

# STORY-TELLING

## An effective training tool

*Simple tales have profound messages, which, if employed effectively, can actually make a difference to professional lives. Read on to find out how Corporate Myth Training or CMT is gaining prominence among companies*

**BY MURLI MENON**

**A** university professor went to visit a famous Zen master. While the master quietly served tea, the professor talked about Zen. The master poured the visitor's cup to the brim and then kept pouring. The professor watched the overflowing cup until he could no longer restrain himself. "It's overflowing. No more will go in," the professor blurted. "You are like this cup," the master replied, "How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup."

A simple story, but a deep philosophy is hidden behind this story. It has been scientifically proved by the western research that stories, parables, myths and anecdotes are powerful metaphors, specially when used in classroom training situations. Now this finding is being scientifically employed in corporate training under the acronym of CMT. CMT or Corporate Myth Training is the technique being employed in Fortune 500 corporations and Indian epic tales have now gained prominence in corporate training. It is no meaningful coincidence that since the Vedic times Indian rishis have been teaching through epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana. More importantly, stories have played a meaningful role in moulding the psyche of Indian children over generations. The success of NRIs in countries from USA to Singapore is being attributed to their vivid imagination fed on childhood tales of adventures, moral issues and courage and most importantly it feeds on imagination.







the training of the members, motivating them constantly. Of course, as in every organization, there are bad apples here too. Like the character who gets 'bought over' by the Brits. But the leader Bhuvan gives him a second chance, thus earning his loyalty through the act of forgiveness. The end result? A resounding victory for his team and he emerges taller than ever before. Bhuvan's success is a lesson for managers and bosses. How to deal with disgruntled employees, take them into confidence, turn their cynicism into optimism and most importantly, take diverse personalities and mould them into a single, fighting unit.

#### LAKSHYA (2004)

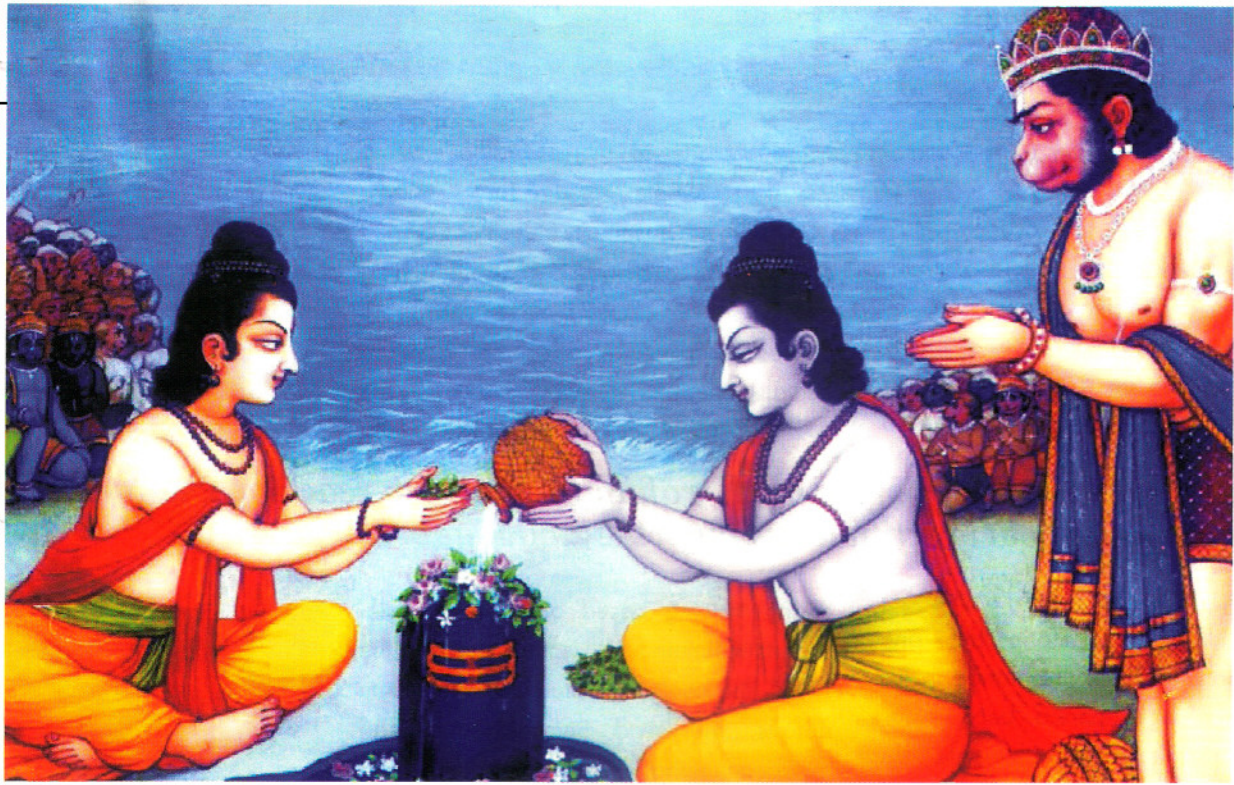
The name says it all. Hrithik Roshan's coming-of-age film showed the journey of an aimless young man who realizes his goal in life after joining the army. This is one film that has plenty to teach. The self-realisation that comes with proper training (in this case, the armed forces background). Also the movie had some brilliant action scenes wherein the young cadet gets important lessons of battle (and of life). One, never lose focus. Two, set your sight on one major goal (winning the war) and go about it by setting smaller goals (scaling one peak at a time, warding off enemy attacks, thinking out of the box et al.). Three, never underestimate your adversary. And four, it's never over until it's truly over. So don't let your guard down even for a minute. These are lessons that can be imbibed at every level in a company. Especially in large organizations that have to consistently work

towards maintaining their position in the market.

#### IQBAL (2005)

Subhash Ghai and Nagesh Kukunoor's film about the triumph of a deaf-mute boy over adversities was inspiring to say the least. What makes this film a must-see for managers is the presentation of 'optimism and hard-work coupled with precise planning' as a winning formula. The hero Iqbal, belongs to the under-privileged sections of society. He doesn't have access to the best training facilities. Moreover his disability and poverty automatically reduces the options for him. But what he lacks in opportunity, he makes up in talent and ability to work hard. His efforts succeed only due to his coach (portrayed brilliantly by Naseeruddin Shah) who recognizes his genius and moulds him. In real life, Shah epitomizes the good boss or manager. A leader has talent with him, but it is entirely upto him how he 'manages' it. A true leader, like Shah, assesses his subordinate's weaknesses and strengths. He then works towards converting the limitations into assets. The film also shows the virtue of patience. Iqbal doesn't succeed overnight. He has to go through a lot of disappointments before he gets what he deserves. Similarly, in an organization, it is essential that the boss and the employee think in tandem, are willing to work together on a problem and then go about reaching their target in a planned way - taking one step at a time; sidestepping difficulties and capitalizing on gains. □





India has a rich tradition of 'teaching stories' be it the Jataka tales, Panchatantra or the numerous other legendary fables which vividly pictured in Amar Chita Katha. Many of our legendary stories were exported to other Far Eastern countries and continues to fascinate people all over the world. With the spread of Buddhism to the Far East, our Jataka tales took on a Japanese hue and appear in their Japanese avatar as Zen stories. Today, Fortune 500 corporations have rephrased our stories as CMT and have generated legendary experiences from which corporate myths grow. These legendary experiences are woven into training programmes and are an intricate part of creating new neural pathways in the brain. CMT phrases this technique as 'metaphor.' Metaphors increase the efficiency and effectiveness of any training programme as they simplify idea, are easy to recall and touch the emotions. The efficiency and effectiveness of all training can be improved by intricately weaving stories relevant to the subject being taught. These stories work by appealing to the participants and driving the point into the unconscious minds of trainees. Our

grandma's tales are the hottest new weapon in the training armoury of MNCs. The best thing about corporate myth training is that far reaching changes can be brought about in attitudes, through the language of stories. Moreover, these changes are permanent! The dream of every corporate trainer.

Take for instance, this story:

An elderly woman walks into a store and tells the employee behind the counter that the tyres just aren't up to her standards, they haven't performed well and really needs her money back. "Are you sure you purchased them from here?" The employee asks. "Quite sure." replies the woman. "I know I bought these tyres right here." But the store doesn't sell tyres. With a bit of quick checking, the employee learns from his manager that the store is just a few years old, had been built on the site of an old gas station which had probably sold her the tyre. So the employee takes Rs 500 from the drawer and gives it to the woman and apologies about the tyres not meeting her expectations. He asks her if these is anything else he can do for her and when she declines, he sends her on her way with a smile. This story can tell lots of things to