

In Struggling with misfortune lies the true proof of virtue.

The famous book 'you can win' by Shiv Khanna narrates the following

Story:

A man lost legislative race at the age of 24. His wife died at the age of 27. He had a nervous breakdown at the age of 30. At 35 he went bankrupt. At 37 he again lost a legislative race. At 45 he lost the race to become the vice president. At 52 he became the president of USA. This man was Abraham Lincoln. He is counted among the most highly regarded and respected American presidents who epitomised virtue.

The previous story reveals the truth that how we struggle with misfortunes reveals who we are underneath.

Before going any further, let us try to understand the scope of the essay. 'Struggle' means to fight and not give up in face of adverse situations. These

adverse situations or bad luck are called 'misfortune'. 'True proof'

implies 'irrefutable evidence'. 'Virtue'

in broadest terms means 'ethics, good values and morals'.

So, why does the proof of virtue lie in how we deal with misfortunes?

First, it reveals the true character of a man. It

Shows we will not use wrong means come what may. For example when our nation ~~was~~ faced the misfortune of colonialism, Gandhiji insisted on Satyagrah (sticking to truth) and Ahimsa (non violence). This struggle revealed the Mahatma not just in Gandhiji, but in the spirit of our nation also.

Second, it reveals if we ^{uphold} Universal Values such as truth, honesty, integrity and justice. For example when the Greeks faced economic crisis ^{in all circumstances} in 2007, they resorted to fudging their records.

In contrast in 1991 India upheld transparency to show its real economic situation.

Third, ^{it is said} Veritas ~~characterized~~ consists of what you do in the 3rd and the 4th tries. For

example a person making fake EWS or OBC certificate after a few attempts at UPSC reveals that he or she is corruptible.

Fourth, ~~it reveals~~ nothing reveals the virtue of positive attitude and perseverance

more than a struggle with misfortune for example at the age of 60

Edison watched his factory burn in a massive fire. A lifetime of

work was gone in a few hours.

Yet he said, "Thank God all

our mistakes are burnt up, now

we can start afresh."

Fifth, misfortune reveals if we can hold on to

a belief greater than us or fall into depths of despair. For example

in the misfortune of Nazi Concentration Camps Victor Frankl wrote 'Man's Search for meaning' which not only inspired his fellow prisoners but is a guiding light for millions even today.

Sixty, misfortune reveals if we have the character of taking responsibility or running away and hiding. For example Kantilya wrote that the Prince should be 'brave like a lion and clever like a fox' in face of misfortune. ^{He adds} Candles are put out by

~~fire~~ winds, but fires rage even more because of winds.

But aren't there other proofs of virtue? why are they not the true proofs?

In ~~modern~~ ancient

And modern times both Spirituality has been seen as a proof of virtue.

However we have several examples like Asaram Babu to show the charade left behind such Spirituality.

Similarly Charity is seen as a proof of virtue. However the source of funds for charity may be immoral. For example a prominent business man gives away a part of his black money in charity as part of his scheme to convert black money to white.

Finally a virtuous person may turn into a villain when faced with misfortune. For example in the famous movie 'Batman' the protagonist turns

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into the antihero when he witnesses the death of his loved one.

But now let us explore the antithesis. Sometimes the proof of virtue doesn't lay in struggling with misfortune.

It is said "Every man can survive adversity, but if you want to test a man's character give him power". Power reveals who we really are by giving us the ability to influence other people. For example a politician resorting to witch hunting against his opponents reveals who he truly is.

Similarly sometimes it is not misfortune, rather riches that reveals our character.

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for example Siddharta discovered the Buddha in him when the riches of the court were not able to satisfy his soul.

Now the question is how should we deal with misfortune?

We should face misfortune with hope, belief and faith - the virtues that make up a good life. We should also face it with the virtues of scientific mindset to study it for

what it is. We should not fall into despair or use immoral means. Rather we should always

~~push~~ push and persevere. Remember Remember the tests of life aren't

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meant to break you but to make you.

To inculcate this positive way of struggling with misfortune we must start from ~~the~~ the level of home itself. Parents must ingrain values of truth, honesty and integrity in their children. Similarly teaching emotional intelligence at schools will enable us to build a nation based on highest values of life. We can also learn to reinterpret 'misfortune' in positive sense as ~~an~~ ~~offer~~ challenge to both reveal and build virtue. Above all we must learn ~~from~~ ^{from} our ancient wisdom of giving virtue the highest pedestal in life.

In Conclusion let us remember that a butterfly was a caterpillar that fought against the 'misfortune' of its shell. A diamond is a lump of coal that survived the 'misfortune' of immense pressure and temperature.

Finally let us remember the character played by 'Rajesh Khanna' in the famous movie 'Anand'. He is terminally ill with Cancer. Yet this misfortune & Cancer reveals bundles of joy, positivity, grace and virtue in him.

As it is said it is better to light the candle (of virtue) than to curse the darkness (of misfortune).

The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows

It is said that Nazis had the best education system of the world in their times. They had the most modern infrastructure, best labs, advanced pedagogy and highly professional teachers.

Yet, history bears witness, their education system was a set of mirrors that reinforced ideas of racial superiority. Young children could only see their blue eyes and blonde hair in these distorted mirrors.

The walls of their schools had no windows through which the suffering of the Jews and develop empathy and compassion for

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them.

The above anecdote reveals the whole point of education is to turn 'mirrors into windows'.

But before going any further let us understand the scope of the essay. 'Mirror' implies a structure that reinforces what already exists.

'Window' implies a portal that shows us the possibilities beyond what we know.

The first question to answer is - what is wrong with mirrors that education seems to undo?

First, mirrors are Status quoist in nature. They accurately reflect what is but don't talk about what ought to

be. For example education system based on caste hierarchy 'showed the mirror' to 'low caste' people every day. When a 'low caste' student was asked to sit outside the class, ~~the~~ such education system only reinforced and institutionalised caste system.

Second, mirrors lead to self obsession and a belief that we are perfect. For example Indian education system was left far ~~&~~ behind the British which was based on admitting that more could be discovered and innovated.

Third, a palace of mirrors creates echo chambers. For example this failure of education can be

seen in social media where even the 'educated' become ~~victims~~ guilty of not being able to uphold balanced view points.

Fourth, missions may also create distorted images. For example post colonial scholars write the purpose of ~~British~~ western education system was to paint east as 'barbarian' and 'uncivilized' so as to justify the civilizing mission.

Now let us explore the 2nd question - why should education be a window?

As a window, education lets in breath of fresh air to fight the old stale ideas. For example ideas like humanism, universalism and

human dignity should form the
core of education systems.

As a window
education provides an escape
route when the padlocks of
tradition have locked the doors -

for example for an average
female education acts as a
source of empowerment against
the 'mirror' of patriarchy.

The window of
education also lets sunshine
in. For example it teaches

us values of compassion, humility,
tolerance, pluralism and peacefully
disagreeing with others.

The window of
education also allows us to
see ~~what~~ what exists beyond

Our immediate surroundings and hence creates a Spirit of innovation. For example research into the unexplored ideas and world opened by the portal of education is the basis of all modern technological progress.

Windows also allow us to interact with our neighbours and hence create a Fusion of Cultures. For example Gandhi held that our windows should be open to let the best of all cultures nations. Inside our homes and

The open window of education also allows us to hear the chirping of the bird of hope. For example we have pinned our hopes on modern

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research and development to solve problems like hunger, poverty and climate change.

Sometimes education is more than a window. It is a portal to our own heart and soul. For example the wisdom provided by our ancient gurus removes the mirrors of ego from our beings.

But now let us expose the antithesis. Sometimes education has to be a mirror.

As a mirror, education must reflect social evils, stagnation, political obscurantism and so on. For example the education system of Nordic countries was based on these sharp mirrors because of which today they are high in development.

Similarly sometimes true education means shutting some windows. For example in a regressive society ~~with~~ an open window may actually bring in the bad odour of outdated ideas such as discrimination and make them appear normal. In such case education instills in us the courage to close such windows.

~~let~~ Now let us explore the way forward - How do we transform mirrors into windows?

To begin with we must start at our homes. Primary socialisation in family is the first school of children. Issues such as Caste, patriarchy

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and Communalism will be solved for ever if children are taught to look at everyone through the open ~~not~~ and wide window of equality, ~~respect~~ respect and toleration.

Next in our schools we must have the windows of spirit of inquiry. Children must not only be taught facts, rather they should be taught to question everything they read. This will turn the window of education into a platform from which these little birds can take flight.

Finally society itself

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is the biggest and lifelong school.
It should be based on the
window of balance between
materialism and spirituality. It
should be informed by social
Capital. As Amartya Sen writes
the purpose of education should
be to increase the range of
things a person can do and
be. In that sense education
is an unimpeded window to
the world and to our own
selves.

Finally let us
remember the story of Helen
Keller. She was born deaf, an
dumb and blind, and that is
what all the microbes told her. Yet
in her education autobiography my life she writes
was her window to the
world!