KAIPA'S PYRAMID AS A *YANTRA*

Raghu Ananthanarayanan

One of the most interesting mental models I have come across in recent times is Prasad Kaipa's use of the tetrahedron. I have been playing with it. Our consulting group explored our work processes based on the paper Application of Pyramid Building in Organisations: Aligning Strategy, process and people in organisations by Prasad Kaipa, Chris Newham and Russ Volckmann.

As I worked with the model further, I started bringing it into my meditative practice. I experienced the *padmasana* in one such session as a *tetrahedron's mudra* (body gesture). My *mooladhara charka (the base of the spinal cord)* and the two hands in a *dhyana mudra (meditative hand gesture)* became the base. My head was the apex, and my *hridaya* (the centre of my being) was the centroid. Exploring this mudra was a very powerful experience. It has triggered an intense enquiry in me on the question, "What is my reason for being?" "Who is the quintessential me?" "Have I nurtured this being or have I distorted this being through compulsions to become something?" "Are my intentions true reflections of my reason for being?" I have not got any conclusive answers to these questions, but I persist in seeking answers. I believe that questions and inquiries are more important than answers. I am sharing in this paper the process by which I came to experience the tetrahedron as a *Yantra* that can be applied to personal learning, team learning and organisational learning.

After reading Kaipa's paper, our consulting group decided to use it in our yearly retreat to reflect upon ourselves. We came up with a model that fitted the different aspects of our practice. It also helped us integrate various aspects and be true to our key idea, "*Aligned to the Gemba*".
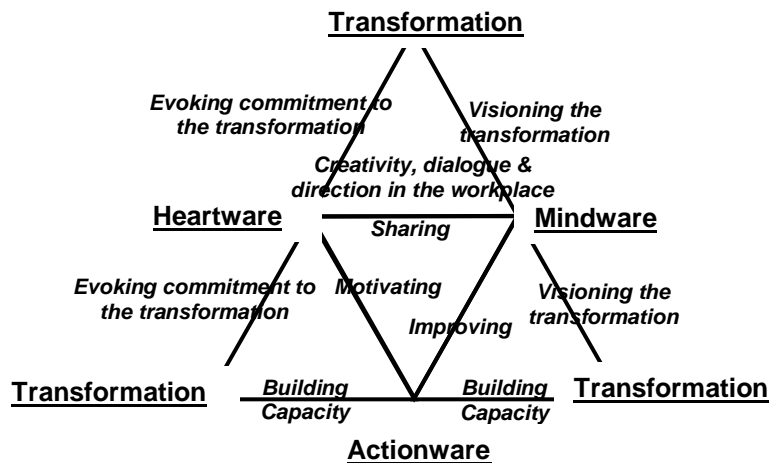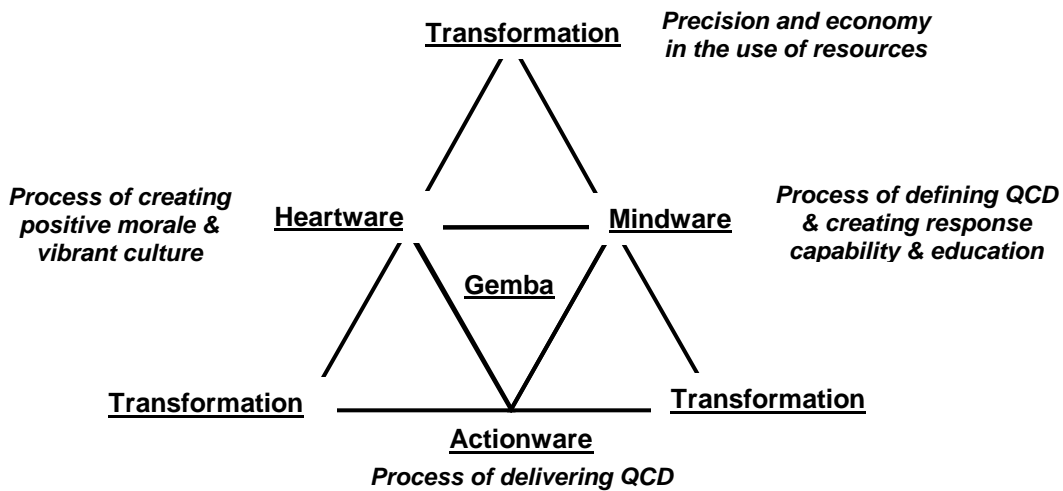
Two significant challenges face us today. Firstly, people work together and strive for personal and collective excellence simultaneously unfolding; Secondly, economy and precision in using resources. We see these challenges as human challenges that cut across all organisations, large and small, voluntary groups, social action groups, large national bodies and the like. Our focus, however, is to help business organisations respond to these challenges. Taking these seriously, the organisation stays true to its business objectives and exercises corporate citizenship.
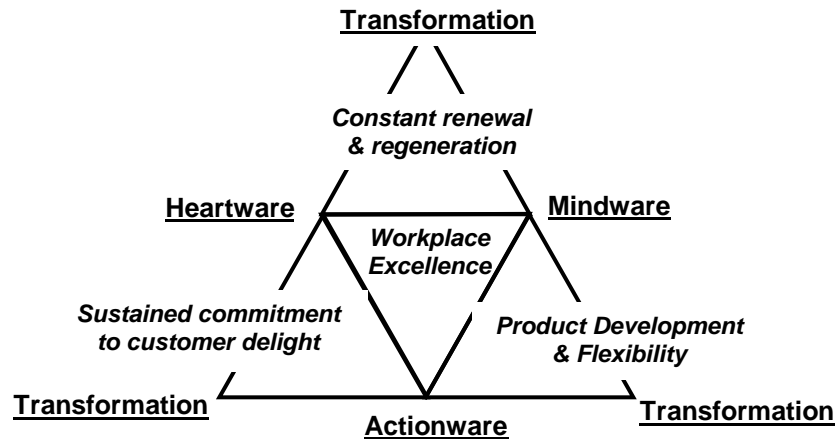
When we looked at our consulting practices in our organisation, we realised that while we were working primarily on the *Gemba* – the workplace, our work had different facets. We were working with people directly and evoking a sense of pride, empowerment and ownership in them. We aim to transform the culture and make it evocative and energising. The methods we used for this have a strongly systemic and task focus. This is primarily because we are engineers who worked on the shop floor for many years before engaging with organisation*al transformation. We, therefore, chose "Heartware"* as a critical cornerstone. We educated people, challenged existing mindsets, and helped people understand the emerging paradigms. Education is, therefore, another cornerstone of our work. *This cornerstone is* "*Mindware*". Thirdly, we implemented changes in the

shop floor and system design by working with organisations in a relatively "hands-on" manner. *This cornerstone is* "*Actionware*". One of the areas of focus that we missed in our early years is the aspect of costs and tangible measures of economic value. A cost accountant with expertise in Activity Based Costing joined us, and through teaming up with him, we have learned how to integrate the vital aspects of cost in our work. We go through the resource economy route to make understanding effectiveness and efficiency visible. This idea we translated into the *economy and the precision in using resources-our fourth cornerstone Transformation*. Our primary focus is on transforming organisations into becoming Lean in all aspects. By activating all four of these cornerstones of the tetrahedron, we help organisations change their culture, how they work, and how they measure performance.

Thus, we identified the four cornerstones of our work. We then used the rules outlined in Kaipa's paper, derived the action words that join the cornerstones, and described the outcomes. The final picture emerged like this:

Transformation

Precision and economy in the use of resources

Process of creating positive morale & vibrant culture

Heartware ———— **Mindware**

Process of defining QCD & creating response capability & education

Gemba

Transformation   **Transformation**

Actionware

Process of delivering QCD

Transformation

Evoking commitment to the transformation   *Visioning the transformation*

Creativity, dialogue & direction in the workplace

Heartware   *Sharing*   **Mindware**

Evoking commitment to the transformation   *Motivating*   *Visioning the transformation*

Improving

Transformation   *Building Capacity*   *Building Capacity*   **Transformation**

Actionware

Transformation

Constant renewal & regeneration

Heartware   **Mindware**

Workplace Excellence

Sustained commitment to customer delight

Product Development & Flexibility

Transformation   **Transformation**

Actionware

After going through this exercise, I was very excited about the whole process. Applying Piaget's maxim "to play is to learn", I have been playing with the model. What I am most excited about is the correspondence our consulting model has with some basic principles of yoga. Let me explain :

The female forms of god are considered the active, evolving, flowing aspects of the universe, and the male forms are life-giving but changeless. In the female forms, *Shakti*, *Lakshmi* and *Saraswathi* are different facets. *Shakti* symbolises the powerful, passionate form, *Lakshmi* symbolises order and wealth (in a universal sense), and *Saraswathi* symbolises quintessential insight and learning. *Shakti*, in turn, is seen as comprising *Iccha Shakti* – the power of intent, *Guyana Shakti* – the power of wisdom and *Kriya Shakti* – the power of action.

I discovered, to my delight, that the model we had come up with for our consulting work fitted in with this conception. The three forms of *Shakti* had a one-to-one correspondence with hardware, mindware and actionware; *Ichha Shakti is Heartware*, *Guyana Shakti is Mindware*, and *Kriya Shakti is Actionware*. The nature of *Lakshmi* coincided with our understanding of resource economy, leading to wealth creation – order and precision in the deployment of resources. I struggled with the need to find how the idea of *Saraswathi* fitted in and not just make it synonymous with *Gnayana Shakti*. I had an insight! If I look at the tetrahedron as a space structure and not as a solid, *Saraswathi* forms the centroid! The pyramid tetrahedron became a prism.

Let us take a closer look at *Saraswathi* before returning to our model. *Saraswathi* is the female aspect of *Brahma* – the creative principle. The word *Brahma* means ever-growing, ever-expanding. *Saraswathi* is the quintessential insight and learning necessary for dharmic growth. The reason-for-being of an organisation ought to be focused on the growth and well being of all human beings and the ecosysytem it is situated in.
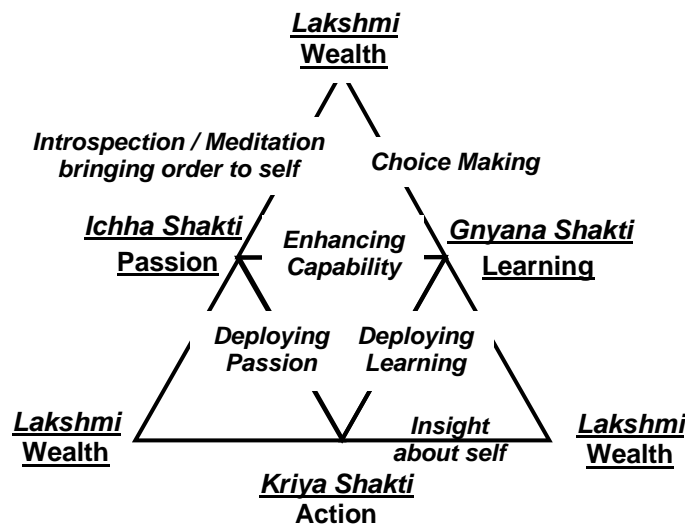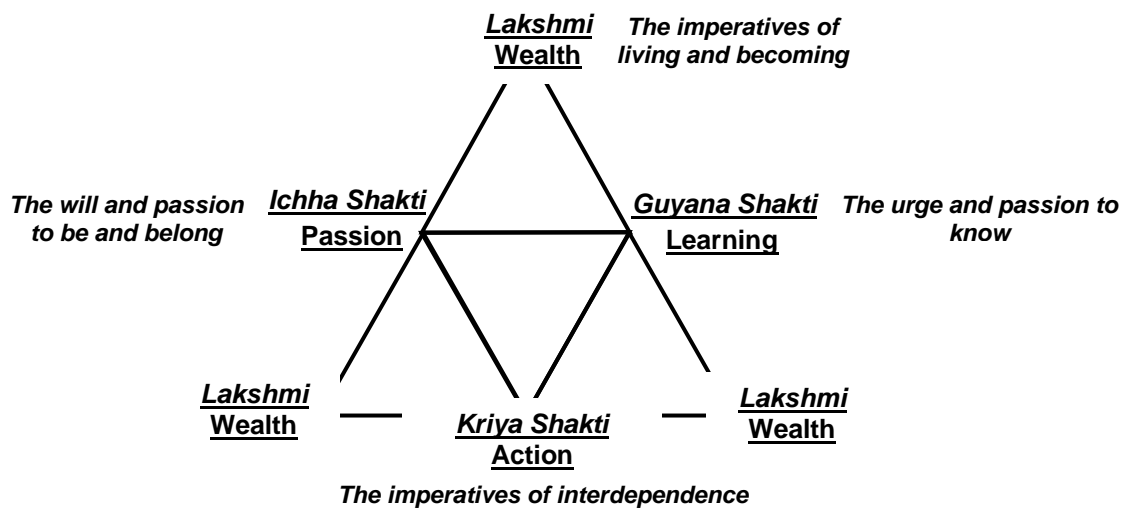
To my delight, I discovered that the *Tripura Rahasya*, an ancient text on the nature of the mind and its transformation (that has a woman as its main protagonist), talks about the creation of the manifestation as follows: from the infinite primordial unmanifest, the
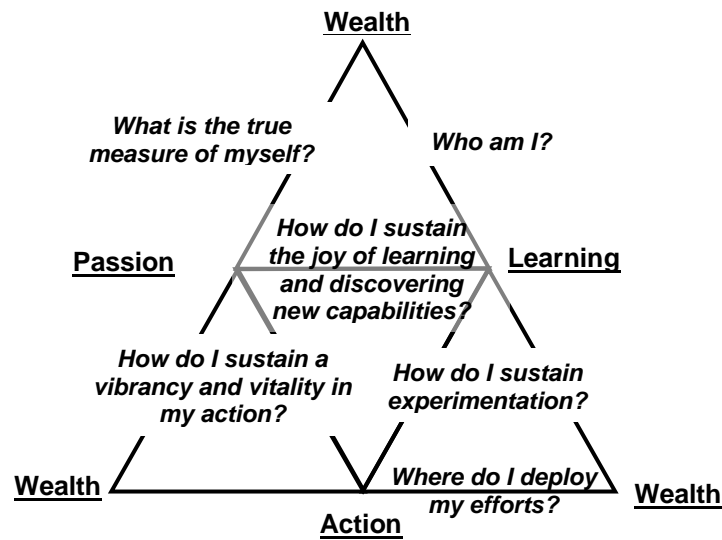
energy of pure Consciousness emerges. Pure Consciousness then breaks up into three forms - the *Iccha Shakti*, *GnAana Shakti* and *Kriya Shakti*. These four interact with each other, creating time and manifestation. Also, as engineers, we saw a remarkable parallel with the work of Buckminister Fuller. He has written a treatise called "Synergistics", where he derives the basic approach to creating geodesic domes and spends a great deal of time on the beauty of the tetrahedron. He also suggests that all structures, including organisations, ought to be designed on the principles of geodesic domes.
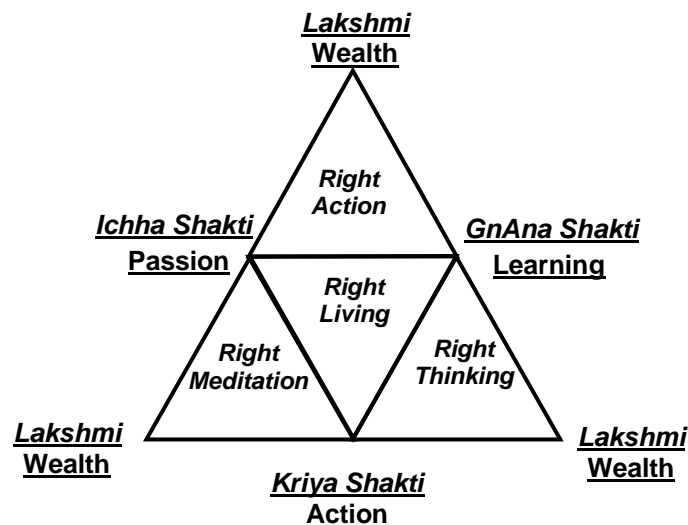
We now return to our model and look at the centroid as the "reason for being" and the cornerstones as the tangible aspects of the intent. Growth is the reason for being. Growth in human terms means self-expression and relatedness with others. *Saraswathi* is the unstoppable urge to grow. In her three aspects, Shakti forms the "here and now" unfolding of energy, *and Lakshmi* the nature of order in the unfolding of energy.

The tetrahedron we worked on looks like this:

Wealth

What is the true measure of myself?

Who am I?

How do I sustain the joy of learning and discovering new capabilities?

Passion

Learning

How do I sustain a vibrancy and vitality in my action?

How do I sustain experimentation?

Wealth

Where do I deploy my efforts?

Wealth

Action

Each edge carries an essential question about oneself. We are using the tetrahedron to do two things, one, for us as a group to reflect on our organisation and two, to reflect on how each of us as individuals energise the whole. To illustrate, if I am able to live in a way that is true to my quintessential nature, there is order and excellence in my living process. I become what I am meant to be. My passion is true, and I extended my capacity to learn, act as well as I can, and generate wealth and knowledge. In converting the edges into questions, I also realise the "other side" of the picture: my adequacies, limitations, and potential.

Lakshmi
Wealth

Right Action

Ichha Shakti
Passion

GnAna Shakti
Learning

Right Living

Right Meditation

Right Thinking

Lakshmi
Wealth

Lakshmi
Wealth

Kriya Shakti
Action

I have found it extremely useful to treat this prism as a "*Yantra*" – a geometrical drawing meant for contemplation both individually and as a group. While the questions one reflects upon can be stated in generic forms, each person must develop one's own

"*Yantra*," i.e., specific action words that represent the edges, specific intent for each cornerstone and specific hope for each outcome. However, one must keep in mind that to use a *Yantra* or any device as a trigger for contemplation, one must learn the art of intense slow observation without judgment. The *Yantra* cannot be used as a framework of "shoulds". "Shoulds" do not evoke creative healing processes within; they internalise the expectations of significant others and act as walls, jailers and censors that distort and deform unfolding.

When the *Yantra* becomes a trigger for contemplation, one learns the art of experiencing the "*Nava rasas*" – the nine (flavours) essences of living experience. One learns the measure and balance of these feelings. They neither take on demonical proportions and derail one's growth nor become emaciated and life becomes a drudgery. In discovering this location within, one discovers *Saraswathi, Lakshmi and Shakti*. One discovers a subtle and enduring joy of living. One experiences creativity and growth.

We (Vandana, who is my co-author in writing this paper and I) are now working on an exciting project with the European Union. The project is aimed at creating a platform for the design of Mechatronic products. Often the design process and, therefore, the resulting mechanical and electronic components do not fit "hand in glove" with one another. The project had a further objective of getting several small organisations situated worldwide to collaborate with a few European small businesses. Our role in this process was to enable a virtual team to emerge. We have applied this "*yantra*" to the problem of creating the virtual team. As we write this paper, the resulting model and process are being tested by a few virtual teams in this project and a large global IT organisation. The initial results are very encouraging. We share below the process by which we came to build the model.

Around this time, we were approached by two small consulting organisations in the US to form a collaborative offering that we could jointly take to market. After an initial face to face meeting, where we shared our intent and derived broad contours of the shared offering, we decided to carry the process forward. We were hopeful of forming a joint venture and giving concrete shape to the offering. We even had a prospective client. The next few months proved to be a roller coaster ride. After a few hundred e-mails, phone calls and skype chats, we decided to pull out of this process. We decided to use the failure as a learning process and studied the various communication trails; we also shared our feelings and thoughts. We realised that four anchors made up the "virtual" gestalt – the most visible to all the participants was creating the offering and the goals we had set up. The invisible anchors were the meaning-making and choice making process embedded in our psyche; the partly visible anchor was the information and knowledge each held. The knowledge base and competencies were the authentic sources of wealth for the group. The goals we had defined for the Joint Venture were translating the intent into a business proposition. The workspace was the actual shaping sculpting of the offering. Our introspection and reflection made it clear that the product/offering did not get a decent shape for two reasons primarily. The first and more obvious reason was the lack of a shared language and frameworks for management experts, behaviours scientists, anthropologists, and yoga teachers to understand in-depth the "components" each of us was bringing in. We had not evolved the "glass bead game" to enable communication and translation. The second and more subtle reason was that we had not created a bedrock of
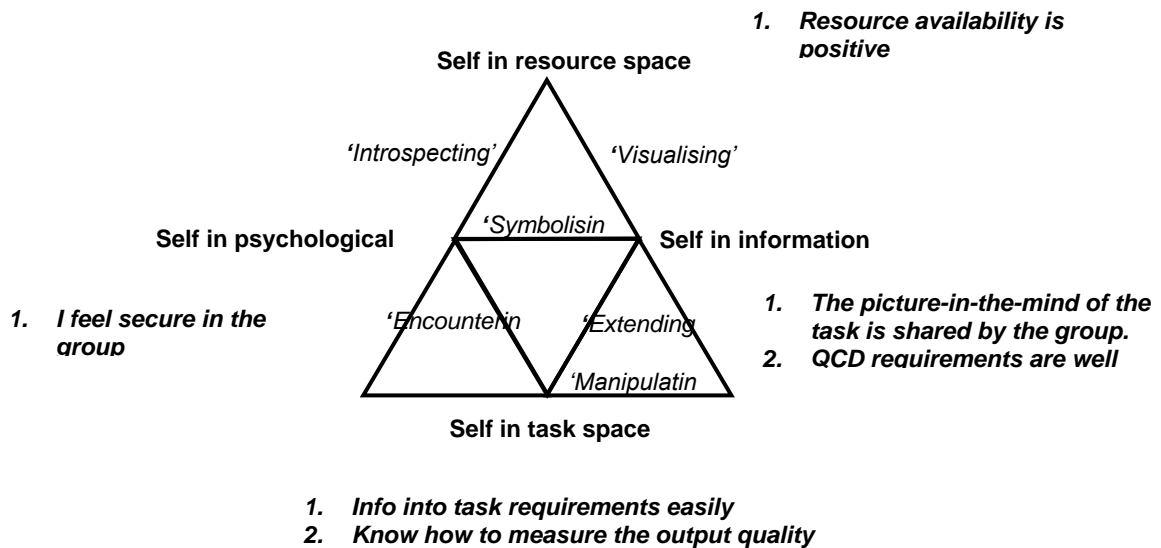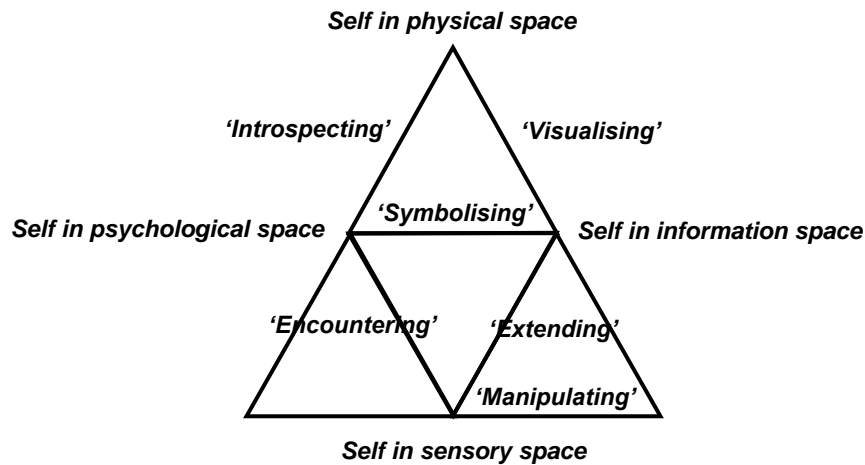
trust between us. Trust would allow contingent and situational leadership: issues like IPR could not be dialogued with candour and depth. Withholding of resources and wariness would come up from time to time and stall the process of "welding the components and sculpting the offering".

If I interpret this failure through the Spiral Dynamics lens, the enterprise itself required strong Green V-memes to be the foundation of the organisation. The systems and processes of sharing and growing needed to be open with each of us in deep dialogue while holding responsibility for the whole. Each of us, as individuals, ought to have anchored ourselves in our Yellow values. The individual had to bring in an ability to "flow" and be insightful for the outcome to be a creative, integral offering and not a patched up piece. The offering and the business focus of the collaboration rested on an Orange networking process on the one hand and transparent rules for sharing the wealth on the other hand. The work disciplines were not defined, and norms were not set. The Blue was assumed, and when one person idea of "work discipline" did not immediately harmonise with the other, there were no standard processes and structured expectations to fall back. Soon, narcissistic boomeritis made its appearance. Given that we met face to face only once as a group, an in-group / cohesive "us" had not formed at all. We experienced a euphoric "wow! we can actually communicate and dream together though we are from such diverse cultures and we are meeting for the first time". We were pleasantly surprised to sing songs together and discuss books and philosophy. However, I guess creating a robust ground for "ubuntu" did not exist.

At TAO(our consulting firm), we created this *Yantra* out of the introspection:
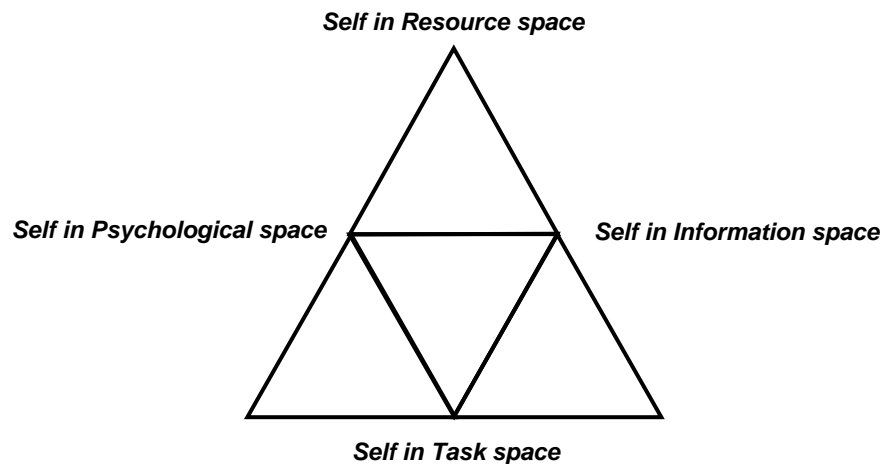
The four corner stones of this model are the link between the information available, how the information gets translated into the task requirements and the resources available to perform the task. The psychological space explores the way I end up 'feeling' in each of these interfaces.

Self in physical space

'Introspecting'   **'Visualising'**

Self in psychological space   **'Symbolising'**   **Self in information space**

'Encountering'   **'Extending'**

'Manipulating'

Self in sensory space

1. **Resource availability is positive**

Self in resource space

'Introspecting'   **'Visualising'**

Self in psychological   **'Symbolisin**   **Self in information**

1. **I feel secure in the group**

'Encounterin   **'Extending**

1. **The picture-in-the-mind of the task is shared by the group.**
2. **QCD requirements are well**

'Manipulatin

Self in task space

1. **Info into task requirements easily**
2. **Know how to measure the output quality**

We then looked at the possibility of extending this experience to create a Model for Virtual Teams to use. Some of the premises we started with were as follows:

1. A virtual team has a very high orange quality. Its members come together for a purpose and often may not know each other beyond the virtual interfaces.
2. The task is very collaborative and must be achieved through a structure that allows autonomy while ensuring rigour.

3. The initial process of setting up the task's protocols must include a set of discussions on expectations that are usually taken for granted in teams that have a high face to face possibility.

Therefore, the model we came up with offers the team (leader) opportunities to set transparent processes, expectations, & review measures.

- We have formulated a protocol for the "team inception process" and "induction into the team" process.
- We are testing the health of virtual teams with a questionnaire based on the pyramid.
- We have formulated a set of "trouble shooting" methods based on the outcome of the questionnaire.

We have developed a few such *yantras* for various organisational design and assessments. We call them Tensegrity-Mandala - Tensegrity to honour Buckminister Fuller who has worked extensively on Tensegrity in building geodesic domes and elaborated on the nature of these structures; and Mandala, a Sanskrit word meaning, "a whole that synergises divergent components". Mandalas are also tantric diagrams that aid mediation. A Tensegrity-Mandala is, therefore a thought-feeling algorithm that generates holistic organisational action.

This version of the paper is a reviewed form of the original article published in the Integral Leadership Review:
Feature Article: Kaipa's Pyramid as a Yantra: A Tensegrity-Mandala
Feature Articles / March 2009

For further reading on the Tensegrity Madala:
http://integralleadershipreview.com/11752-gangadeep-singh-raghu-ananthanarayanan-organizational-development-alignment-tensegity-mandala-framework/