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In struggling with misfortune lies the true proof of virtue.

A young lad, hailing from Padehi, Uttar Pradesh, saw the lowliest times of life when he had to live in a tent on a road margin, selling "pani puri" (local fast food) for a living. The sheer misfortune he had to battle until he became a part of the "Development Team" of Mumbai's cricket team, is unimaginable. While the "rags-to-riches" story glorifies "talent" and the inevitability of its discovery, however what it truly signifies in reality is the strength of character, undebated spirit, resilience and thus, can't we contend, ~~that~~ from the present narration of Yashvini Jainmal's life, that ~~to~~ his struggle with misfortune, was perhaps the true testament of his "virtue?"

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In this essay, we will explore "how" & "why" misfortune grants true proof of virtue. We will further explore, what other factors contribute to the evidence of virtue. Lastly, we will understand how can such testing times of misfortune be handled in a manner such that we eventually end up victorious and virtuous.

Khalil Gibran said that "time's definition of coal is diamond". While, time plays an important role, the geomorphological processes, constant heat, pressure which the coal has to brave through so as to transform into a diamond, shows the true test of its → "VALUE". It is this value that is cherished, appreciated and defines the "quality" of the mineral.

Similarly, for human beings, or societies or nations, the "heat & pressure" are postulated in the form of 'misfortunes'. How one rides through the same, keeping one's "moral value" within intact, shows the

true test of character, virtue and inner value system.

This has been witnessed since time immemorial, in the economic domain, where cyclical events of misfortune have been a true test of 'resilience' of the economics, a celebrated virtue. The ^{East} Asian economic crisis, financial crisis 2008 or the recent Covid 19 provided set back and called for realignment of priorities of the economics of the world. The misfortune presented by these events posed the challenge of "balancing" between lives & livelihood, poverty & development, inequality & progress. The fact that the global economics & national economics drew key lessons for the future from the mishaps is like it is; Basel guidelines, the development of supply chain resilient networks. have been true proof of the virtue of economics.

Similar is the case with the administrative

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domain where the misfortunes befalling on the administrators and leaders becomes true test of their virtues of "courage", "spirit of service", "courage of conviction", "dedication" and passion for public good. This has been witnessed in the case of Purges Shanti Nigpal, who when met with the challenge of facing the sand mafias, receiving life threats, tackled ^{them} with strength and courage. Even leaders like V Sagayam, who was transferred innumerable times, yet did not give up on his fight against corruption; are proof of the 'virtue test' of misfortune. These leaders have been true depictions of Plato's philosopher king concept and Aristotle's virtuousness value.

'misfortunes' also take the shape of failures. while failures are considered to be the pillars of success, yet the path charted post a failure, leading upto the

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triumph and success ~~are~~ is what is the most
crucial. When ISRO, was faced with
the crashing of the Vikram lander of the
Chandrayaan 2, it ~~did~~ rather chose to work
on its shortcomings to further consolidate
an even more ambitious plan for the South
Pole of moon: Chandrayaan 3 when the
Badminton duo: Satwik Sairaj and Chirag Shetty
were faced with the misfortune of having
lost to their Indonesian open opponents in the
finalists, 9 times earlier, coupled with the
unprecedented history of mens' Doubles in the
country, they did not give-up! They
chose to fight back and emerged victorious.

This is precisely why, Martin Luther King said :-

" if you can't fly, run,
if you can't run, walk,
if you can't walk, crawl,
BUT, by all means, keep moving."

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Apart from being a testament to one's virtue, misfortune also reveals the "true character" of an individual or a society. When one becomes desperate, he tends to take to every possible means to make his ends meet. Hobbes, thereby declared man to have been "selfish & brutish". This of desperation forces man to become greedy and as there is enough for every man's need but not for his greed, stated by Gandhi, one thing leads to another and he loses himself in the process. This precisely why, Indiyand kipling in his poem If, declared that an ideal man:

"keeps his head, when all around him
are losing theirs ... and blaming it on him"

Vagaries of life, living unannounced "misfortunes" which no person can prepare against. But, ~~virtue~~ true virtue is revealed in how one chooses to deal with these vagaries. When Arundna Sinha, became an amputee, she did not give up on the

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dream of doing something unprecedented :
 went on to become the first female
amputee to scale the mount Everest. Similarly,
 when Someshwar Rao, lost his leg to a landmine
 in 'Uri', he chose to convert the adversity
 into an opportunity and will be contesting
 in the upcoming Hangzhou Asian Paralympics.
 As Rosa Parks says, "today's rut is
 tomorrow's oak tree", the strokes of character
 displayed in testing times will culminate into
 fortified aspect of human character of these
 individuals, there can't we say that ^{misfortune} it is
 a true test of virtue?

Befalling of misfortune has been a repeated
 theme in the Indian civilisational history.
 Be it the Emergency era or the communal
clashes or the regionalistic demands or even
 perhaps the Manipur violence, in more recent
 times. However, the strength and "morality"
 conceptualised by our constitution, has enabled
 the "intactness" - unity & integrity of our

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civilisation which is a "cultural mosaic". The coexistence of the diversity since 76 years of independence despite all misfortunes, shows the "virtue" of the civilisation. The character of the transformative constitutionalism, that has enabled the same.

However, can we say that "misfortunes" alone determine the true virtue of an individual? Churchill says, "nearly all men can stand diversity," but not all can stand POWER. It is thus, 'power' or the excess of it, that enables in testing the virtue of a being or society. Negative instances of Hitler, Mussolini, China's debt trap policy are evidence of how the responsibility brought by power (Lord Acton), has been plundered. However, instances of India's vaccine diplomacy, digital transformation leadership, Gandhian leadership on account of 'power' entrusted by people, are evidence of "virtuous character" and virtuous exercise of

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power. This is why Gladstone says, that "when power of love overcomes love of power, the world will be a better place."

How, can then we perhaps manage our struggle during times of misfortune in a better manner? We can preserve the integrity of our character and virtue by being emotionally intelligent. Robinson says, "that when awareness is brought to emotions, power is brought to life". Thus, being able to identify the negative emotions during a misfortune and channelizing them effectively is essential.

Secondly, the power of "influence" is immense. Reading biographies of leaders like Martin Luther King who taught to "dream" in the face of misfortune, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's Wings of fire, stories of famous sportspersons like Milkha Singh, M.S. Dhoni who faced several setbacks before making it to the Indian team, can enable an individual to develop confidence.

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Thirdly, at the social level, institutional strength should be relied upon. Utilising the multipplier effect posed by civil society organisations, independent autonomous institutions of governance ~~can a strong~~ and judiciary ~~also effective~~ can enable smoothing out the gears of struggle during a misfortune. The impact of Justice Khanna's dissent in the Habeas Corpus case, during the dark era of emergency, created tremors years after when predominance of life & liberty at all times & rule of law, was established. This shows the significant importance of institutional strength in creating tremors. ~~years~~

Thus, ensuring that one develops the strength to battle the adverse situations thrown by life is quintessential to stand the test of 'virtue'. While misfortunes are periods of despair, yet one should focus on staying true to his inner ideals and not let circumstances dictate his virtue, at any given point of time. One should stay true to one's conscience,

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decided to be the "highest court" by Gandhi
and braved through the ~~the~~ misfortunes, by
considering them as opportunities instead, as
Hemley in his poem "Invictus" puts it :-

"It matters not how straight the gate
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
The captain of my soul"

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The whole purpose of education is to turn
mirrors into windows

When on a grim day in Pishawar,
Pakistan, a young girl was shot at a
point blank range by terrorists. She stood
facing them undeterred. Marvellous was her
courage and grit in the face of a life
threatening adversity! This life changing
incident enthused her to pursue the goal
of girl child education. Her perseverance
and spirit of ~~doing~~ achieving universal
peace via education led her into achieving
the Nobel Peace Prize!

She is Malala Yousafzai, and when

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asked about her motivation behind pursuing education, she answered that there's a saying, darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can! Education is that light in the face of the darkness of terrorism, intolerance, hate, parochial mindset, regressive practices. ~~It~~ It is perhaps Education that can transform the world. Can it then not be said, that the purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows?

In this piece, we shall discuss how the purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows. We shall also delve into understanding how can we better realise this purpose.

The fundamental purpose of education is to encourage free flow of ideas, which would foster innovation, lead to cultivation of scientific temper. In an archaic society

devoid of education, one would be content with his point of view. He would be wary of change and of a differing perspective.

This can be witnessed historically, ~~as~~ as challengers of the status quo, ~~consider~~ ^{like} Galileo, who stood for anthropocentrism and heliocentrism against the prevailing notion, were persecuted by the people. This was due to the conservatism present due to absence of free flow of ideas, prevailing ideas mirroring themselves.

Education enables an atmosphere of ~~the~~ the aforesaid free flow of ideas. It thus leads to conversion of the prevailing "mirrors" of echoing conservatism into "windows" which permit debate, dissent and deliberation to flow through. Amartya Sen, in his book, The Argumentative Indian, outlines the importance of the same. ~~for~~ It is perhaps due to this, that Voltaire, famously said, "I may not agree with what you say, but I shall forever defend your right to say it".

Much like the allowance of debate, dissent and deliberation in the society, education also enables conversion of "mirrors" of

parochial mindset into "windows" of
progressive & broad mind approaches. The
~~set~~ "mirror" that the education seeks
to convert refers to the self absorbed
tendencies of societies to perpetuate injustice
in the name of culture and heritage.
This was witnessed during the freedom
struggle, where the educated elite like
Lajpat Ram Mohan Bay, Ishwar Chandra
vidyasagar and many more stalwarts enabled
by their education, fulfilled its purpose by
~~the~~ "turning" the mirrors of self glorified
but abhorrent rituals like "sati pratha",
"ban on widow re-marriage", "child marriage",
into windows of social change. This
change was brought by promoting female
education; establishment of widow remarriage
associations, ~~the~~ prohibition of sati by
law and establishment of several schools
and colleges to further advance this purpose.

Likewise, the Hobbes acclaimed "selfish
horrid" nature of man in the state of
nature is sought to be converted by
education. Much like the mirror shows

forms an individual's own reflection, an individual has the innate tendency to focus on himself alone, without paying attention, heed and consideration to others. Education seeks to convert the same by establishment of "windows" leading to brotherhood, fraternity and greater collaboration.

The realisation of power of economies of scale which comes from collaborative exercises with civil society organisations, NGOs in ~~its~~ addressing tricky times such as that of Covid 19 has been game changing. Such a collaboration was witnessed even at the international level. The "Operation Sanjeevani" undertaken by India in sending out vaccines to vulnerable countries around the world is an accurate depiction of how education induced maturity enabled our nation in overturning the mirror of self-centrity into window of help extension.

At the individual level, education seeks to achieve the same goal by enabling one to be emotionally intelligent, morally upright, ethically righteous. The appropriate "value education" will enable the overturning of grim "mirrors" leading to corruption, greed, dishonesty into "windows".

of righteousness. ~~As~~ righteousness has been
tailed to be the foundation of good gover-
nance by Confucius, it is perhaps the
purpose of education to provide for the
same.

Education enables in increasing the human
capital. It enables in better opportunities
of economic progress and social development.
It has a multiplier effect on the society,
leading to improvement of health parameters,
technological progress, along with the growth
rate. Thus the focus shifts from a
"mirror" based growth centrality to
"window" based development centrality.

However, apart from enabling us to
appreciate the windows of change and
development, education has enabled us to
view our "mirrors" in a different fashion.
It has empowered us with critical abilities
to undertake self reflection. It seeks to
help us sharpen our conscience, hone our
abilities, learn from our mistakes.
In fact, the entire education system is
established along the lines of "self assess-
ment".

This has been further emphasised under the new Education Policy's formulation of PARAKH: the deep assessment tool.

But, the crucial question to pose here is that ~~how~~ has education been successful in achieving its purpose of dealing with this mirror window dynamics?

In reality, even in the most literate of societies, such as that of United States of America & France, there are increasing rates of intolerance, gun violence, crust. Rather than windows ^{tending to} harmony, brotherhood, peace, we see parochial mirrors of discrimination and anti-secular practices. The condition is as dismal in India, where instances of mob lynching, caste bias, gender violence, child marriage, sex selection are still occurring, along with instances of corruption, disproportionate assets and livisng.

The way to redress the same is to ensure that greater emphasis is provided on "value education" and "self self reflection".

While we need to decimate the external ~~mirrors~~ mirrors and convert them into

"windows", however we need adequate placement of mirrors internally. Being able to self assess oneself on the moral front along the lines of one's inner voice of conscience, will enable the cultivation of an ethical attitude. If every individual is successful in doing the same, we can build an ethical ecosystem, where intolerance, discrimination etc., all arising from an inflated sense of self worth, will cease to exist. There can then be windows of social capital, economic development, peace & prosperity all around & thus, purpose of education can be attained.

As Atal Bihari Vajpayee said,

"Where there is righteousness in heart,
there is harmony at home;
where there is harmony at home,
there is order in society;
where there is order in society,
there is peace in nation,
and love in the world".