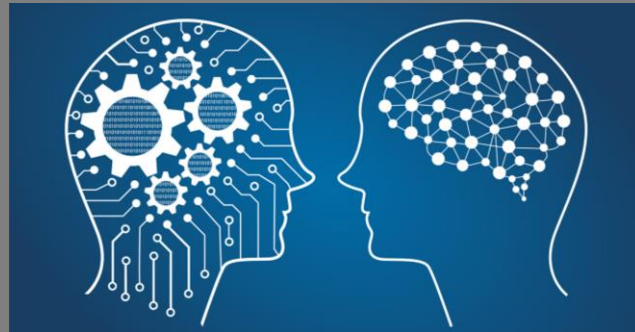
DIVISIVE MINDS AND INTEGRATIVE PERSONALITIES CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Some Introspective Autobiographical Insights
from a Participant Observer

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Divisive Mind

To divide means to separate into parts. It also means to make people disagree or the existence of disagreement or difference between two or more groups. The division is the act of dividing people into groups.

A divisive mind is a tendency or mindset a person has to assign to self or other people, quickly, a group identity (for example caste, community, linguistic, professional, occupational, cultural, social, batch, national etc.) and anchor subsequent behaviors and decisions based on such identity.

Individuals with a Divisive mindset may be called divisive people just like people with an Internal Locus of Control are called Internals. Divisive individuals often differentiate and attribute group characteristics to divide people into groups that cause disagreement and competition against each other. By nature, the division has the potential to create competition and conflict rather than collaboration. Collaboration does not require divisiveness. It is a mindset. All of us perhaps have this mindset. I have it, you have it. It is perhaps our nature. However some live on it, promote it and others are either beneficiaries of it or victims of it. The sum of results arising out of divisiveness is likely to be less than those that could be obtained without it or with an integrative mindset. While divisiveness in the short term benefits some people, in the long run it hinders overall growth, consumes more resources and increases overheads or transaction costs or process costs.

Integrative personality

To integrate means to combine parts into a whole. It also means to make someone accepted within a group. Integrative personality is intended to depict a constellation of behaviors that strive towards inclusion, integration, cooperation, emphasis on the whole, and benefits to larger groups of people or entities including humanity at large. A divisive mind gives importance to parts or small groups while an integrative mind focuses on the whole and strives to build the whole and use the strengths of the whole.

The term “Integrative Personality” is preferred here to “Integrative Mind” to communicate the desirability of developing constellations of qualities that promote integration in society. A divisive mind is a mindset that can be changed while an Integrative personality is a personality trait that can be developed with consciousness and training.

In my view, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai and Ravi Matthai are two great Integrative personalities. Dr. Sarabhai built several institutions in different fields including space and management. Ravi Matthai saw Management as promoting the mission of professionalizing management in all sectors of life and actively demonstrated it in his own life. Their design of the institutions they were associated with speaks for their integrative mind. Mahatma Gandhi of course is an embodiment of integration. His passion for one India was unparalleled. All corporates working for uplifting their local communities where they are located without being asked to do so are also indicative of high degree of Integrative tendencies. Any inclusive mind leads to the development of an Integrative personality.

A divisive mind is a mind that shows tendencies to constantly divide people into smaller groups and use the groups for decision-making and various other purposes. Integrative personality is a personality that always gives importance to the whole rather than the parts. The integrative personality thinks of larger goals and larger society while a divisive mind looks after the short-term interests of self or small group with which it is associated.

A group of faculty of a University or an Institution opposing the allocation of resources or blocking the growth of another department because it is growing out of proportion is an outcome of a divisive mindset. The divisive mind always sees the benefits to a part and often ignores the benefits to a larger community. In this case, the clients served, several people benefited due to services rendered by the fast-growing department etc. are ignored and only the benefits availed of by the fast-growing department are highlighted and issues of equity and fairness are brought in. This largely arises out of a divisive mindset. A group of Faculty of one Institution blocking the collaboration between two institutions as it may bring the second institution fame even though together they may be doing a great service to the country is also an example of divisiveness. Divisiveness involves differentiation in terms of “I” and “You” and “Ours” and “Theirs”. The term “We” is interpreted narrowly and boundaries are put and maintained strictly. Jealousy, Mistrust Insecurity, Intolerance, narrow mindedness etc. are perhaps the root causes of divisive mindsets. Sacrifice, Trust, Strong Spiritualistic orientation, Self Confidence, Respect for each other, Empathy, vision and long-term thinking are perhaps associated with the Integrative personality.

There are several stories including Panchatantra stories that tell about the consequences of divisiveness and the utility of staying together or united. The story of five bulls fighting a lion when they stand united or the story of how a group of birds flew away along with the net and escape from the bird hunter are all stories that aim at promoting integration.

What Causes Divisiveness

We are taught from childhood to be divisive. It happens culturally. In some Asian cultures, divisiveness is high. All Asian Cultures have enough reasons or parameters to be divisive. Some of them are more divisive and others less.

A few years ago I was working in Indonesia as a USAID Consultant to the Ministry of Health. As a part of my work, I had to take a group of Doctors on field trips to teach them Task Analysis-A technique we introduced to bring more professionalism in the management of health services in Indonesia. Whenever I asked the team to choose a Health Center for fieldwork, they would talk among themselves and in five minutes come up with their proposal and it was always unanimous. I was amazed at the teamwork and remarked about the same with appreciation to the participants who were Doctors. One of the lady Doctors narrated to me the following in response to my compliments. I reconstruct this from my memory:

“Professor Rao, I agree that we in Indonesia work like a team. We care for each other and respect each other. There is a lot of sharing that takes place. I also agree that it should strike you as an important part of our culture as I believe that your country which taught us a lot at one time has this one aspect very much lacking in them. I am sorry to say this as I had only one experience which I like to narrate”.

She continued... “Professor, A few months ago I was attending a meeting of UNFPA in Bangkok and it was attended by participants from various countries. Each country had two or more delegates. We had delegates from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Japan and India etc. One thing I noticed was, whenever a Pakistani spoke something about his country his colleague supported it. Whenever a Bangladeshi spoke about his country his colleague from another department supported it. Whether it was a Sri Lankan or, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi or Malaysian, or a Singaporean, they supported each other in their presentations. However whenever an Indian spoke the second or third Indian contradicted him and said what my colleague said is true in his state (Tamil Nadu) as he comes from Tamil Nadu but the situation is different in my state (UP) as I come from UP and the third person gave the third story. The convention was filled with contradictions by Indians. Surprisingly the contradictions extended even to fights. We found that by the fourth day the Indian delegates were even staying at different places and coming at different times to the conference. So I understand that in your country, teamwork is difficult as every Indian seems to differentiate themselves a lot more than integrate unlike other countries. We are an integrating nation and we help each other”

This episode left strong impressions in my mind about how much a divided nation we are. I am deeply pained to see that we are not learning lessons from our past and others and are pursuing policies that divide the nation more than integrate the same.

Divided Nation: Inherited Divisiveness

We are a divided nation. Our minds are divisive as we are taught from birth to view each other in terms of the caste, and sub-caste or gotra, community, religious affiliation, language, regional affiliation, etc. various variables. Because we are taught from early childhood to view each other in terms of these variables our self-concept and behavior towards each other is determined by the classification we hold of each other. When we judge the other person by his/her affiliations, we undermine or overestimate the capability of the other person as per the stereotypes we hold. When such stereotypes are shown towards us by others we spend time fighting such stereotypes if they are to our disadvantage. When we discover that the other person does not believe in our internal capability and is attributing to us competencies by virtue of the stereotypes he holds about us and not by virtue of our real capabilities, it hurts and we engage ourselves to prove what we are capable. The result is always fights to prove or disprove what others believe. As a result, a lot of psychological energy is spent on proving and disproving. This results in enormous unproductive transactions.

The amount of wastage of the Nation's time in internal water disputes, communal riots, caste wars, etc. are all a drag on the nation. They affect economic development. Our policymakers should be sensitive to this and should engage the nation in more productive issues than in such transactional issues. They should aim to build integrative minds rather than perpetuating the divisiveness in our country. What we need today are integrative minds for nation-building and not those who are further dividing the nation. People, politicians and policymakers who are capable of working towards projecting an integrated India and Indians as one are the need of the hour.

I am happy the modern youth is fighting and arguing for the abolition of the caste system. It is high time that everyone is treated with the same dignity and given an equal opportunity to bring out the merit that each individual has. Every form of divisiveness-religion, caste community etc. should be minimized and national Integration needs to be promoted. The divisive mindset is evident even in the best of the corporations where teamwork is difficult and Indians are known to be poor team workers. Our policies seem to perpetuate the divisive mind and a lot of time of our nation is being engaged in fighting divisiveness created by our policies.

Integration and Diversity

Having made the above observations I would like to say that there is perhaps a lot in Ancient India that promoted integration and tolerance. We need to discover the same. On the positive side, it is amazing that a country so divided as ours still runs well as a democracy. The current Indian leadership is an indication of tolerance for diversity. However, the unfortunate part is perhaps we are not using this diversity adequately and divisive policies are taking over an overwhelming impact on integrative personalities. Divisiveness is normally intensive and has a larger emotional appeal than integration. Integration becomes a philosophy while divisiveness becomes a reality. Divisiveness serves the short-term interests of certain vocal sections of people and therefore is paid attention to. Long-term interests are postponed and integrative personalities get frustrated.

Academy of Human Resources Development (AHRD) and National HRD Network (NHRDN)

A number of my observations have been derived from my experiences with the NHRDN and AHRD.

The NHRDN is a professional body that started about 20 years ago. In the last 20 years, NHRDN has grown vastly. The seeds for its growth were sown and the foundation was laid in the first three years. The principle agenda of learning from each other continues. The annual or biannual conferences and the chapter meetings for learning from each other and networking continue. The chapters have grown in number. The culture of publishing papers to be distributed during the conference continues.

The first ten years were institution-building years. This was done well by all those associated with NHRDN and the initial leaders MRR Nair as the second President and Udai Pareek as the third President led the organization to stability. Dissemination of knowledge through publications became a major USP of NHRDN. The educational programs like the HRD facilitators program initiated through NHRDN were later continued by AHRD. Among the major accomplishments of NHRDN are:

1. Its publications-about 20 books by now.
2. Post Graduate program with MDI, Gurgaon
3. Academy of HRD
4. Regular publication of Newsletter
5. Setting new standards in conference Management
6. Getting global scholars to India
7. Providing a forum for the exchange of young HR Professionals (Delhi chapter set new standards in this)
8. Enhanced membership with regular meetings (Hyderabad chapter showed the way for it).
9. Networking to learn from each other and collaborating with other forums (Bangalore chapter showed the way)
10. CII-NHRDN competency model
11. Code of conduct and values for HRD professionals and the list goes on.

AHRD

Origins: National HRD Network (NHRDN) in a Mission-Vision workshop held at Chennai on September 11, 1990, conceived a Center for Research and Education in NHRD to be set up to further the objectives of NHRDN. This workshop was facilitated by Anil Sachdeva and V S Mahesh. MRR Nair (MD Bokaro Steel and Second President NHRDN), Udai Pareek (President), T V Rao (Founder President), Fr. E. Abraham (Founder Secretary), Keith D'Souza (XLRI, Secretary and Editor Newsletter) and Rakesh Kumar Associate Secretary, NHRDN) Office bearers of NHRDN meet at Bokaro and decided to name it as the Academy of Human Resources Development. AHRD has Contributed a great deal so far to Human Capital Formation among HRD Professionals in India as summarized below:

Accomplishments: innovative Practices

- 1) Diploma Program Design in Distance Education: Assignments and Newsletter
 - a. Diploma Newsletter (12 issues published)
 - b. Catch up Newsletter of Fellow Program Students. (Discontinued since 2000)
- 2) Round Table Conferences

- 3) NGO Network started in Ahmedabad
 - a. NGO Networking Facilitated through ORENGODA project.
 - b. Renewal Journal for NGOs
- 4) Education
 - a. 23 Doctorates and many others helped
 - b. About 1000 diploma holders (First three years, AIMA, SCMHRD, IIPS, TAPMI, etc.)
 - c. Several students benefited from AHRD
- 5) Professional Development
 - a. About 200 trained through HRD Facilitators program
 - b. About 300 trained in IOAC who can conduct Assessment centers
- 6) Research and Publications
 - a. 12 books, 4 working papers, five monographs, and several articles written by AHRD staff
 - b. Publications in Organizational climate and Round Tables etc. available for HRD professionals
- 7) Social Sector
 - a. New methodologies of LSIP and Future Search made available for several NGOs and Facilitators. Most of them are using
 - b. Over 200 NGOs exposed to Renewal methodologies
 - c. Over 100 NGO facilitators developed in HRD
- 8) Assisted NHRDN in the first decade by housing its secretariat, publishing newsletters, editing conference papers, and managing the HRD Awards process.

WHERE NHRDN and AHRD could have done a lot more:

1. Setting standards for the HRD profession and creating curricula and accreditation methodologies
2. Creating assessment tools and rating methods in HRD for corporations (like CRISIL's ratings)
3. Building AHRD as NHRDN's institution (within a few years of its setting up AHRD became a very prominent contributor.

The following are the specific activities AHRD could have been engaged in by now and made a mark:

1. Had its small campus with state of the art facilities for research and visiting scholars
2. A recognized regular Doctoral program by itself or with other institutions like XLRI, IGNOU, MDI, BITS, DDIT etc.
3. A post-graduate program with 100 students who make a difference to the organization through their HR knowledge and skills.
4. Publishing of research journals and occasional papers
5. Assisting NHRDN in setting standards for the HR Profession, formulating code of conduct, evaluating HR curricula of other schools.
6. Conducting faculty development programs for faculty
7. Patented a few of its products and innovations like IOAC
8. Become a Research, Training and Consulting Center with a network of scholars

These are just a few. On each one of the above, some effort has been made and for each one of these, other organizations have better success stories to report than AHRD.

Soon Political issues started interfering with professional issues. Issues like how to share the fee, who gets credit, why two bodies with the same objectives, who owns AHRD? Started cropping up. Why AHRD and why not XLRI or IIML or MDI etc. became an issue rather than focussing on how to support AHRD as our body. How to build it up? How to get good faculty? How to popularize and use its services and products? At times it

appeared as though there are rivals rather than one giving birth to the other and the second servicing the first. AHRD was too identified with Founders. When the founders withdrew and left it to be managed by new young leaders, it took time to stabilize. Weak moments lead to criticism than support and investments in alternative institutions. Thus building AHRD was a failure of NHRDN but attributed as a failure of leaders and at times founders. It is also a failure on the part of AHRD leadership to integrate into NHRDN and promote its cause. The structural requirements of registering it as a separate institution, mobilizing its funds, and having its Board further created difficulties in integrating and strengthening to the desirable level.

United we stand, run and win the race. Divided we sit, relax and glorify ourselves or fight and win over our fellows.

There was a lot of scope for AHRD to have made an excellent impact. By today, AHRD could have been a globally recognized institution and would have been considered the only place to go or the main place to go for scholars across the world. The great dream remains a dream. The great dream was to have a campus, data bank, library, residential accommodation furnished for scholars to visit, write, renew and disseminate their work. The relevance and need for such an institution still exists today. Its doctoral program could have become a flagship program and would have contributed a great deal to HRD Knowledge.

Some of the issues where the divisive mind has won and Integrative personalities were weak in my experience are the following:

The case of Ph. D. program in Management in IGNOU

XLRI-AHRD Collaboration

One Year Program versus Two-year program Distance education Program in Fellowship

The tendency to divide extends from people to situations and objects also. For example, the faculty of a reputed management School had a proposal to start a one-year International Management Program. The idea was floated by a Professor who taught at an Asian business school and saw a lot of opportunities for this business school to start a one-year program for Asians. A task force was formed and the task force surveyed the opportunities and strongly recommended it. After a lot of work was done by the faculty group to start this program it was finally dropped because it would conflict with the already existing two-year program and dilute the standards. The divisive mind looks at how the new program affects the existing program. While the integrative personality argues on how many Asians can be benefited and how much more the institution will be known in other parts of the region. The divisive mind looks at “How am I going to be affected?” The integrative personality looks at “How will the others be affected?”. Thus divisive minds are short-sighted and self-centered. Integrative personalities are large-hearted and look at benefits to others.

Distance Program versus Full-Time Program

In another case, the faculty of a reputed management school in the late eighties appointed a committee to examine the feasibility to conduct a Doctoral program in management on distance education mode. The committee submitted its report and strongly recommended starting of the same. When it went finally to be decided by the policy committee of the institute they decided not to go ahead with it because it would create a new category of Fellows in the Management world and would dilute the applicants to the already existing Full-

time fellow program. That the new program will bring a lot of richness into the current program by virtue of experienced faculty joining and it will add to the family of teachers became a secondary consideration and the impact of it on the current program became a primary consideration.

Divisiveness is a tendency to evaluate other individuals, situations, and objects based on narrow attributions and take decisions in a way that is of advantage to smaller groups or serve limited causes but affects larger interests, larger communities, and larger goals. Normally such tendencies work against the interests of larger communities and goals.

An integrative personality is one who more frequently works for larger causes and larger communities and has goals in mind and works for the same and is willing to sacrifice short-term goals, narrow interests, and small benefits for the sake of larger goals and larger communication and their interests.

How Divisiveness Works in Organizations

Organizations have several forms of divisiveness. Divisiveness by hierarchies or levels; by roles and designations, and by departmentation and other forms of identities. Organizations need to have the roles identified (Like Finance Manager, Sales Manager, HR manager, Personnel Manager, Training Manager, IT Manager, Marketing Manager, etc.) Such role-based assignments are necessary to communicate to the incumbent as well as to the outside world the broad areas of work responsibility or specialization of the individual. Similarly, departmentation also serves the same purpose. Every senior Manager in the hierarchy is supposed to perform integrating functions. However, if HR and IT Managers report to Finance (Vice President) the Finance VP is expected to integrate and make the services of the three functions (HR, IT and Finance) available to the rest of the organization. A divisive mind performs this integrative role in ways that are dysfunctional to the organization and may unconsciously or consciously favour one or more of the functions or roles depending on his/her preferences to those groups. He needs to be extra cautious and careful in performing his integrative roles. He has to develop conscious and formal mechanisms of sharing, communication and integration. In the absence of it, overheads go up and the company may suffer. For example, he may use IT mainly to develop and MIS for Finance and neglect the rest of the organization like the production, materials, HR etc. He may be perceived as misusing IT for exercising controls over the rest of the organization etc. The perceptions, as well as facts together, influence the functioning of the organization.

“This is not my Job” syndrome: Divisiveness into roles also creates a sense of identity to one own role or department. However along with identity to one's role or function it also erodes larger identity and may even prevent individuals from sacrificing larger or organizational interests for the sake of role-related narrow interests. A bank employee completing his work early because he has been assigned a particular role and that role did not demand as much hard work and refusing to be working hard and have to stay late is an indication of such role boundedness. In one Travel Agency spread all over the country, the employees are divided by the nature of their work assistance to individual travels, versus group tours. Individual travel has been found to be high in some months and groups in other months. Though sitting under the same roof and belonging to the same organization they were not even on talking terms with each other and did not help each other in peak performance periods. The group travel team is overworked in certain months and the individual tours teams in certain other months as both these are seasonal. When asked one of the groups said that they are paid lesser salaries and the other groups get high incentives why should they help them when free? The second group said when they need the first group does into help then why should we help.

Asian cultures and particularly the Indian cultures seem to be either role-bound or rule-bound. They exhibit “it is not my job” syndrome. For them, the first level of importance is “self”. There is of course who go beyond the self and go for self-less service.

The most enjoyable time I had where I found work to be smooth and individual dignity is maintained from day one was at IIM, Ahmedabad. The symbols that different people and communicate that you work for a team or group has been minimized. Every faculty member gets the same size room and every faculty member irrespective of your designation shares the same secretary and privileges. You charge the same consulting fee irrespective of the designation as per the norms of the institute. Irrespective of whether you are a professor or assistant professor you are addressed as a professor. There are no departments and there are only areas. The term “Area” signifies a broad categorization. You may be a member of more than one area or group or center. You may shift also your area. All these are organizational mechanisms to create a larger identity and bring down the overheads or transaction costs associated with managing the system they contribute to the growth of the organization.

However, there could be other forms of divisiveness even in the best of organizations. For example teaching staff versus program staff. The norms for teaching staff were different than those of the administrative staff. It has always been a sore point. However, the administrative staff always took pride in the fact that they belonged to the IIM. The internal processes were so designed that they got dignity for the roles they are performing. For example, the Activity Head depends a lot on the Program manager as he is an embodiment of experience and information. The program head keeps changing but the Program Head is a lot more permanent.

The IIMA experience indicates that it is possible to institute structural mechanisms to promote integrative tendencies. An integrative personality can be developed. Conscious effort and emphasis on super-ordinate goals help in developing the same.

Win As Much As You Can

The behavior of most participants in this game is a good example of the Divisive mindset. In this game most often (Almost 90% of the time) I found it very easy to develop mistrust. The moment a team is given a label like (A or Red or any other) they saw the other team as an adversary and worked for narrow interests. It is extremely rare to find a team that interprets “We” as the totality of all four teams. I have used this game hundreds of times in my career. I have come across only one time when the groups interpreted “We” as the total team and started playing win-win. Even in this group, one only required four attempts for one of them to play mischief and once the trust was breached by any one party it never returned. I still remember on the occasion an Army officer trying his best to convince his team to play a win-win game failing which he started crying. This is an integrative personality. The overall score of the group went up but he was very upset that the groups behaved in a divided way. He saw this happening in his country.

What do I conclude from all these Experiences

Divisiveness is the order of the day. It is the easiest thing to divide people. The divisive personality operates perhaps in all of us. We are perhaps socialized in a country like India to be divisive from childhood. Caste identities, community identities, linguistic identities, social identities and groups make us develop an affinity to select groups and deny a larger identity as Indians perhaps as people. While grouping or dividing people into groups and labelling serves some purpose sometimes, it has an inherent danger of increasing conflicts, decreasing trust, and affecting the individual, team, organizational as well as national and global productivity and improvements in quality of life. Divisiveness or labelling needs to be done extremely cautiously. Indian society is filled with such divisive tendencies.

The good news is that post-liberalization is changing as organizations are becoming less hierarchical, more flexible and competency-based rather than group-based. Group-based interventions though well-intended will promote the growth of some groups but inherently at the cost of some other groups and the whole (nation or

organization). The development-oriented divisiveness needs to be very carefully orchestrated. A lot of education is needed to take care of the negative side effects of divisiveness. Integrative personalities are needed at the helm of affairs whether it is in an organization or an institution or a country.

Integrative personality can be developed and identified. We need to develop more and more integrative personalities. Integrative personality is a way of life. They always think long-term, they sacrifice and enable people to sacrifice short term interests and small group interests in favour of long-term interests and larger group interests. Such long-term and larger group interests also benefit all those who made sacrifices or postpone immediate gratification for the sake of long-term gratification. Nation-building and organization building today requires such integrative personalities more than before as there are more opportunities for growth and avenues for growth.

In drawing these conclusions I have used my own experiences as a base. I may have made some observations that may not exactly be in the direction or liking by some groups or individuals or institutions. The intention is to point out a phenomenon and build theory and not offend or displease anyone. All my observations are based on my personal experiences and reflections of these experiences. I request to be excused if any comments make any one of the readers uncomfortable or displeased.