

# Questioning Aloud – 1

Beauty over safety

Appearance over content

Keeping the boss happy over doing the right thing

On 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019, part of the ‘Himalaya’ pedestrian bridge near CST in Mumbai collapsed, resulting in 6 deaths and dozens of serious injuries.

The ‘Mumbai Mirror’ newspaper on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019 has carried a report that says that one possible factor that MAY have contributed to this terrible tragedy is the fact that the bridge department rushed to do the ‘beautification job’ of the bridge, to prepare for visit of some ‘big bosses’. This beautification effort (applying a fresh coat of paint and fixing of new tiles) would have seriously come in the way of doing a proper structural and safety audit. Knowing this implication of beautification process fully well, the team still completed this job first, - we can guess, to ensure that they ‘showcased’ a beautiful bridge to the big bosses during their visit. When I read this report, I could see so many parallels that we see in workplaces every day and thought of asking ourselves a few questions.

## AS INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES:

Do we truly dig in our heels to do what is right? – for long term well-being of our organizations, our customers and our team members ?

Do we push back the big bosses, if needed, to do what is right and not take shortcuts?

Are we more concerned about preparing a great presentation to impress the boss than actually doing the work in a great way?

## AS LEADERS:

Do we set the right expectations and demand that our teams do what is right for long term, and not just do cosmetic stuff that makes them and us look good? (and help us win likes on social media)

What kind of people and behaviors do we appreciate and value ? Hollow showboats who may be harming the organization for self-glory OR Understated, silent folks who quietly go about doing what is right without creating any great fuss?

As leaders, when we are reviewing work, how often do we scratch ‘under the paint’ to see true, deep, real quality of ‘structural work’ that has been done?

As leaders, how easy do we make it for our people to give us the bad news? Or even express a concern or disagreement? Or do we often shoot down the messenger – sending out the signal that the boss does not want to hear any bad news?

*In ‘Questioning Aloud’, I hope to think and question aloud about things happening in the world of work and leadership. As a student of human behaviour, I want to ask myself and to all others who are interested, a few questions that will hopefully help all of us take a pause, reflect and act to make the world of work better.*

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