

# THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

**The Art of Unleashing Your  
Potential, Conquering Adversity  
and Achieving High Goals**



**MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN**

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## Foreword



**A**lfred Adler (1870-1937) the renowned psychologist, focused principally on individual psychology. One observer made the following comment on Adler's chosen field:

After spending a lifetime studying people and their hidden reserves of power, the great psychologist, Alfred Adler, declared that one of the wonder-filled characteristics of human beings is "their power to turn a minus into a plus".

God has created human beings with extraordinary capabilities. This quotation is a succinct acknowledgment of God's work as expressed by a psychologist. Indeed, one of the greatest features of human capability is that a person can see the bright side to things—even in darkness. He finds it possible to change unfavourable situations into favourable ones. Even in defeat, he can find new opportunities to achieve success.

It is a fact that a human being is by nature well equipped to turn his minuses into pluses. But there is a condition attached to this—He shall have to opt for the way of management and abandon the way of confrontation. An individual ought first of all to study the situation he is faced with and then plan his course of action objectively.

A person will succeed if he follows the principle

of management rather than confrontation. Non-confrontational methods always yield positive results, while confrontational methods only aggravate matters.

In human life the most important thing is the will to act. The people who ultimately succeed are those who are undaunted by adverse circumstances, who waste no time in lamenting over their disadvantages and who give their attention instead to overcoming whatever difficulties they face.

It is not, after all, the one who has never had to face any kind of difficulties, who is necessarily the most successful in life. The truly successful person is one who can carry his ambitions into effect no matter what hurdles he has to surmount. He is the one who will arrive at his destination no matter what obstacles are strewn in his path. He is the one who is prepared to battle through fire and water right to the very end.

God has created this world with remarkable possibilities. Here, when an endeavour appears to fall into the oblivion of failure, a new light shines out from the darkness. When a house falls, it leaves the space for another house to be constructed in its place. The same is true of human life. Here, with every failure, there arises a new possibility of success. In the competition of two nations, if one nation becomes developed and the other is left behind, the matter does not end there. Subsequently, a new process begins to take shape where the people of developed nations adopt a lavish lifestyle and enjoy luxurious facilities, whereas the people of underdeveloped nations develop a passion for hard work and struggle, and thus become developed.

This means that in this world of God there is no question of being overtaken by disappointment and depression. No matter how unpromising the circumstances may appear to be, there will always be a new opportunity for success close by. One has to avail of this new opportunity in order to convert defeat into success.

Moreover, deprivation in this world is not something valueless; deprivation gives rise to the passion for enterprise. And in this way, it makes groups more active and produces the possibility for greater success.

Those who wish to advance and be successful in life without passing through the necessary stages, will have to build another world for themselves—one which satisfies their own requirements; for in the world that God has created, their dreams can never come true.

Wahiduddin Khan

May 8, 2019  
New Delhi

## A Taste of Honey



Of all the nectar that bees collect from flowers, only about a third is actually converted into honey. In order to produce just one pound of honey, bees have altogether to collect nectar from 2 million flowers. This involves approximately 3 million flights over an aggregate distance of 50,000 miles. Only when the required amount of nectar has been collected does the process of honey-making begin.

In its initial state, nectar is a liquid of roughly the same consistency as water. Bees' wings have been designed to act as fans which vapourize the excess liquid. When this has been removed, a sweet liquid remains, which the bees suck. The mouths of the bees contain a certain type of gland, which automatically transforms the sweet liquid matter into honey. Their honey prepared, the bees now store it in their hives in specially formed holes made out of wax. All this involves an enormous amount of work by other bees. The safety and effectiveness of this method of storage is as complete as any packaging in which humans encase honey. Only when the honey is needed for human consumption does it have to be taken from the hives.

Numerous other arrangements of this kind could have been made for the preparation of honey. God is able to do all things: He could have brought honey into

being by uttering a magic word; He could have caused it to issue from the ground, as He has done with water. But for the preparation of honey He has ordained this other, highly evolved and perfect system. This is so that man may take heed and realize the manner in which God has created the universe, thus learning the laws and methods he must follow if he is to be successful in this world.

If we are to sum up the method employed by bees in the preparation of honey, we might say that it is a method involving perfect planning. This same method is to be followed by man. For man to achieve any worthwhile aim in life, he has to work towards it in a planned, methodical way. This is the only way to be successful in one's aims. What applies to the bees applies also to mankind.

## The Example of Nature



**A**n expert on hunting writes: “The big cats often turn into man-eaters when they are too old to hunt and trap wild animals. But nine times out of ten, they do so because a poacher has wounded them.” (*The Times of India*, May 12, 1984)

The big cat by nature is not a man-eater. But it is the greatest enemy-eater among all animals. The big cat does not spare anyone it considers to be its enemy. In general when a big cat sees any human it veers away from him.

But those hunters who do not possess a proper weapon or take poor aim at a big cat are generally unable to kill it, and instead leave it wounded. These are the big cats who turn into man-eaters, they now consider “humans” to be their enemies and whenever they come across them they do not stop until they kill them.

This is one of the laws of life. Just as it is true of the big cat versus man, it also holds for man versus man. Whether it concerns an individual or a nation, in both the situations the same principle applies. Do not seek revenge on an enemy if you cannot at first succeed, for he will only become a greater opponent than he was before.

When you try to deal with one who is your enemy without proper preparation, it is like digging your grave with your own hands. Impatience will not work for those who are unable to formulate a plan. With their silent struggle they are the ones who act against people on the surface, turning them into bigger enemies and later resort to complaint and protest. In this world ill-prepared action and ill-founded complaints have no value.

## The Life Force



**A** creeper growing in a courtyard once had the misfortune to have its roots and branches buried under mounds of earth and rubble when the house

was undergoing repairs. Later, when the courtyard was cleaned up, the owner of the house cut away the creeper, which had been badly damaged, and even pulled out its roots so that it would not grow again. The whole courtyard had then been laid with bricks and cemented over.

A few weeks later, something stirred at the place where the creeper had been rooted out. The bricks heaved upwards at one point as though something were pushing them from below. This appeared very strange, but was dismissed as being the burrowings of rats or mice. The riddle was solved when some of the bricks were removed, and it was discovered that the creeper had started growing again, although in a sadly distorted form. As it happened, not all of its roots had been pulled out, and when the time of the year came around for them to grow, life began to stir within them and they pushed their way up through the cement to the sunlight. It is one of nature's miracles that these tender leaves and buds, which can so easily be crushed to a pulp between finger and thumb, can summon up such strength as to force their way through bricks and cement.

The owner of the house then regretted having attempted to take the creeper's life. He remarked, "It is just as if it were appealing to me for the right to grow. Now I certainly won't stand in its way." And saying so, he removed some more of bricks so that it would grow unhindered. In less than a year's time, a fifteen-foot creeper was flourishing against the courtyard wall at the

exact point from which it had been so unceremoniously ‘uprooted’.

A mountain, despite its great height and girth, cannot remove so much as a pebble from its flanks. But these tiny, tender buds of the tree can crack a cemented floor and sprout up through it. Whence such power? The source of its energy is the mysterious phenomenon of our world called life. Life is an astonishing, ongoing process of this universe—a force which will claim its rights in this world, and, even when uprooted, it continues to exist, albeit dormant, at one place or the other and reappears the moment it finds the opportunity. Just when people have come to the conclusion that, because there is nothing visible on the surface, life must be at an end, that is when it rears its head from the debris.

## The Teacher Tree



The tree-trunk forms one half of a tree and the roots the other half. Botanists tell us that there is just as much of a tree spread under the ground as there is standing above the ground. The top half of a tree can only stand erect and verdant above the ground when it is prepared to bury its other half beneath the ground. This is an example which trees show to mankind; from it, man can learn how to build solidly in his life. One philosopher puts it this way:

“Root downward, fruit upward, that is the



divine protocol. The rose comes to a perfect combination of colour, line and aroma atop a tall stem. Its perfection is achieved, however, because first a root went down into the homely matrix of the common earth. Those who till the soil or garden understand the analogy. Our interests have so centered on gathering the fruit that it is easy to forget the cultivation of the root. We cannot really prosper and have plenty without first putting down our roots in a life of sharing. The horn of plenty does not stay full unless there is first such sharing.”

A tree stands above the ground, having fixed its roots firmly beneath the ground. It grows from beneath, upwards into the air; it does not start at the top and grow downwards. The tree is our teacher, imparting to us the lesson of nature that if we seek to progress outwardly, we must first strengthen ourselves inwardly; we must begin from the base of our own selves before we can hope to build society anew.

## An Easy Solution



Once a hakim (Unani physician) was visited by a person carrying a box, out of which he took a piece of jewelry, saying that it was pure gold. “Its price is not less than rupees twenty thousand. I want to leave it with you against a loan of 10,000 rupees. I will return this

amount in one month and will then take this jewelry back from you.” The hakim said: “No, I don’t do this kind of work.” But the man expressed his helplessness in such a manner that the hakim felt sympathetic towards him and lent him ten thousand rupees against the jewelry. After that he kept the jewelry safely in an almirah.

Months passed by but the man did not return. The hakim now became suspicious. At last one day he showed the jewelry to a goldsmith. Right away he told the hakim that it was brass and not gold. After the loss of money, the hakim did not want to lose himself. So he stopped thinking about this incident. He only changed the place where he kept the jewelry which had earlier been kept safely in a steel cupboard. Now he kept it in an open cupboard. He separated the jewelry from the gold ornaments and kept it in a boxful of brassware.

Anger generally arises due to the non-fulfilment of the expectations that we have of another person. One we regarded as an honest person turns out, after a bad experience, to be dishonest. One we considered to be an obedient person turns out not to be so.

The best way to deal with such a situation is for the person concerned to change his position, just as the hakim did in the case of the fake jewelry. The jewelry which he had originally thought to be gold and kept safely, was later removed from that safe place and kept in a boxful of brassware.

## Reading the Signs



With the increase of traffic in modern times, the danger of accidents has also increased. To obviate this danger, various forms of road signs have been put up, for the guidance of motorists. One such sign reads: “Lane driving is sane driving.” Keeping to one’s lane is an effective safeguard against accidents, averting the danger of colliding with other motorcars, and ensuring that one’s journey does not end in disaster.

An article in a British motor magazine by an expert on driving gives some indispensable rules of thumb for drivers. If one is speeding down a main road, for example, and suddenly a ball appears from a side road, one must realize that there is probably a child not far behind it. If one sees the ball, but fails to see the child, one cannot count oneself a good driver. The really good driver stops, not on account of the ball, but on account of the child that he sees with his mind’s eye, running behind the ball. It is the quickness of the driver’s imagination which saves the child from being run over.

The principles we are required to keep in mind while driving are the same as those we should keep in mind on our journey through life. If one wishes, one can learn from the “highway code” the principles that one should follow in the vaster arena of life.

Always confine your activities to your own sphere;

if you infringe on the sphere of others, you are sure to clash with them: then your progress will come to an abrupt halt. When certain signs appear on the horizon of society, try to make out what these signs imply. Do not just go by outward signs; try to reach the meaning behind them. If one just goes by what one sees and fails to see what lurks in the background, one will not advance in one's journey through life. Others, more far-seeing than oneself, will forge ahead, while one falls victim to dangers that could have been avoided if one had read the signs properly.

## Per Ardua ad Astra



According to an English scholar, Ian Nash, who spent eleven years in Japan making a detailed study of the people and the nation, what shook the Japanese most profoundly was not upheavals in politics, but the great Kanto earthquake, which devastated the whole of the most populated eastern part of Japan on September 1, 1923. Another terrible blow was the reduction of two of the great cities of Japan to smouldering mounds of waste by the dropping of atomic bombs. This led to the ultimate defeat of Japan in the Second World War in 1945.

One might imagine that any country which has been dealt such shattering blows would never be able to rise again from its ashes. But this is far from the truth,

for Japan has not only rehabilitated itself, but now figures most prominently on the world's commercial and industrial scene. Japan has become a great hive of technological activity, in spite of having launched itself on an industrial course long after Britain, Europe and America. This is all the more remarkable considering that Japan has none of the natural resources that the older established industrial nations have, buried right there in their own soil just waiting to be extracted.

In human life the most important thing is the will to act. Had the Japanese succumbed to a sense of loss and frustration and frittered their energies away in futile political protest, their country would have been doomed to decline and ruination. But, as it was, they overcame any sense of victimization they might have had and set about reconstructing their national life with a will and a way. Although earthquakes had brought them death and destruction, they had also galvanized them into building their lives afresh.

In such situations of grim affliction, provided one has the will, all one's hidden potential and latent faculties are brought into play. One can think better, plan more successfully and make the greater efforts needed to bring one's plans to fruition. One who lacks the will to improve his life is just like an idling motor which is going nowhere.

Experience has also shown that complacency and a sense of comfort can be even greater vitiating factors in man's progress through life than devastation and despair. This does not mean that adversity by itself is beneficial. No. It is simply the spark which ignites the

fuel of man's soul and drives him on to greater things. It is the mainspring of his initiative and the force which propels him relentlessly forward. In the face of adversity, his hidden capacities come to the fore and it becomes possible for him to reach undreamt of heights. But first and foremost, there has to be the will to do so. There has to be the will to stop wallowing in self-pity and to get up and take action.

It has rightly been said: "It is not ease, but effort, not facility, but difficulty which makes a man what he is."

## The Need for Flexibility



**A** man came into a shop intent on buying some cloth. Choosing a suitable piece was no problem, but fixing a price was, for in eastern countries one usually has to bargain before buying anything. This time, the bargaining was tough. Neither the shopkeeper nor the customer was willing to budge from his original price. Finally, after holding out adamantly for half-an-hour, it was the shopkeeper who gave in, coming right down to the customer's price, thus clinching the deal.

A friend of the shopkeeper's was in the shop at the time. After the customer had left he asked, "Why waste so much time over the price, when you were ready to give it at the customer's price all along?" "You missed the point," the shopkeeper replied. "That was my way of clinching the deal. Why, if I had agreed to the customer's

price straightway, he would have thought—'Oh, I might be able to get the cloth even cheaper somewhere else'—and gone off. Anyway, I wanted to know how far he was willing to go. When I realized that he was not willing to budge even an inch, I saw that I was the one who would have to give in. So I sold him the cloth at his price."

So it is with any contest in life. Quite naturally, each party wishes to settle the matter to his own satisfaction. It is only sensible, then, for him to press his demands. But, at the same time, common sense requires him to know what his limits are, i.e. how far he can go without losing anything himself—or sending his customer away dissatisfied.

Here we have a basic principle of life. It can be put in one word—adjustment.

Adjustability is the key to success in life, both for individuals and for nations. We can define adjustability as taking into account the needs of others besides one's own. In this world, success comes the way of one who is able to see both sides of a coin, to look at matters from another's point of view as well as from his own. Those who only know what they want, and go all the way to achieve it, irrespective of others' needs, will find their path through life strewn with obstacles and pitfalls, and it will be little wonder if they come to grief.

## Perseverance Pays



Waking up in the morning to the noisy chirruping of the birds, the man noticed a broken egg lying on the floor. It had obviously fallen from the nest built by sparrows just under the ceiling of his modest dwelling. Warily, he removed the broken egg, then, noting with disgust the straws which were eternally littering his floor, he stood up on a piece of furniture, and swiped the nest out of its niche. Then he spent quite some time and effort cleaning up the whole place.

The very next day, he found more straws dirtying his newly cleaned floor and, looking up, he saw that the birds were again building their nest under his roof. He felt he was going mad with their chirruping and the perpetual mess they made, so he destroyed the new nest before it was even half-completed. That way he thought he could drive them away forever.

But the tragedy of the devastated home only spurred the birds on to greater efforts, and showing great daring, they worked faster than ever. They did not waste a single moment on lamenting their loss. Nor did they go away to collect a whole flock of birds to come and make a united attack on the house owner. They simply flew to and from the home, quietly and incessantly picking up fresh straws and fixing them in position. They did not waste a single moment.



This self-same story was repeated from day to day for over a month. The house owner would angrily destroy their home and moments later the sparrows would reappear with straws in their beaks to begin their labour all over again. Their efforts seemed fruitless. Their incessant gathering of straws was apparently futile. But, regardless of the consequences, they went on steadily with their work. It was the birds' answer to the unmitigated hatred of the man. Yet although he was the stronger, they always seemed somehow to foil him. And, finally, with their silent endeavours, they gained the upper hand. The man realized that his resistance was futile and he stopped destroying the nests. Now they have completed their nest and have successfully laid and hatched their eggs. Their chirruping no longer incenses the man. He has simply ceased to mind them, for they have taught him a priceless lesson—never hate your enemy. In all circumstances, persevere steadfastly in constructive activities. In the end you will emerge victorious.

## A Spur to Improvement



**O**n board the Delhi-Hyderabad Indian Airlines flight no. 439 on January 20, 1987, the usual announcements were made, from which I gathered that the pilot in command was a Captain Mustafa. This name was new to me, although I was a regular passenger on Indian Airlines flights. It clearly indicated that

Muslims were now being recruited to India's airlines as well as to other prestigious services of the country. This seemed to me to be a great step forward—the result of a major effort to overcome the general backwardness of their community.

This is highly significant in the context of Indian Muslim leaders' proclamations to the world at large, that young Muslims are regularly kept out of good jobs. It hardly seems fair to go on in this vein without presenting both sides of the picture. If, in certain instances, Muslim youths are denied good jobs, the other instances of their being recruited should also be brought to the attention of the public. Constantly making out that Muslims are necessarily at a disadvantage is certainly unjust, given the changing pattern of national opportunity.

I agree, of course, that for every 'Mustafa' who has been taken into service in this country, there is another, less fortunate 'Mustafa' who has been turned away. But I object to this being called discrimination. This is simply one of the realities of our highly competitive world. It is a matter of historical fact that for any human progress to take place, the competitive element is an essential ingredient in any social set-up. As a spur to improvement, competition must play its part between individuals and societies alike. After all, observation of animals confined in the safety of zoos, where all of their requirements are provided for them, has shown that they sink into indolence and lethargy, and only regain their zest and vigour when 'rival' animals are introduced into their cages. In this respect, human beings are no

different, for it is only when they are confronted by rivals that they strive their utmost to fulfil their potential.

In many situations in life, there must be a winner and a loser. The moment such a situation is termed communal, however, an atmosphere of bitterness is generated in which grievances are regularly voiced. If, on the other hand, we simply call this human rivalry, it will be seen as an instance of obedience to a law of nature. There will then be no grounds for ill-feeling and the destructiveness which this can engender.

## Teaching the Teachers



For about twenty years, between 1950 and 1970, Japan used to import superior industrial technology from the West, at times by outright purchase, but more often by borrowing or on a credit basis. As a result, Japan today stands on its own feet economically and is in a position to export not only its goods but also its know-how to other countries.

Thanks to its advanced technical expertise, it is now in a position to help other countries, enter into friendly relations with them and draw up contracts to do business with them. Some of their feats include working on the latest irrigation projects in Thailand, giving instruction in computer programming in Singapore, constructing iron and steel factories in South Korea and China and setting up petro-chemical industries in the Middle

East, etc. The Japanese learnt iron and steel making from the Americans and have now developed it so extensively that they are at present exporting their skills to the Americans themselves. Japan, once the learner, is now so well placed in so many fields—particularly in communications and electronics—that America is seeking its technical assistance in many of its important military departments. The students are now teaching their teachers. A newspaper correspondent reports: “Now the flow is out instead of in.” (*Hindustan Times*, June 11, 1981)

Japan willingly submitted to industrial tutelage for 20 years and, as a result, attained the position of industrial dominance. If it had chosen not to recognize the supremacy of others at that crucial point in its development, and had felt too proud to go to them for help, it would never have had such resounding successes.

All too often, we have to lose in order to gain. We have to resign ourselves to our lowly position until we can work ourselves up to more satisfactory heights. Those who recognize this necessity as one of the facts of life will have a better chance of succeeding in this world than those who expect to be able to climb straight to the top without first having accepted a position of humility, or who persist in blaming others for their failures. Patience, fortitude and tenacity are the virtues which will see us through to success, provided they are always leavened by humility.

## Learning from Our Mistakes



**A**dam, the first man, had two sons, one of whom killed the other in anger—while quarrelling. This was the first incident of the killing of a man in human existence and the murderer had no idea of what should be done with the dead body of his brother.

“Then God sent down a raven, which scratched the earth to show him how to bury the corpse of his brother. ‘Alas!’ he cried, ‘have I not strength enough to do as this raven has done and so bury my brother’s corpse?’ And he repented.” (The Quran 5:31)

Ever since this event took place, God has continuously been sending one creature after another to us to guide us about how we should lead our lives. But man seldom takes heed of such occurrences.

A friend, by the name of Khurshid Bismil, living in Thanna Mandi, Rajouri, once showed me a spot in his house where such an incident took place as should give rise to serious thought about the quality of human endeavour. It seems that two swallows once built a nest under the eaves by bringing small quantities of mud and laboriously attaching it bit by bit to the underside of the wooden roof. It took several days of continuous effort to make the nest solid enough for them to lay their eggs in it. Sad to say, while the hatching process was going on, the nest suddenly gave way one day, fell to the

ground and was destroyed. The weight of four eggs and two swallows had been too much for it. But, nothing daunted, the birds began fluttering around looking for some safer place to reconstruct their home. They finally found a niche with a rougher surface, which would give the nest better support. Whereas the swallows had made their first nest just from mud, they made this one from a mixture of mud, grass and straw. This combination of materials proved much stronger than plain mud and this nest was also more firmly fixed in position than the previous one. The eggs they laid in it then were successfully hatched and this new, reinforced nest continued to provide shelter for the baby swallows until they grew up and flew away to mate and make their own homes.

There is a great lesson in this for all of us: if a bird or animal fails in some effort, it seeks to understand the reason for its failure. It does not simply give up and succumb to adversity. It casts about for some other, better way of doing things and rectifies its errors by harder work and better planning. Human beings would do well to follow this example. Our planning is so often faulty and the efforts we make are so often inadequate that failures in many spheres are commonplace. But, really, all it would take to achieve success would be to give further thought to the problems besetting us and a deeper appreciation of the strategy we need to adopt. It is a wise man who learns by his own mistakes.

## Motion and Direction



A western thinker once commented, “You have removed most of the road blocks to success when you have learnt the difference between motion and direction.”

One intrinsic quality of activity is movement. When you are walking, driving, riding a bicycle, galloping along on horseback or roaring along on a motorcycle, you are moving. But in what direction? Are you moving towards your destination, or away from it? The actual motion in both cases seems to be no different in quality. The great difference between the two is that the former brings you ever nearer to your destination, while the latter takes you further and further away from it—leaving you where? Nowhere. At least nowhere that would be worth your while going to. It is direction that is all-important. Even if we only get on to a slow-moving bullock cart or a cycle rickshaw, we shall do better than a jet plane whose pilot has no sense of direction.

Whether in the context of our private lives or social existence, it is imperative that we take stock of our means and resources and then set off in the right direction, if, sooner or later, we are to reach our destination.

Often people launch themselves on careers, plunging headlong into them without giving due thought to their actual capacities and to whether they have any real

potential which can be developed? At times, they are led astray by trivial considerations, ill-founded opinions and overwhelming emotions, and rush heedless into whatever first comes their way. When the result is not what they had anticipated, they fall to complaining against others, lamenting their losses and failures and claiming that it was due to the prejudices of others that they had had to suffer frustrations and that their careers had come to naught. Had they given more profound thought to the matter, they would have realized that the fault lay in their own ill-judged planning or even total aimlessness. Had they started out in the right direction, others would not then have had the opportunity to place obstacles in their path and turn their successes into failures. Aimlessness is a great weakness and should be eschewed at all costs. In actual fact, no activity is truly of value unless it is characterized by its direction and not just its motion.

## Simply a Matter of Time



Oxford University, which was established in 1163, is surrounded by lush, green lawns. Once a visiting American millionaire, who had been quite charmed by them, asked the gardener at Oxford, how much it would cost him to have the same kind of lawns around his mansion in the US. “Nothing,” replied the gardener. “How?” asked the millionaire in astonishment. “You have to only level the ground and grow the grass. Then



you cut it and roll it.” “Oh, really!” said the millionaire, feeling reassured. But then the gardener went on in all seriousness: “Repeat this process for five hundred years and your lawn is ready.” Meeting the steady gaze of the gardener, the millionaire realized that not only do the English have their own special sense of humour, but that there are things which money cannot buy.

There are things for which time is of the essence. In the evening, when the sun has set, if we have a sudden desire to see the sun again, there is no way that we can do so except wait through the long night for dawn. If we plant a seed and hope to see more than just the sapling which will spring from it, we have to wait for many years. Only then shall we be able to see the full-grown tree in all its might and glory.

A definite span of time has been appointed for all of nature’s happenings. Nothing can come into being or fructify before that appointed time.

## Ease After Hardship



**A**nyone who has experienced a dust or sand storm in desert regions will know what traumatic experience they are. There does not appear to be anything good about the scorching, blinding winds. But Soviet meteorologists have—in the Karakoram desert—made investigations into the properties of dust storms and found that they are nature’s way of controlling extreme

climates. The strong winds raise the dust up to form a screen in the atmosphere, guarding the earth from the intensity of the sun's heat. The surface of the desert, scalded by the summer sun, is considerably cooled when it erupts in a dust storm. Sometimes the resultant change of temperature can be felt, say, in America and the Arctic as far afield as from Arabia and Central Asia.

Such is the order of nature. In this world just as ease always follows hardship, so fruitful results come only from arduous, painstaking processes. This is the way nature works, and from it we can see how we should live on earth. We should be prepared for a period of hard struggle before we can expect to reap the results we desire. This is a law established by the Maker of the universe, and it is only by complying with it that we can advance towards our goal in life. If we wanted to accomplish things an easier way, we should have to create another world, one in which cooling clouds—for instance—are not preceded by scorching winds.

There is no doubting the fact that failure in life usually results from the quest for immediate success. The word "short-cut" may be applicable to the world of roads and footpaths, but there are no short-cuts in the struggles of life. This fact frequently evinces itself in untoward ways.

Take the instance of a young man in the town of Surat, in Gujarat, who entered a jeweler's shop, stole a piece of jewelry, then tried to make a quick exit. His line of retreat to the staircase being cut off by the suspicious shopkeeper he made a dash for the nearest window and crashed his way—as he thought—to freedom. But

this bold attempt ended disastrously. His leap from the second floor window resulted in his instant death. (*The Times of India*, January 21, 1980)

This might appear to be just an isolated incident involving a foolhardy youth, but one finds people who are generally considered to be intelligent committing the same mistake in their lives. When an individual tries to accomplish instantly what should be worked for over a long period—like the youth who sought to reach ground level by jumping instead of walking down the stairs—he is condemning himself to destruction. When the leaders of a nation do likewise, they are spelling doom for all those who follow their lead.

## An Inevitable Evil



**M**r. Das was ranked as one of the most senior IAS officers. He had a big house in “Madhuban”, a posh colony in Delhi. But he committed suicide on the August 3, 1985, by putting a noose around his neck.

His wife, Hena Das, entered his room around one o’clock in the afternoon and found his body hanging from a ceiling fan. He was 54 when he died. He had recently been appointed the Chairman of the Delhi Tourism Development Corporation and was receiving the highest scale of salary.

In spite of all this, why did he commit suicide? On

this issue *Hindustan Times* and *The Times of India*, both dated August 4, had this to say:

“A businessman friend of Mr. Das said that the deceased bureaucrat was dissatisfied with many of the postings he was given. He said that Mr. Das often used to say that he was always given insignificant and ordinary positions. He was also depressed because he felt that he was not being given his due in the administration.”

Whether a person belongs to a majority group or a minority group, is an ordinary employee or a senior officer, in every situation, he will often experience what he considers unjust treatment. In this world, one can seldom escape the thought that one has not been assigned the position one deserves. In this situation, one should simply accept the situation. Because refusing to do so can lead a person towards total frustration or ultimate suicide.

## The Evil of Ignorance



This is an incident that happened before Independence. A villager once came to the city and stayed with one of his acquaintances. A melon was served to him. A knife with which to cut it was placed along with the melon on a plate. When he saw this, he was quite astonished. He said: “I do not understand the combination of knife and melon.” Without eating he returned the melon. When someone asked him why he had not eaten the

melon, he replied: “The only way I know how to eat a melon is by breaking it into pieces by pressing it with my hands. Then why was that knife placed beside the melon? I thought there must be some sorcery in this and that is why I did not eat it.”

Once again the same kind of incident happened with this man at night. A pillow was placed on the bed which had been made ready for him. He could not sleep the whole night and kept looking at the pillow. Later he said, “I thought there was some treasure inside it. I could not understand whether I should guard this bundle or sleep.”

Often it happens that a person develops complaints about others to such an extent that he becomes very annoyed. For his part, he thinks that his feeling of annoyance and complaints are completely justified.

Whereas this is only because of his ignorance. Without taking into account the whole of the situation, he forms his own opinions and sticks to them, whereas in reality, his complaints are baseless.

The Quran tells us how to keep away from such evil. That is, by thoroughly investigating the matter. If one is sincere, his attitude will be one of two: either he will just try to forget what he has heard or he will remain silent. And if for any reason he wants to discuss the matter, he will do so with the concerned person. Thus he would accept the facts only after proper investigation. Holding firmly to his former opinion even when investigation has shown it to be wrong is equivalent to propagating something without prior investigation.

## Ducking Below the Waves



Two young friends, both good swimmers, once went swimming off the coast of Madras. The day was pleasant, the sea calm, and sometimes skimming along the surface, sometimes plunging below, they had soon left the shore far behind. Then, quite without warning, they found themselves struggling against enormous waves which bore down on them with tremendous force. One of the young men struck out strongly against the waves, battling his way to the shore. But try as he might, he could not make the distance to the beach and he was drowned. The waves had proved stronger than him. His friend also struck out in the same way, but soon realized his efforts would be futile. Luckily he remembered that the force of the waves was felt more on the surface and much less underneath, so he immediately plunged, kicking and struggling, to a depth where he was no longer buffeted about. Now he began literally to swim for his life, his lungs bursting and his muscles aching. By straining every fibre of his being, he managed to reach the shallows, where he was picked up unconscious by some sailors. They brought him safely to dry land, where he was taken to hospital. He was given emergency treatment and soon recovered. It had certainly been lucky for him that there had been a boat in the vicinity to haul him out, and that he could have immediate medical attention. But what had really saved

his life was his change of tactics when he realized that the waves were going to be too powerful for him.

Both the young men had struggled valiantly to survive, but it was the one who had not depended only on physical strength but also on his intelligence who lived to tell the tale. He had understood almost immediately that a confrontation of his own human strength with the enormous powers of nature would be inane and futile.

This is a principle which might well be applied to the whole spectrum of human activity, for confrontation seldom brings us anything positive. When a typhoon approaches, even the fishes dive deep.

## There is No End to Opportunities



The sun was setting in the west behind the mountains. One half of the sun sank behind the mountain's peak while the other half remained visible above it. After a few minutes the sun had set behind the mountain range.

Now darkness started to spread everywhere. The sun had withdrawn its light slowly, and it now looked as if the entire surroundings would be enveloped in darkness. But, simultaneously, another light appeared on the opposite side of the sky. It was the moon of the twelfth night, which had started to shine after the sun had disappeared. After some time the moon was at its

brightest. A new light now pervaded the surroundings after the disappearance of the sunlight.

This is a sign of nature, I thought. When one opportunity ends, at the same time another opportunity arises. After the setting of the sun, the world had been brightened again by the light of the moon. This is how opportunity never ceases to arise, both for individuals and for nations. If anyone goes through bad times, even then there is no question of being disappointed in this world of God. By availing of new opportunities one can pull through once again. There is just one thing one needs to do and that is to give proof of one's wisdom by continuing to struggle without giving in to disappointment. God has created this world with remarkable possibilities. Here, when an endeavour appears to fall into the oblivion of failure, a new light shines out from the darkness. When a house falls, it leaves the space for another house to be constructed in its place. The same is true of human life. Here, with every failure, there arises a new possibility of success. In the competition of two nations, if one nation becomes developed and the other is left behind, the matter does not end there. Subsequently, a new process begins to take shape where the people of developed nations adopt a lavish lifestyle and enjoy luxurious facilities, whereas the people of underdeveloped nations develop a passion for hard work and struggle.

This means that in this world of God there is no question of being overtaken by disappointment and depression. No matter how unpromising the circumstances may appear to be, there will always be a



new opportunity for success close by. One has to avail of this new opportunity in order to convert defeat into success.

## Before Receiving



**T**here is an English proverb to this effect: “It is in giving that we receive.”

The Creator of this world has laid down a law that he who gives is the one who receives. In this world, one who has nothing to give is destined to get nothing in return.

God has enforced this principle in the world around us. Here, though everything has to receive something from elsewhere to sustain itself, the fact is that everything tries to give more than it receives.

Take a tree for example. The tree receives water and minerals from the earth. It receives nitrogen from the air. It receives heat from the sun and, in this way receiving its sustenance from the universe, it carries its being to a high level of perfection. But what does it do after that? After that, its whole being is reserved for other things and people. It gives shade to some. It provides wood for others. It gives flowers and fruits to yet others. Throughout its life it reserves itself for the service of others, till the time it dies. Everything in the universe follows the same pattern. Everything is busy in giving to and benefitting others. The sun, the rivers,

the mountains, the air—everything benefits others. The motto of the universe is based on giving benefit to others and not demanding rights from others.

In this world there is only one being who wants to receive instead of giving anything and that is the human being. Human beings exploit others unilaterally. They want to receive from others without giving. They want to become takers without being givers. This attitude runs counter to the scheme of God. It deviates from the general law of the universe. This contradiction proves that success is not destined for such people in the present world. In this world only those can achieve success who conform to the culture of this vast universe, and who live in this world as givers, not as takers.

## The Order of Nature



**A**fter an absence of several weeks, despite having shut up your room, you will find on your return, that a layer of dust has settled over everything. Until the room has been dusted, you will not feel like sitting in it, so displeasing is all this dust. It is just as unpleasant as the dust that is blown in your face by a strong wind. It makes you long for the air to be still once again, so that you may be spared the irritation.

But what is this dust that we find so annoying? It is, in fact, a surface layer of fertile soil, the very substance which enables the growth of all forms of vegetables,

fruits and cereals. If this soil did not lie on the face of the earth, it would be impossible for us to live on the earth at all.

It is this same dust that makes the earth's atmosphere dense enough for water to vapourize, forming clouds which release a downpour of water to revive and replenish the earth. Without rain, there would be no life on earth, and rain is only possible because of the dust in the earth's atmosphere.

The redness of the sky which we see at sunrise and sunset is also due to the presence of dust in the atmosphere. In this way dust, besides possessing multiple practical benefits, also contributes to the beauty of the world.

From this straightforward example, we can see how God has placed unpleasant things alongside the pleasant things of life. Just as the rose bush, as well as having exquisite flowers, also has sharp thorns, so also is life composed of an amalgam of both pleasing and displeasing things. This is the way God has created the world. There is nothing we can do but fit in with this order of nature as laid down by Him. Much as we may try, it is impossible for us to have things in any other way.

If you want to complain, you are sure to find plenty to complain about in life. But constantly complaining about things is surely a fruitless exercise. The intelligent thing to do is to forget the unpleasant things which are a part and parcel of life, bury grudges, and carry on seeking to fulfil your true purpose in life.

## The Law of Nature



**H**arry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969) explained a certain fact of life in these words:

“No steam or gas ever drives anything until it is confined. No Niagara is ever turned into light and power until it is tunnelled. No life ever grows until it is focused, dedicated, disciplined.” (Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Living Under Tension*)

There is but one law of nature, which applies to both animate and inanimate objects. It is that there is a price to be paid for every objective aimed at in life: without paying that price, nothing can be achieved.

In this world one has to sink before one can rise; one has to resign oneself to loss before one can gain, to backwardness before one can advance; one has to be able to accept defeat before one can claim victory.

The world in which man lives has been created by God, not by man himself. This may appear to be a simple fact, but it is one that man usually forgets in his everyday life. Since we are living in God’s world, we have no alternative but to understand His laws and follow them. There is no other way we can make a place for ourselves in the world.

Those who wish to advance and be successful in life without passing through the necessary stages, will have to build another world for themselves—one which

satisfies their own requirements; for in the world that God has created, their dreams can never come true.

## When One is Broken



**W**hen an inanimate object, such as a piece of wood, is broken into two, it remains broken. Never again can it remould itself into one piece. Animate objects, however, live on even after breakages. When one live amoeba is cut in two, it turns into two live amoebae.

This is surely a sign from God, showing us the breadth of opportunity that God has kept in store for us live human beings in this world. For a human being, no defeat is final, no disaster permanently crippling. As an animate being, no human can be finally shattered, for when broken, his every piece is welded again into a new, live being, if anything, more formidable than before.

For a human being, failure is no disaster, for it only serves to make one into a more profound, thoughtful person. Obstacles present no hindrance, for they open up new avenues of intellectual advance. Setbacks do not stunt one's growth, for even if one is crushed into many small pieces, each piece in its own right has the capacity to form the building blocks of an entirely new being.

Such are the never-ending possibilities which God has created for man in this world, but it is only one who is alive to these possibilities, who can benefit from

them, gathering and marshalling his resources after some shattering setback. When he tastes defeat, he does not lose heart, but prepares himself to issue a new challenge. He builds anew his shipwrecked boat, and, aboard it, recommences his journey through life.

## The World is Not a Typewriter



A man was sitting with a typewriter in front of him. Something came to his mind, and he immediately put paper in the typewriter and his fingers started moving along the keyboard. His thoughts were taking the form of words. Now all the sentences were typed out as follows:

- I am right, except for me, everyone is wrong.
- There is no fault in me. In all matters others are at fault.
- I am the greatest of all. Others are inferior to me.
- I am God's favourite. Paradise is reserved for me.

The man was happy that whatever he wanted had been written down on paper. But man's misfortune is that the world in which he lives is not a typewriter. The way he made his thoughts real on a paper, could not be done in this real world. It is enough to move one's fingers on the typewriter to print words of our choice on paper. But one has to perform a long and extensive struggle in the real world to make one's thoughts come

true. It is not just a question of moving one's fingers on a keyboard. The result is obvious. Whereas the typist had achieved apparently everything in the world of words, he was totally deprived of any such result in the outside world. However unpleasant it may appear to us, it is a fact that the world is not a typewriter for us. We are not its typists and we cannot, just by the movement of our fingers draw anything we like on the map of the world. This is a world of grave realities and it is only by adjusting to realities that we can achieve anything in this world. Man has a tongue and a pen with which he can express whatever he wants to. But man must remember that his tongue and pen can only shape words and not the realities of life. Words are reduced to dots or symbols on the paper. Words have to be translated into realities by our own efforts, determination and actions. Otherwise all will be lost.

## The Creation Plan of God



Everyone asks the same questions: Who am I? Why I am here on this planet earth? What is the purpose of man? What is success and what is failure? These questions may be summed up in a single sentence: What is the creation plan of the Creator? Chapter sixty-seven of the Quran, *Al-Mulk* (The Kingdom), gives the answer to this question. The translation of the relevant verse is as follows:

“God created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct. He is the Mighty, the Most Forgiving One.” (67:2)

According to the Quran, man was created as an eternal being. In the above Quranic verse ‘death and life’ represent both the pre-death period of life and the post-death period of human life. So, death and life cover the entire eternal lifespan of human beings.

The fact is that God created man with a well thought-out plan, the essence of which is to give man complete freedom—not simply as a gift, but as a test. The result of this test would enable God to know who misused his freedom and who put his freedom to the best use. This was, and still is, the divine scheme of things for man.

This test is not just for the sake of testing mankind. It is for a high purpose. Before creating man, God created an ideal world, that is, Paradise. Now God wanted ideal men and women who would merit being settled in this Paradise for all eternity. Therefore, the present world is a selection ground for Paradise.

According to this divine scheme, the present human lifetime affords a great opportunity to man. In the pre-death period of life, man has the chance to qualify himself for Paradise, so that in the post-death period of life he may be settled as a deserving candidate in this perfect world.

This divine scheme gives man great hope. The present world may be one of problems, for in this world there are sorrows, pains and unwanted situations. But the divine



scheme of life prescribed in the Quran gives us a great solace. It is like a bright light in the darkness. It gives men and women great hope that all those sorrows they experience in the present world are for the temporary period of testing, and that once they qualify in the test, they will be fortunate candidates for eternal Paradise.

This Quranic notion explains human life. It explains not only the existence of man, but also all the misadventures that he faces in this world. It gives great meaning to all the good and the bad in life.

Man is born with unique qualities, he is born with unlimited desires, his mind has enormous capacity but, before realizing his potential and before fulfilling his desires, his life comes to an end.

Given his often untimely demise, man seems to be a completely inexplicable phenomenon, but in the light of the above divine scheme, human life becomes completely explainable and understandable. Keeping this in mind, one sees how everything falls into place.

## The Present World and the Next World



If any farmer would like to reap the harvest on the day of sowing the seeds, shall lose the seeds as well as he will be deprived of the harvest. Same is the case with this world and the post-death world of tomorrow. The world of today is a place for action, and the world of tomorrow is the place for receiving reward. The one who

wants to achieve the 'reward' in today's world will be at the price that he will not be able to perform the desired task and will miss the only opportunity of building the world of tomorrow.

Man desires to achieve in the present world, what is to be achieved in tomorrow's world. This is the reason he loses both of them. The wise man is the one who buys tomorrow's world at the cost of today's world, rather than be embroiled in today's world thus depriving himself from finding a place in the world of tomorrow.

If one tries to find all the comfort of one's home during a journey, one can never succeed in achieving this. The matter of today's world and tomorrow's world can be understood by an example. Today's world has been made by God for action (performance) and tomorrow's world for achieving the results of the performance of those actions. Today's world is a journey, and tomorrow's world is its final destination.

If one desires to achieve the results in today's world itself, the planning of one's actions will all go totally awry. Similarly, if one desires the comforts, available only at one's destination, during the journey, he would mar his journey.

A wise man is one who understands the difference between today's world and tomorrow's world; who does not desire in this world what is to be achieved in the post-death world.

A man ought to be a realist. He must not chase after his desires because desires lead man nowhere but to destruction.

Every man's heart is an ocean of desires. These desires are not wrong in themselves but the place for the fulfilment of these desires is tomorrow's world and not the world of today.

## The Purpose of Man's Trial



According to the creation plan of God, man was settled on this earth for the purpose of putting him to the test. This divine intention is clearly stated in the Quran at several different points. One example of how God's scheme was to be carried out is alluded to in the chapter Yunus (Jonah):

“Then We made you their successors in the land, so that We might observe how you would conduct yourselves.” (10:14)

This kind of test is basically of one's sense of moral responsibility. When a person comes to understand that he is on trial and that angels are recording all of his actions, this automatically engenders in him the requisite sense of responsibility. Now he becomes cautious in every aspect of his activities—in thinking, speaking, dealing, and in all other activities. Indeed, this understanding of how he is being tested works like a self-correcting mechanism which promotes deep introspection. It is the crucial factor that makes him a good person and a good member of society.

But what is this test for? According to the Quran,

the final destination of mankind is Paradise, but only good people will be permitted to cross its threshold. So this test is to determine those who are truly worthy of being selected for Paradise. Thus, the knowledge that one is being tested serves as a great incentive to live up to a high moral standard. Living a disciplined life then becomes every person's self-interest. He feels that he must adhere to high principles, otherwise he will lose the opportunity to gain entry into Paradise.

A very bad and risky alternative to such a life is to make one's motto: 'Eat, drink and be merry!' Adherents of this formula know nothing beyond their own desires and will never rise above the animal level in this world. Such a formula can turn our society into a jungle.

But the above Quranic formula compels man to behave like a responsible member of his society. The whole of humanity becomes his concern and then he cannot afford to live like an irresponsible person. This is what gives us an honest society. This formula, based on belief in the Hereafter, is also fully applicable to our worldly life. When one becomes a responsible person with a disciplined character, and does his best not to succumb to satanic temptations, he becomes a good human being, not only in terms of the Hereafter, but also in terms of the present world.

Moral character requires some incentive, for without that incentive no one is going to uphold moral values. The above Quranic formula provides a great incentive to do so. It applies not only to a community or nation, but also to individuals, both men and women—all are equally required to demonstrate a sense of responsibility. All

are under the watchful eye of God who will hold them accountable for their deeds. There are no exemptions to this rule. All are equally responsible before God.

The above Quranic principle not only addresses those who were the contemporaries of the Prophet of Islam, but is an eternal teaching, applying to the whole of creation.

## The Divine Scheme



According to the Quran, man was created as an eternal being. The period of life in the present world is the pre-death phase and is temporary, while the period of life after death will be eternal, post-death period of human life. The fact is that God created man with a well thought out plan, the gist of which was to give man complete freedom, not simply as a gift, but as a test. The result of this test would enable God to know who misused his freedom and who put his freedom to the best use. This was, and still is, the divine scheme of things for man. This test is not just for the sake of testing mankind. It is for a high purpose. Before creating man, God created an ideal world, that is, Paradise. Now God wanted ideal men and women who would merit settling in this Paradise for all eternity. Therefore, the present world is a selection ground.

According to this divine scheme, the present human lifetime affords a great opportunity to man. In the

pre-death period, man gets the chance to qualify for Paradise, so that in the post-death period he may settle as a deserving candidate in this perfect world.

## Why Suicide is Not an Option



General Atiqur Rahman, then Chairman of the Pakistan Federal Service Commission, came to Delhi on an official visit in February 1984. An emigrant to Pakistan, he had worked before Partition during the Second World War with Field Marshal Manekshaw, in Burma. At a meeting with journalists, he told of how, during his stay in Burma, Manekshaw had once been badly wounded, and the pain having become unbearable, he decided to put an end to his life by shooting himself. He asked Rahman to give him a pistol for this purpose, but Rahman refused. The General added, laughing, “Had I known at that time what General Manekshaw was going to do to us during the 1971 war, I would certainly have given him my pistol!” (*The Times of India*, February 20, 1984)

During the Second World War, Manekshaw’s state of despair was such that he wanted to commit suicide, quite unaware of the fact that 25 years later, he was to emerge the victor in the 1971 war.

If Islam holds suicide to be unlawful, it is because committing suicide means having despaired totally of any succour from God. What is equally bad is that it

also signifies a refusal to accept the reality of the world Hereafter. But if a man is convinced that he will not face extinction upon the death of the body, and that he will experience a rebirth in the world Hereafter, he will never commit suicide. For one who is fully aware of the seriousness of life after life, the anguish of this life will pale into insignificance.

Beside this, there is another aspect to holding suicide unlawful—it conveys a message to man not to be forgetful of the future because of temporary hardships. The present world is one in which every man, woman and child has his or her moments of pain and grief. But these should be recognized as transient phases, and borne with stoicism and courage. Just think of Manekshaw, who wished to annihilate himself, little realizing that his name was to be emblazoned in the pages of history as a latter-day conqueror.

## Doing One's Bit



**T**here was once a person who did not believe in the existence of God or that it was God who provided food to all. His friends tried their best to make him understand this fact but to no avail. At last he said, “I would like to experience this myself.” Therefore, one day early in the morning, he left home and headed towards a jungle. There he perched on the branch of a tree. He

said to himself: "If God is the one who provides food then He will definitely send food to me here."

He sat on the tree for a whole day but did not receive any food. His morning, noon and evening meals were skipped. He did not find anything to eat. Now he was convinced that the belief that God provided us with food was wrong. Then after some time, he saw a group of people. They were travelers and were looking for a tree under which they might spend their night. After looking here and there, they finally selected the same tree upon which the man was perched.

He remained totally silent so that they would be unaware of his presence. After setting up the camp, the travelers collected wood to make a fire. Then they untied their bag, took out pulses and rice, and cooked a dish from them. When it was ready, they thought of seasoning it, so they heated oil with chilies. When the strong smell of chilies reached the nostrils of the man sitting up in the tree, he could not stop himself from coughing. Hearing this, the travelers discovered that someone was sitting up on the tree, so they helped him get down and invited him to join their feast.

The man happily returned home in the morning. He said to his friends: "What you all said was 100 per cent correct. Surely it is God who provides us with food, even when we have done nothing to deserve it."



## Long-term Planning



The following story, written by Mao Tse Tung, former Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, is one which should set us all thinking.

In olden times, there was once an old man from the northern part of China who lived on the side of a mountain range which always lay in shadow. The problem was that there were two high mountains in front of his door which prevented the sun from entering his house. One day, the old man called his young sons and said to them, “Let us go and remove these mountains by digging, so that the sun’s rays may fall upon our house unhindered.” A neighbour of the old man’s, hearing of this plan, made fun of it. He said to the old man, “I knew that you were foolish, but I never realized that there was just no limit to your foolishness. How on earth is it possible to remove these high mountains just by digging them?”

The old man replied in all seriousness, “Yes, you are right. But when I die, my sons will dig, and after their death, their sons will dig. The digging process will thus continue for generations. The mountains, as you know, will not go on increasing in size, whereas each digging is bound to reduce them in size and, in this way, there will come a time when we shall have finally succeeded in removing these obstacles.”

The power to solve problems is always more significant than the problems themselves, and while problems are invariably limited, their solution is unlimited, there always being a number of different approaches which naturally vary in scale and complexity. This story is a beautiful illustration of how a major feat necessitates not only long-term planning, but the willingness and determination to carry that planning into effect.

For people who have the fortitude to carry on their schemes from one generation to the next, working consistently and steadfastly, there is no mountain or river on earth which they will not be able to conquer.

## Try, Try, Try Again



**A** person who was employed as an ordinary worker in a bidi factory soon learnt the entire art of the business and set up his own factory. He initially invested only Rs. 5,000 in his business but then by dint of fifteen years' hard work, his business progressively increased until it expanded into a big factory. One day, narrating his life story to his friends, he said: "Just as a young child grows into boyhood after fifteen years, so does a business. I have not reached this stage in one day. It has been a fifteen-year struggle."

In truth every piece of work is accomplished in "fifteen" years, be it of an individual or a nation, be it a business or a social service. Those who long for a recipe

for instant success are, in fact, living in a fool's paradise. It is all very well to say that a hop, step and jump can take you right to your destination. But as soon as one comes face to face with reality, one realizes that this is just an illusion. Glenn Cunningham, a sportsman who became a champion of the one-mile race, saw the school in which he was studying go up in flames. His own experience was terrible. His feet were so badly burnt that he could not even move his legs. The doctors lost all hope of his ever walking or running. They said that only a miracle could save him. Surprisingly Glenn Cunningham's incapacity excited in him a new zeal and eagerness to walk and run. All his mental faculties became concentrated on his decision to walk. So he began to experiment with different kinds of exercises till he hit upon a novel idea. It was to drag himself along by holding on to the handle of a moving plough. When his feet could even so much as rest on the ground, he felt encouraged, and intensified his efforts. Finally, the miracle of which the doctors had so despaired, took place. The new technique was a tremendous success and, ultimately, he could not only walk, but could also run. Later he entered a race. He set up a new record and became a champion of the one-mile race. But this grand success was not achieved in a few days. He had to spend "fifteen years" realizing his goal. Only after a fifteen-year stint had it been possible for him to become a champion in flat racing.

In reality, no success is possible in this world without working for "fifteen years". It is God alone who has the power to achieve instant success. But God has not

created this world on the basis of instant success. Man must learn his lesson and should not fritter away his time in futile efforts. In this world of God, innumerable events are taking place, all of which are based on eternal, immutable laws. Not even a blade of grass grows on the ground as a result of wishful thinking, not even an ant can manage to live by ignoring the realities of life. How is it possible then for man to change the divine laws? The only condition for success is continuous striving, that is, to make such unflinching efforts, as are essential to achieve the desired objectives in the world of God according to the law of God. By following the same principle we can achieve success in this world; it is the same principle which will bring us success in the next world.

## A Realistic Approach



The process of gardening does not start with a conference on gardening. It starts rather in the way that every plant should be provided with such circumstances and conditions in which it can use its own ability to grow itself, thus becoming a part of the whole garden by developing itself into a tree.

The same process has to be followed to make a nation or community flourish. The betterment of the nation presupposes the betterment of the individuals of which it is made up. That is, every individual has to be made

aware of his duties and the latent natural abilities of every individual must be encouraged to fructify so that he may reach the position of a fully developed human being in the real sense. The urge must be fostered in every individual to struggle for the development of his potential without his being a problem for others. It is such activities which build the nation or community.

This is a world of competition. It never happens that opportunities present themselves without there being hurdles to overcome and that there are no opponents in the field. This has never happened in this world for anyone, nor will it happen for anyone now or in the future. Life, in fact is all about surmounting hurdles and barricades, finding ways to proceed and not futilely knocking on doors.

History demonstrates that however excessive the hurdles and problems may seem, there is always a way for a person to reach his destination. But this is not for those who stick to the well-trodden path, but for those who search for a new path in another direction and press onwards.

History also shows that no matter how great the disadvantages are, there is always a way for them to be compensated for. In this world, no calamity is final. There is always the opportunity for a human being to start his work afresh with better planning and achieve his goals in a new way.

You too can achieve what others have if only you recognize the fact that those goals which can be achieved

by accepting reality, cannot be achieved by mere wishful thinking.

## No Second Chances



A senior college teacher once commented to me with considerable bitterness, “There are no second chances in life. Wonderful opportunities to advance myself are coming my way at the moment, but I can’t take advantage of them.” I was rather surprised at this outburst and asked him the reason. “It’s all because I rushed into taking up a job immediately after I had done my B. Sc. You see, I never did my M.Sc. Of course, I always meant to at a later stage, but somehow the circumstances were never just right for me to leave work and start studying again.” I had to agree with him that without higher qualifications one cannot aspire to higher things in life.

This is unfortunately true of about 99 percent of our society. The early part of one’s life should be devoted to intensive preparation for adult responsibilities, but most people fritter away their energies in fruitless activities, more intent on enjoying life than on giving any thought to the future. Having failed in their youth, through ignorance or negligence, to develop their potential to the full, they can seldom make a decent start in life, and even if they do, they find it almost impossible to make

any progress. More often than not, they find themselves at an impasse. All doors are closed to them.

When you enter the field of life inadequately prepared for it, you cannot expect to reap a harvest if the seeds for it have never been sown. When the time has come for harvesting, you cannot then rush to sow seeds. Time once lost can never be brought back again, and once opportunities have slipped from your hands, they can never again be recaptured. Fortune only knocks once, it does not knock again.

There are few useful tasks which can be performed without preparation, for preparation equips one and gives one the tools for the job. If you try to break a stone with your bare hands you will surely fail. But if you take a pickaxe to it, and have learned how to wield it, it will only be a matter of minutes before you have smashed the stone into small pieces. Being well equipped and having the technical knowhow are indispensable to personal progress.

Only if you enter life with the requisite competence will you receive your rightful place in it. Bemoaning your losses and protesting against imagined enemies will be of no avail. It is pointless counting upon the environment to provide the necessities of life, and complaints against it are usually an expression of one's own incapacity. They convey the desire to possess, to reach heights of honour and glory without having put in the necessary groundwork.

## False Pride



This is the story of a man whose grandfather was a successful businessman, but who later lost his business. His parents died during his childhood. He did not inherit any wealth from his father or grandfather. All he inherited was the feeling that his father and grandfather had been wealthy people. When he came to know that the post of a clerk was vacant in the town's government office, he applied for it and got the job. However, his relatives advised him to continue his education till matric at least, as he had studied only up to middle school. After that he could qualify for a senior post in the same office. Besides, he had also inherited some agricultural land the income from which would be sufficient to fulfil all his needs. But his feeling of false pride hindered him from following anybody's advice. Moreover, in his false pride he often quarreled with his colleagues. One day he even argued with a senior officer and resigned from his job.

After resigning he remained unemployed. Neither did he take up another job, nor did he continue his education. His only priority was to talk about his false pride and receive a false sense of satisfaction. After his resignation, he met his necessities from the income of his agricultural land. With the passage of time, he became the father of six children. Now his circumstances were very worrying. However, his feeling of false pride again



stood in the way of acknowledging his own fault in this. He held his relatives responsible for his failure. But this unrealistic attitude not only worsened his ruination, but he became chronically ill.

The present world is a world of realities. Here you can achieve everything by coming to terms with the reality. In this world of God, nothing is more worthless than false pride. Here nothing is more destructive than the mentality of false pride.

## Instant Response



In the developed countries computerized telephone systems have been introduced. As a result modern communications have undergone a transformation. In many towns in the U.S., for instance, a system called “enhanced 911” has been installed. This number 911 has to be dialed in an emergency for the caller to summon help.

With enhanced 911, a telephone company is now able to trace the originating number of the call and the caller’s address instantly even without the caller saying a word. This automatic system can immediately identify and convert numbers into addresses even when the callers are unable to say where they are calling from. The system’s computer is so efficient that after tracing the call, it can itself determine whether the

emergency relates to the city's police, fire or ambulance departments.

In Orlando, Florida, a panic-stricken woman caller dialed 911 but could not say a word before hanging up. Gunshots, however, were clearly audible. Within minutes cars were on their way to the correct address and the culprit—an enraged gun-toting relative of the woman's—was apprehended.

In another case, a deaf and dumb person could summon help in a similar fashion in an emergency. (*The Times of India*, April 16, 1985)

In the above instances, the computer converted the call into telephone numbers, and telephone numbers into addresses, then without delay informed the police by wireless technology.

The Quran and the Hadith tell us that when a person calls upon God, he immediately establishes contact with Him. There is no delay either in the calling or in the response.

The computerized telephone contact is a material analogy of this spiritual reality. It shows how a person, moved by the remembrance of God, loses himself in a spontaneous outburst of feeling, calls upon Him and instantly finds himself very close to Him: within a moment he is in touch with his Lord.

## On the Ground of Patience



Crops spring from the soil of the land and not from ingots of gold and bars of silver. This truism does not just pertain to agriculture but is illustrative rather of a universal law. God has laid down a particular system for the existence of all things. Things come into existence only when in accordance with that particular system. We cannot bring anything into existence by any other method.

The same is true of human beings. Life is a test which has to be passed on the issue of patience. Life is a crop which flourishes on importance being given to patience. God has destined life to be grounded on this issue and now this pattern will be followed for all eternity. We cannot create any other fundamentals on which it will thrive. Patience is not a negative thing; it is a form of positive behaviour. Patience means carrying out duties with deeper thinking rather than doing so superficially. It means doing things as a result of conscious decision-making rather than as the outcome of an emotional reaction. It means not losing hope after temporary failures and instead reassessing one's position under the pressure of present circumstances. It means rising above the situation and then deciding upon one's course of action.

If you place a seed on a gold plate, it will never grow.

It will remain lifeless in this universe which is full of life's resources. Though it possesses all the power to grow, it is deprived of growth. The same is true of the human individual. If he is always impatient, he will be like a dead thing—all its plentiful resources unutilized. But when he exercises patience, he will all of a sudden be able to put down his roots in the land of his Creator and will gradually be transformed into a fine powerful form of creation, like a tree.

When a person gives sincere proof of patience, he starts living on a divine plane rather than at the level of human beings. From a limited world he reaches up to a limitless world. From a meaningless life he enters into a meaningful life. A person who shows patience makes himself deserving of the eternal reward of Paradise.

## No Vengeance



The owner of a transport business once found himself in a weak and vulnerable position because, for technical reasons, he had once had one of his vehicles registered in the name of another person several years before, and that person still held its license. The holder decided one fine day that he would take possession of the vehicle himself, and that its real owner would have to make do with a paltry sum of money in exchange. The owner naturally felt that the most dreadful injustice was being done to him and, greatly incensed, he was

determined to have his revenge. Night and day he lived in frenzy, thinking of ways and means to eliminate his enemy. Truly he wished to crush him like an insect.

For six long months he lived in this state of morbid pre-occupation, losing all interest in his home and his business, and becoming, finally, like the ghost of his former self. Then, one day, he had an experience which changed the course of his life. As he was pacing up and down one of the streets of the town where he lived, lost in black vengeful fantasies, he heard the unmistakable sounds of someone making a speech before a large gathering. Curious, and for once drawn out of himself, he approached the gathering of people and began to listen to the speaker. He was suddenly struck by what he was saying: "Think well before taking revenge, for you too shall suffer the vengeance of others." It was as if a shaft of bright light had suddenly penetrated his mind and with each example that the speaker gave to drive home his point, he felt himself turn into a new person. He decided there and then to give up his negative way of thinking, in fact, to forget the whole sorry episode, and to devote his time and energy to his family and his business. The full realization had come to him that it was on himself that he had inflicted suffering and not on his enemy, and that it was best to leave such matters to God. In beginning to think in this way, he found that, bit by bit, he was once again able to approach things in a constructive way, and it was not long before he became more successful than he had ever been. In pursuing positive ends he had also attained peace of

mind, and that, for him, had been the most important thing of all.

## Hasten Slowly



“**A** young man once came to a venerable master and asked, ‘How long will it take to reach enlightenment?’ The master said, ‘Ten years.’ The young man blurted out, ‘So long!’ the master said, ‘No, I was mistaken. It will take you twenty years.’ The young man asked, ‘Why do you keep adding to it?’ The master answered, ‘Come to think of it, in your case it will probably be 30 years.’” (Philip Kapleau, Reader’s Digest, 1983)

A goal can be achieved in the course of ten years, but you want to attain it in just ten days. This means that you want to reach your destination in tremendous leaps and bounds. But there is an old saying: “The more hurry, the less speed.”

A traveler who wants to dash straight as an arrow, without allowing time for twists and turns, will collide with many obstacles in his headlong flight. Far from reaching his destination faster, he will surely come to grief and fall by the wayside. He shall then have to retrace his steps to the starting point, heal his wounds and only then set forth again. All of this will take time, precious time—time which should have been spent on the onward journey. Had he proceeded in a normal, unhurried way,

he would have reached his destination all in good time. Just as it is wrong to delay, it is equally wrong to be in too much of a hurry. All work can be completed in due course. To delay work is idle and irresponsible, but to do it with unseemly and unwarrantable haste is a sign of crass impatience. In the world of God, where each event has its allotted time, both extremes are doomed to failure.

## The Talent for Survival



Studies carried out on over 100 major human disasters by the Disaster Research Centre of Ohio State University (set up in 1963) reveal that conditions of extreme adversity call forth extraordinary strength in human beings, which prevents them from being totally overwhelmed when catastrophe strikes. One astonishing example is the behaviour of the inhabitants of a coastal area in Texas which was ravaged by storm floods in 1961. The danger warning had been received four days before the tempest hit the coast, but over fifty per cent of the population elected to remain in their homes. No less amazing is the fact that out of a population of 70,000, only 7 percent decided to leave their homes when, in 1971 a huge dam in California, which had been seriously affected by an earthquake posed a grave threat to their lives.

These studies have also revealed that the majority of

the disaster victims, left undaunted by their experiences, had few qualms about the future; feelings of acute anxiety were displayed by less than 10% of the people in the flood-affected areas of Texas. The report issued by the Disaster Research Centre concludes: “The reality of events suggests that human beings are amazingly controlled and resilient in the face of adversity. Perhaps heroism—not panic or shock—is the right word to describe their most common behaviour in times of disaster.”

Even when threatened with total annihilation, man has shown over and over again that he has the capacity to build his life anew and is always able to summon up the determination and energy to overcome whatever difficulties stand in his way.

How does he come to have these remarkable qualities? The answer is simply that of all the blessings showered upon him by his Creator, one of the very greatest is this hidden potential which manifests itself in times of extreme crisis. The very knowledge that this potential exists in all human beings should serve to imbue us with such optimism that we never waste so much as a moment in fruitless lamentations, but plunge straight into whatever action is essential to the reparation of our losses. This God-given capacity for reconstruction should never be allowed to languish, for it is that very quality which can lead us into a new and brighter phase of existence.



## On Pride and Arrogance



“ Evil can have no beginning but from pride nor any end but from humility.”

When the English author William Law (1686-1761) wrote these words, he placed them in an ethical context. But they could well be interpreted in a spiritual sense, for the most sinful attitude that man can adopt before God is one of pride. Other sins may be forgivable, but for pride there is no forgiveness.

Pride, whether overt or covert, is at the root of many of the wrongs and injustices perpetrated by man. It is pride, which prevents the wrongdoer from acknowledging his guilt: to do so, would detract from his personal status. He forgets that in denying, or ignoring what is true, he places himself above truth. It is folly to do so, for truth rides high, far and above everything and everyone else in this world. There is no mortal creature who can take precedence over it.

It is only the individual who lives out his life in consonance with the true nature of things who will receive God's blessings. To attain to this state of blessedness, he must realize that truth transcends all, and that he should bow before it. But those who are puffed up with a sense of their own importance are seldom capable of doing so. Instead of bowing before truth, they want truth to bow before them. Instead of

living in harmony with reality, they demand that reality should harmonize with their wishes. This is as unrealistic as it is egoistic, for things can never happen in this way in this world. The perpetually proud man—without his ever realizing it—is doomed to moral bankruptcy and can never find favour in the eyes of God.

## The Price of Unity



Unity is the subject of much oratory and journalism. Today everyone is speaking and writing on unity. But nowhere has unity been established. The reason is that everything has its price tag. This is true also of unity. It too has its price tag. People talk of unity but they do not want to pay the price for it. This is why unity does not become established anywhere.

Why does unity disintegrate? There is just one reason, and that is the failure to put an end to the sentiments of disunity arising in oneself. This world is a testing ground. Here for different reasons, such sentiments develop against others. Only if you succeed in burying such sentiments within yourself will unity prevail. And if they are not buried, they will destroy the harmony which flows from unity.

Sometimes you have complaints about another, or sometimes you feel bitter because someone appears to come in the way of your success. Sometimes you feel jealous of others' achievements. Sometimes out of pride

you feel happy about insulting someone and proving him worthless.

If such negativity is to be rectified, the individuals concerned must pay the price. And the price is that they bow down to maintain the air of unity—they tolerate complaints and eschew bitterness. They must be willing to sacrifice their own interests. They have to be sincerely happy at the achievements of others.

They have to change their attitude of pride into one of humility. Such personal sacrifice is the sole secret of unity.

They will necessarily face provocative situations. It is impossible for such situations not to arise in the present testing ground. In fact, these situations are the deciding factor between unity or disunity. If a person buries such sentiments in his heart as may lead to the disruption of unity, he will maintain societal unity but if he is not able to do so, societal unity will cease to exist.

To avoid coming into conflict with others, one has to fight with oneself. However, people are not ready to fight with themselves, and that is why their fight with others never comes to an end.

## The Secret of Unity



There were hundreds of visitors present in the zoo. Some of them were busy eating and drinking on the open lawns. Some were watching various animals.

Some were strolling here and there without a care in the world.

But then there was the sound of a lion roaming about and it was rumoured that a lion had got out of his cage. As soon as people heard this, they ran towards the exit gate. Those who had seemed to be quite separate individuals till now, all with one accord, began to walk in one direction. All kinds of different activities stopped and became centred at a single point.

This is an example which shows how the intensity of fear ends differences of opinion. In such a situation, every person becomes attentive to whatever deserves the most urgent attention. Everybody starts fearing that one thing which is most to be feared. Everybody's thoughts become focused on one point alone, the ultimate and unalterable issue.

Differences among people arise because they are not focused on what is quintessential. When an individual faces a fearful situation, all things of secondary importance automatically disappear. At that time, what generally happens is that the attention of most of the people turns towards the most burning issue. All other things of lesser importance are immediately forgotten about. And when that happens, unity will definitely come to the fore.

Differences arise when the eyes of the people are not directed towards the most significant and ultimate end. Therefore, the only successful way to achieve unity is to divert people's attention from things of lesser importance and re-direct it towards what is most important. This

is what happens when a country is attacked by some enemy. At that moment all the individuals of a nation become united.

Studies reveal that at the time of a threat from any enemy, even animals become united. In a devastating flood, dog and cat and snake and mongoose have been found sitting together in silence. But such unity is at the animal level. Human unity is that which arises from the fear of God and thoughts of the life Hereafter. The latter form of unity is of a higher level and more enduring.

## A Fitting Response



Once in a mosque, an elderly gentleman noticed a person of modest appearance, dressed in western attire, wearing a Gandhi cap and sporting a beard trimmed shorter than the length prescribed by the shariah. He had never seen him in the congregation before, and, intrigued by his appearance, he approached him and introduced himself. In the course of conversation it emerged that the newcomer was very religious and had many books on the Quran and Hadith to his credit.

The elderly man remarked that judging by his appearance, he would not have thought so. The stranger felt offended by this comment but managed to control his feelings. Then after a few moments of silence, he said, “You are right. But the Almighty sometimes gets his work done by the sinners as well.”

This even-tempered response made such a powerful impact upon the elderly man that he was left speechless.

This is an example of the right way to answer when provoked. Whenever anyone criticizes you, or says anything harsh about you, and you become incensed, you want to hit back at your critic. The right thing to do is to absorb the bitterness of the shock. It is better to do that than throw it back. When you act in this way, you will gain new strength.

You will realize that answering harsh words with polite words is a far more hard-hitting and effective response. And it shows wisdom.

The truth of the matter is that one who, when enraged remains patient and is able to forgive one who offends him, feels, ultimately, that he is in no need of revenge.

## Admitting One's Faults



**A** young player, who had participated in a big football match for the first time, wrote to his father after his team had been defeated: "Our opponents had discovered a great gap in our defense line, and that was me."

Such acceptance of one's shortcomings requires courage, and it is something without which we cannot make social progress. There are very few defeats which are not attributable to a gap in the line of defense. The best remedy is to accept that this is so, and in that way,

the problem is half-solved at the outset. Once a defaulter has recognized his deficiencies, it is but a short step from there either to allowing himself to be replaced by someone with superior talents, or to putting his best efforts into improving his own performance.

The most important cognitive and moral act in life is recognition of the truth. Faith is acceptance of the greatness of God in comparison to a human being. Paying your dues to others shows an appreciation of their rights. Repentance is admission of the fact that the right thing is that which is right in God's eyes, and that the wrong thing is that which is wrong in God's eyes. The key to all kinds of reform in life is a frank acknowledgement of one's shortcomings. If a wrongdoer does not admit his mistakes when he errs—and he does so frequently—there is no way that he can reform himself.

The humble admission of one's mistakes, followed by a rational appraisal of them is the first step on the road to success. But it is rarely that the average individual manages to bring himself to the point of doing so. Whenever he is at fault, he finds it a psychological necessity to cover up his mistakes. His honour is at stake. It is then that he stoops to lies, deceit and false arguments as face-saving devices. This can only lead to moral ruination. The harm done is often irreparable and in the long run he frequently finds himself forced to pay for his initial mistakes with his honour, reputation, career—sometimes, indeed, with his very life. If only people could swallow their pride sufficiently at the outset to make a candid admission of their faults, they

could in all humility reset their course towards success, with clearer vision and the will to make far greater efforts than ever before.

## The Message of Life



Life is like a trial. This is the greatest reality of this world. And the secret of all our success is hidden in our willingness to acknowledge this truth, whether it pertains to the success of this worldly life or to the success of life in the Hereafter.

In the context of the present life vis-à-vis the life of the Hereafter, if things are bestowed upon an individual, regardless of what form they take, they are given for the sake of testing him and not as a reward for his merit. He should not, therefore, consider those things as his own, but rather as their belonging to God. At all events, they remain in a person's possession only till his trial period is over. As soon as it is completed, everything will be taken away from him. Subsequently, he will be left only with his own good deeds and not with those things which he finds himself surrounded by today.

In this world, all men and women individually possess the same freedom. For this reason the world has become a field of competition. It is because all individuals are free that they, as separate entities and collectively as nations, are continuously in open competition with each other.



The reality is that in the present world, in order to be successful, all objectives have to be attained by vying with others. Here, it is only the one who comes first in the race of life, who seizes the advantage from his fellowmen. The one who achieves things here is the one who has the courage to forge ahead of others.

It must be borne in mind that, in the life Hereafter, those who seek the support of anyone other than the Almighty will find themselves to be valueless. Moreover, those who think here only in terms of prejudice and superiority will never be able to achieve any measure of distinction in this present world of competition and will never be able to attain any position of significance.

## The Scientific Temper



In the world of science, the standard measure of superior performance is the Nobel Prize. How is it that one qualifies for such recognition? Mr. H.A. Krebs, a Nobel Prize winner himself, has made a study of what goes into the making of a great scientist. To him, what is more important than having access to well-equipped laboratories and up-to-date libraries, is to have been fortunate enough to have benefited for some time from the company of a great scientist. He says that if he had not spent time in the company of a scientist of the stature of Ootenberg, it is extremely unlikely that he would have cultivated a truly scientific outlook.

Krebs is not alone in holding this view. Many other great scientists have felt that the company of a great scholar plays a major role in developing scientific tastes. The main point about such company is not just that it serves as an enormous source of scientific facts and figures—for such data is obtainable in so many other ways—but that it affords opportunities for the transference of a special attitude of mind from the great man to his students, which Krebs appropriately calls ‘a general scientific spirit’. It is this distinctive outlook which is the mark of the true scholar.

He writes, moreover, that his attitude must be marked by humility and enthusiasm, for these two virtues are the greatest stepping stones to the heights of progress. Enthusiasm spurs on, it excites feelings of curiosity and stimulates one to search unflaggingly for the truth. The search in itself is a wonderful activity, but greatness will elude the seeker if he does not humble himself before the superior reality. A person who recognizes that his existence and endeavour are on a lower plane, will be willing to admit his mistakes immediately—an indispensable trait in a true scientist. In confessing his shortcomings, he risks no loss of dignity, for a person of true scientific vision holds the truth to be above all things.

## He Was Expelled from School



**A**lthough his beginnings were humble, Albert Einstein succeeded in revolutionizing 20th century science. The ordinary son of an ordinary father, he could not speak until the age of three, and showed no signs of having even average abilities up to the age of nine. He was even once expelled from school because his teacher feared that his poor academic performance might have a bad influence on other pupils.

On completion of his school studies, he failed to qualify for admission to the Zurich Technical College. It was only on his second attempt, after due preparation, that he met with success.

Up to the age of twenty, Einstein showed no exceptional potential. In fact, ‘Albert was a lazy dog,’ was how a teacher once described him. Later, by dint of sheer hard work, he rose to such heights as no other modern scientist has been able to surpass. His biographer writes, “We may take heart that it is not necessary to be a good student to become Einstein.”

Einstein’s first scientific book was published when he was 26 years of age, after which his fame spread far and wide. He led a simple life, ate simple food, but often worked late into the night. At one stage, he was offered the presidency of Israel, but he declined. He believed, in fact, that politics was the cancer of humanity. He left

Hitler's Germany with a price on his head—a reward of twenty thousand marks offered by Hitler's government (at that time a great deal of money)—but Einstein's standing was such in the scientific world that no one dared come forward to claim it.

Countless instances have been recorded in history which show that to achieve greatness, it is not necessary to be born great. A man can rise to greatness from the most obscure of beginnings—provided he is willing to strive for it. It is worth remembering that those who have to put up a struggle in the face of severe difficulties are more likely to develop in estimable ways, because adversity calls forth their hidden potential. It throws down a challenge which the aspirant to greatness must accept, failing which, he will sink into oblivion, if not actually perish. Where the comforts and convenience of prosperity will cause him to become sluggish and unenterprising, the whiplash of adversity will drive him into purposeful action. In short, it will bring out the best in him. As Sir Francis Bacon observes in his essay, 'Of Adversity,' "Prosperity doth best discover vice, but Adversity doth best discover Virtue."

In the realm of God's creation, there are no limits to the humanly possible. Having had an undistinguished start in life should never, therefore, be a cause for despair. The ordinary circumstances of life—if we could but realize it—are the stepping stones to success. But before we launch ourselves on that path we would do well to listen to Sir Francis Bacon's final words of caution—and consolation: "Prosperity is not without

many fears and distastes, and Adversity is not without comforts and hopes.”

## Wise Management of Anger



**B**ertrand Russell (1872-1970) was an unconventional person. He often used to say such unconventional things as would anger many conventional people.

He writes of an incident during a lecture he was giving, which is as follows: “A man rose in fury, remarking that I looked like a monkey; to which I replied, ‘Then you will have the pleasure of hearing the voice of your ancestors.’” (Auto- biography, p. 565)

Russell’s response alludes to the theory of evolution. According to this theory, humans have evolved from the species of monkeys. Here I will not discuss the veracity of this theory. I have referred to this incident here because it is a good example of making a reply without being provoked. When someone says something harsh or criticizes you, at that time there are two ways in which you can answer. One way is to become angry and retort in anger. This is a non-serious way of answering.

The second way after listening to harsh words is not to burst out in anger. You should control yourself, no matter how harshly someone speaks to you. Your answer should not be reactionary, but should rather be well thought out and positive.

The first way of replying will only increase provocation,

whereas the second way will have a calming effect. It is as good as pouring water on fire.

The second way of answering is the best method of silencing the questioner. In the said event, Bertrand Russell's answer proved to be quite effective, whereas it would not have been so effective had he answered in a negative manner.

## Challenges of Life



**S**ir Walter Scott (1771-1832) is now accepted as an outstanding figure in English literature. Yet, in the early stages of his life, he was in such financial straits that he appeared to be doomed to failure. But it was this very stringency which drove him ultimately to success.

Until middle age, he had been regarded as a man of very ordinary capabilities—a third rate poet, in fact. By this stage of his life, he was overburdened with debts from which his rather uninspired poetry could not obviously rescue him. But the desperation to which his circumstances had reduced him, far from crushing him, unleashed new and unsuspected forces from within him. These hitherto unrevealed capacities were to find their outlets in what was, for him, a new field—that of the historical romance in novel form. The pressure of his debts spurred him on to tremendous literary efforts over the next few years, and, because of his desperate need to sell his books rapidly and at a high price, he

devoted himself to writing the kind of narratives which were sure to arrest the attention of his readers. Such extraordinary diligence became the guarantee of his novels' popularity. They sold like hot cakes, and he was able to pay off his debts.

A great literary success, he was knighted later in life in recognition of his contributions to English literature. But if he had not originally had the stimulus of his debts, he might never have composed works of such high literary merit, he would never have been so prolific and would certainly not have become Sir Walter Scott. It was his determined tackling of a serious situation which led to his being awarded one of the highest places in English literature.

It is the challenges in life that either make men or break them.

## You Are Not Poor, You Are Rich



Once, when a beggar was calling out for alms on the street, a passerby turned towards him only to find that he was in no way disabled. So he asked how he was entitled to charity. The beggar replied, "I'm poor." The man said, "No you are not. On the contrary, you are very rich." The beggar pleaded with him not to make fun of him, as he was really poor. The man went on, "All right, give me whatever you have, and in return, I'll pay you Rs. 50,000." The beggar happily handed

over to him his dirty bag containing a few coins and said, "That's all I have, you can take it." The man said, "No, you have much more besides this. You have two feet. Give me one of them and I'll pay you Rs. 10,000 in exchange." The beggar refused. Then the man said, "You have got two hands, give me one hand, and I'll pay you Rs. 20,000." The beggar again refused to comply with his request. So the man said, "You have got two eyes, give me one eye and I'll pay you Rs. 20,000." The beggar refused again.

The man now said, "Look, you have got two feet, two hands, and two eyes. I wanted only one each which together add up to Rs. 50,000. If we set a price on the pairs, it will be one lakh rupees. That means that the price of only three parts of your body is at least one lakh rupees. How can you say you are poor then? You are extremely wealthy. Stop begging, utilize this great God-given wealth and you will be reckoned amongst the wealthiest people in the world." God has endowed us with extraordinary capabilities, but we do not realize their true importance under normal conditions. It is only when we lose anyone of them that we learn how priceless each one is.

Take the case of James Thomas, twenty-four years of age and a machine operator by profession. Due to some illness, both his kidneys started malfunctioning. He was admitted into the AIIMS (New Delhi), where doctors told him that the only way to survive was to obtain a kidney from a donor. Now, a kidney is a product of nature which cannot be built in a human factory, even if we were in a position to spend millions and billions



of rupees to make one. And even after receiving the priceless gift of a kidney, he still needed Rs. 45,000 just to have it transplanted. Here was part of his body to which he had never given any particular thought before, and now its value had been brought home to him in no uncertain manner (*The Times of India*, January 10, 1980)

In truth, even when a person is resourceless, he has a great deal to invest. The body and the brain which we possess are priceless. If an individual exploits his capabilities to the full, there is no success which he cannot attain in this world. For him nothing is impossible. When you have hands to hold things, when you have feet to walk with, when you have a tongue to speak, really, you have all that you want in this world. And because everything else can be obtained by material means, there is nothing that is beyond one's reach.

## The Handicap that Helped



**M**ahatma Gandhi's world renown as a spiritual leader tends to obscure the fact that he was by nature a very shy person. Those who are unacquainted with the details of his rise to leadership are generally surprised to learn that in his early career, he had often been reduced to silence by sheer nervousness.

Once when he was a student in London, he was asked to make a speech at a meeting of a vegetarian society which he had joined. He stood up to speak, but was

unable to express himself. Finally, he muttered a few words of thanks and sat down. On another occasion, when he was invited to speak on vegetarianism, he set his thoughts down on paper, but was not even able to read out what he had written. It was left to someone else to perform that service for him.

After passing his law examinations in London, he started his practice in Bombay, but on his very first appearance in court, he was so nervous that he could not plead his client's case and had to ask his client to choose another lawyer.

But, as Gandhiji writes, this apparent disadvantage turned to his advantage:

“My hesitancy in speech, which was once an annoyance, is now a pleasure. Its greatest benefit has been that it has taught me the economy of words. I have naturally formed the habit of restraining my thoughts. And I can now give myself a certificate that a thoughtless word has hardly ever escaped my tongue or pen.”

Mahatma Gandhi was well-known for his thoughtful and terse manner of speech. But this outstanding trait only came from another trait which few would consider outstanding. Initially, his shyness prevented him from speaking in public; later on, it made him thoughtful and succinct when he spoke.

Mahatma Gandhi was well-known for his economy of words and well thought-out speeches. There were few, however, who realized that this very positive virtue had been derived from what had once been a serious handicap.

## Have No Regrets



An American psychologist once observed that the activity in which an individual wastes more time on than anything else is in having regrets. People's energies are dissipated in recalling and mulling over bitter memories of the past and in bewailing the fact that they acted in one way and not in another, or that friends, neighbours and relatives had been remiss in their actions and attitudes towards them. The businessman thinks, "If I had invested in project B instead of project A, I would not have incurred these losses." The young woman sighs, "If I had married X instead of Y, I'd be a much happier person today." The elderly couple think, "If we had started paying up instalments on a house instead of just renting one, we would now be the owners of a house." And so on, ad infinitum.

To entertain such thoughts is a sheer waste of time and energy. The moment we have such thoughts, we should consider whether any remedy is possible at this stage, if something constructive can still be done—relations improved, an entirely new situation contemplated, etc., and if the answer to these questions is "No, things are now beyond repair," then one should simply dismiss these distressing ideas from one's mind and turn to new avenues of thought. It is better to say, "I'll do better next time," or "I'll consider things in greater depth before taking any decision in future," or "I shall myself

see to it that relations are never allowed to deteriorate.” This is a more positive approach to take where there is some possibility of similar opportunities or situations recurring and it certainly keeps one emotionally stable and mentally healthy enough to tackle things in this way. In situations where there is no possibility of a second chance, it is better to resign oneself to things as they are and to view things in as detached a way as possible.

The material gain from such an approach is the saving of time and energy which would otherwise be wasted by wallowing in self-pity. Bitter memories can be channeled by positive thinking into useful experiences—precious lessons for the future.

It should be appreciated, too, that remaining constantly apprehensive about the future is just as bad as lamenting over the past, and no sound future can be built by adopting such a fearful and negative attitude.

## The Making and Breaking of History



According to B. Tuchman, “History is the unfolding of miscalculation.” In other words, history usually develops in a manner quite contrary to people’s expectations. While events are unfolding, observers may pass judgement on the course they are taking; but the course of history defies all prediction, and in the

end things turn out quite differently from what people had initially expected.

Consider an example from Islamic history in the year 6 AH when the Treaty of Hudaibiyah was signed between the Prophet Muhammad and the Quraysh of Makkah. At that time the Quraysh were one in thinking that the Muslims had signed their own writ of destruction, for they accepted peace on terms which were clearly favourable to the Quraysh. Yet, it subsequently transpired that this apparent defeat contained the seeds of a great victory for the Muslims.

The same thing has happened time and again throughout history. In 1945, when the atom bombs were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, it seemed to the Americans as if Japan would lie in ruins for several decades to come. Yet this was not to be: forty years after the event, Japan stood at the pinnacle of her economic strength and continues to be one of the leading industrial powers in the world.

Those who have been written off as spent forces can take solace from this fact of history. Experience shows that sparks erupt from volcanoes that have lain inactive for years. In this world, the very annihilation and destruction of something means that it is ready to arise and take its place as a new power on earth; a force which is spent turns into a living force.

One should never lose hope because of the dismal course events appear to be taking. When the pages of history turn, events may turn out to have been leading in a direction quite contrary to all our expectations.

## Leaving it All Behind Us



When the U.S. launched its first manned spacecraft in 1969, the first stage rocket boosters produced a horrific noise of such intensity that the entire area within a hundred-mile radius was shaken up by it. But the astronauts inside the rocket blithely went on their space journey quite untrammelled by the ear-splitting din, for after an interval of just 10 seconds it had ceased to affect them. If they were able to travel in peace and quiet, it was because they had simply left their own noise behind them.

This is explainable in terms of their very great speed—25,000 miles per hour—as opposed to the relatively slow speed of sound, just 700 miles per hour. Once the rocket had crossed the sound barrier, the terrible noise which it generated no longer reached the astronauts' control room.

Unlike the rocket, an aeroplane, unless of the supersonic type, is accompanied throughout its entire journey by the sound it produces. In some ways, human beings, and even whole communities, are like aeroplanes, in that they are accompanied throughout their lives by certain sets of disturbing circumstances as they go on their way. As often as not, these factors are extremely unpleasant, and whether generated by individuals themselves or by others, they are facets

of human existence which many of us would like to be able to leave behind, just as the rocket leaves its own sound behind it. But what would enable us to outdistance such apparently permanent features of our lives? There is a very simple solution to this problem: greater diligence and more strenuous efforts to attain worthwhile objectives. It is only such action which will protect us from the impact of adversity.

Self-help is the only positive factor which will insulate us from the shocks of our environment and carry us on to a higher plane of tranquility. Only by doing our utmost to overcome whatever is inimical to human progress will we become as protected as the astronauts were from the deafening noise of the rocket.

## A Position of Honour



**T**he sole secret to gaining honour among others is to fulfil their needs. If you convince others that you can do so it will become impossible for them to ignore you.

An educated young man got married to a young lady whose appearance was not up to the expectations of the family. On this count, his sister-in-law openly showed her disapproval of the bride. Each member of the family treated her as if she was a person of no account. They looked askance at her, for she appeared to be an undesirable object in their midst. She had evidently entered their home to no purpose.

Although the girl was not outwardly very beautiful, she appeared intelligent, and did not display any resentment at the family's behaviour. She knew that beauty is temporary, while one's deeds are of lasting value. She decided that although she could not earn their praises on account of her appearance, she could try to earn their goodwill through her deeds.

She silently took on all the responsibilities of the household. She maintained and managed the house, entertained guests, ran the kitchen, took care of everyone's needs, and so on. This was her daily routine. She thought all this was her duty, whether anyone asked her to do these things or not.

The woman neither uttered a negative word nor did she retort to any family member. She only concentrated on her work. And the result was that very soon the behaviour of the family members towards her changed.

This is the wisest course of action whether it be the matter of a house, village or country. The only secret to gaining respect is to prove oneself by fulfilling the needs of others. Then people will not only give you respect but they will become totally dependent on you.

## Giving Way to Others



Every day in big cities, millions of people travel back and forth in buses, cars and vans, going north, south, east and west, all in opposite directions. They speed along



broad thoroughfares which intersect as if laid out on a grid pattern, sometimes symmetrically and sometimes asymmetrically, depending upon the configuration of the terrain. There is never any confusion in the flow of traffic—no clashes, no confrontation, because every big city has its system of traffic lights at all of the crossroads. The red lights stop traffic going in one direction, while the green lights show at right angles to this that it is now safe to proceed.

Provided that all drivers obey the highway code, stop at the red lights and move forward only at the green lights, there will be a smooth, accident-free flow of traffic. Drivers have to respect the necessity to give way to others. This is very much the case with life's affairs. People must see the necessity to give way to others and give them their rights. Only in this way will they be able to lay claim to their own rights. If they do not do so, they will be like the drivers who cause chaos, confusion and blockage of the roads.

## Moral Inheritance



**K**arim Bakhsh was an unpretentious, religious person who lived quietly in a village on a modest income. When he finally passed away at the age of 65, he left no material inheritance worth the name to his family. After his death, his eldest son, Rahim, left the village and went to settle in the city so that he could make a

living for his family. Whatever meagre resources he had went into the small business he set up there.

Karim Bakhsh may have left no money to his family, but what he did bequeath to them was of inestimable value. What he left to them was an idea of contentment—simple living and avoidance of confrontations. By virtue of his adherence to these ideals, Rahim managed to make slow but steady progress, despite his initial investment being negligible. His innate desire to avoid clashes was a major factor in smoothing the path for his business to go forward. Needless to say, everyone was happy with him. Everyone helped him in times of need. In spite of Rahim's resources being limited, he never lacked credit, thanks to his fair dealing and his reputation for always fulfilling his promises. Whenever there was any friction, he would pray for anyone who wronged him. Whenever he was tempted to do anything dishonest or unfair, the innocent face of his father would appear before him and he would be keenly aware of how his wrongdoing would torment the spirit of his poor father in his grave. Such thoughts immediately caused him to dismiss all temptations from his mind and he would regain sufficient mental poise to continue to tread the same path as his father. Rahim's business may have been a very ordinary one, but such was his courtesy, honesty and selflessness that he could command the same respect and live with the same honour and dignity as a top business magnate.

When his business began to flourish, he felt the need of assistance. So he invited his brothers one by one to come from the village and stay with him. Finally, all the

four brothers were united. The business, for convenience, was divided into four separate departments, each one being placed in the charge of one of his brothers. For a time they all lived happily together as a joint family although, in their respective spheres, they worked independent of each other.

But after some time, Rahim Bakhsh felt that his brothers were not taking as much interest in the business as they should. At first, only two options appeared to be open to him. Either, as the eldest and owner of the business, he could continue to keep everything firmly in his own hands and remove his brothers from their positions of trust, thus incurring their immediate wrath and unending hostility, or he could allow things to go on as they were and then ultimately face the consequences of allowing a joint family concern to be irresponsibly run. Inevitably it would mean mutual grievances coming to a head, a great deal of bitterness and a final splitting up of the business. Rahim Bakhsh gave this matter careful consideration for several days, then a third option having become clear to him, he gathered his brothers together and put the whole matter before them. His suggestion was that the best course would be for each brother to become the proprietor of his own department and then to run it independently of the main business. "In this way," he said, "Our father's spirit will be at peace and it is my sincere hope that this will prove a blessing to us all, for it is only by the grace of God that no disaster has as yet befallen us." All of his brothers then expressed their gratitude and approval, and gave him a free hand to apportion the business as

he saw fit. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the fairest way would be to draw lots for the different departments and the distribution was subsequently carried out to everyone's satisfaction.

All the four brothers then set themselves to their tasks with a will and a way, working hard day in and day out. And now their children have been brought into the business to assist them.

All the four brothers have improved their relationship with one another, being at all times prepared to give unstintingly of their assistance. Although they have all had separate accommodation built for themselves, Rahim Bakhsh still commands respect as the eldest brother, and he can always have his say. The women and children also help one another when the need arises, for they still think of themselves as one big family.

Most fathers think that the best legacy they can give their children is wealth and property. But, in truth, the most fortunate children are those whose parents leave them a model for principled living. Those who, before leaving this world, have taught their children to have faith in hard work, to avoid confrontation, to remain content, to look forward to future opportunities rather than immediate gains and to adopt a realistic attitude rather than indulge in wishful thinking, have left behind them a moral inheritance that is far more lasting and of much greater value than the greatest fortunes in the world. But how many fathers are there who realize this great truth?

## Our Homage to the Past



George Bernard Shaw once said of Shakespeare, “He was much taller than me, but I stand on his shoulders”—a fitting tribute from a great modern writer and philosopher to his most illustrious forerunner. Almost two and a half centuries before this, Shakespeare had refined and enriched the English language through the poetic form in which he cast it, and his literary successors strove to continue his good work. It was this ongoing process of refinement and enrichment which made it possible for Shaw to scale the literary peaks for which he is now renowned. Yet, if Shaw’s predecessors had not provided this ‘shoulder’ for him to stand on, he could never—despite his best efforts—have reached such an outstanding level of excellence.

This dependence on the achievements of our forebears is an essential feature of all creative, constructive processes. Without our ancestors having made their contribution, it would be impossible for us to attain our objectives, no matter in what field. In many cases, we might not even understand what our objectives ought to be.

All our journeys have to commence from the point at which we stand, and we must go through all the intermediary stages before reaching our ultimate destination. We cannot just make one gigantic leap

into the future, ignoring everything which ought to take place between the beginning and the end of our journey. But before we can even begin, we have to receive that essential, initial impetus from the past, just as we cannot build the upper storey of a house until the lower walls have been completed.

The people who are most likely to lose sight of these basic truths are those whose minds have been so clouded by romantic poetry and so overheated by provocative oratory that they have lost all sense of reality. Their thinking is made irrational by giving way to excessively emotional outbursts and their energies are simultaneously so drained by this that they fail to see that there could be anything wrong with the 'protest and demand' approach to life. They tend to rush into politics without first having acquired a sound education, or at least the valuable experience to be gained from a solid commitment to commerce or industry. They are people who are barely aware of their backwardness and who, in consequence, do little or nothing to improve upon their own conditions of living. They are quick to make claims upon society without giving a thought to the contribution which they themselves ought to be making. It is lamentable to think how probable it is that such people will spawn a whole generation which is even more inward looking and in no way self-sustaining. If so many of the present generation are swept off their feet by mere demagogy, what hope will there be for succeeding generations who are likely to be even more deficient in mental resources? They need to grasp the

fact, now and for always, that mere words cannot yield a crop of deeds.

When nature sets out to grow a tree, it begins by nurturing a seed in its bosom. This is a lesson tacitly given by nature to people: if you want a tree, start with the seed; you will achieve nothing by trying to start with a tree.

## Overcoming One's Limitations



Opticians usually have arrangements for eye-testing on the premises, so that customers can have their eyes tested and buy their spectacles all in the same shop. One of my acquaintances once opened a spectacle shop. It was rather small, certainly not big enough to permit eye-tests to be carried out, for a distance-vision chart has to be 18 feet away from the client. And this little shop was only 9 feet in length. My friend was quite unperturbed by this. When asked how he proposed to do eye-testing in such a confined space, he said, "Simple! We just fix a mirror on the wall, and there you are! The distance is doubled!" The clients could then be asked to read the chart through the mirror because the reflection would have the effect of doubling the distance. Undaunted by the acute shortage of space, this shopkeeper had shown great ingenuity in solving his problem.

This principle is applicable in most of life's arenas. When you have limited opportunities, when your

horizons seem narrow, there is no need to become a defeatist. It is simply a question of racking your brains and you will be able to “convert” your “9-foot shop” into an “18-foot shop”.

When the home you have is quite small, you can always add upper storeys to it to enlarge it. When you do not have enough resources to make investments, your basic honesty is your best guarantee of success. When you do not possess university degrees or other high qualifications, your courtesy and hard work will in large measure compensate for this. When there are no chances of overcoming your enemy by waging war against him, your wisest policy is to win his heart. When your share in political powers is a diminished one, you can still score in the economic field and achieve a different, but equally important set of objectives. When you feel you are in a weak position because your sympathizers are few in number, you can make up for this by encouraging unifying forces and striving towards efficient organization of whatever human resources are available.

Every ‘small shop’ can be converted into a ‘big shop’. A shop is small only so long as you do not use your brains to expand it. All of your limitations can be quickly overcome, provided you put to good use the natural gifts bestowed upon you by Almighty God.



## A Message of Perseverance



A certain student from Rajasthan failed in his high school examinations. He appeared again the following year, but failed again. After having failed for the third time, the next year he was so ashamed of his performance that he left his home, unable to show his face to his family.

He just kept walking about aimlessly. After a long time he stopped at a well to quench his thirst. Women and children had gathered around it, filling their pots by turns. There he caught sight of something. Something small, but of great significance. He was deeply moved, and his thirst was gone. All of a sudden he felt as though he had found something far greater than the water he had come for. What happened was quite simple. The villagers who visited the well for water, usually brought two earthen pots. They would place one pot on a stone near the well while letting the other down on a rope inside the well to draw water. To his astonishment, the part of the stone on which the pot was placed had rubbed away and there was a hollow there. The pot was made of earth, he thought, but when it was placed on the same spot over and over again, it had worn away the stone which was a far harder substance. The strong element had given way to the weak just through constant action. “Then why should I not succeed in my examinations if

I too persevere? I can surely overcome my shortcomings by putting greater effort into my studies!”

Such thoughts brought him to a halt. He immediately decided to go back home and start working hard on his studies once again. The following year he appeared for the fourth time in his high school examinations. This time the result, astonishingly, was the opposite of the previous year. He had done his papers so well this time that he had first class marks. After having failed three times, he had finally distinguished himself. The lesson of the stone had worked like a miracle and this had altered his attitude altogether. The same student who had run away from home, unable to face defeat, had come to stand first in all the examinations in which he had appeared. When he topped in his M.A. examination, he was given a scholarship to study abroad and from there he earned his doctorate.

This may be a solitary instance that occurred in a certain village, but, indeed, everywhere there exists such a “stone” as can teach a lesson to man which can point to his shortcomings and failures, provided he is sufficiently receptive to the message it conveys. If he only cares to look, he will find around him some such “stone” or the other, which he needs to set him on the right course again.

## The Advantage of Prior Knowledge



In 1970 a certain Indian politician went to France, where he met with a French politician who was associated with the ruling Gaullist party. An extract from their conversation appeared in *The Times of India*, July 18, 1983:

“Is there anything in particular you would like to do in Paris?” asked the Gaullist.

“I am a great admirer of de Gaulle,” replied the Indian visitor.

“I should like to make a courtesy call on him.”

“But he is dead, sir.”

“What? Nobody told me in India during the briefing.”

“They must have presumed you were aware of it. He died four years ago.”

From this example we can see that everything cannot be spelt out in words; there are some things that one has to know oneself. If one already knows half the story, then one can be told the rest of the story; but if one does not have half the knowledge of it in one’s mind beforehand, then how can one grasp the whole picture? However reasonable a thing may be, and however well substantiated, if one does not have some prior knowledge of it, it will lie beyond one’s comprehension.

If one says to someone, “So-and-so batsman scored

a century”, he will immediately understand that what is meant by a century is a hundred runs in cricket. But if one says, “A century of hard struggle is needed for the development of a nation”, no one will truly understand; for no one can know what it is to devote oneself individually to constructive work for so long a period.

## Uncomplaining Endurance



The Mughal Prince, Aurangzeb, came into conflict with his father, Shahjahan, over certain political matters. He, therefore, dethroned Shahjahan and imprisoned him in the fort at Agra in 1658, where he was kept in close confinement and deprived of even the common necessities of life. He could only while away his time by contemplating the Taj Mahal from the fort and reciting poems.

*An Advanced History of India*, compiled by Dr. R.C. Majumdar, Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri and Dr. Kalinkar Dutta, describes the final days of Shahjahan in these words:

“He found solace in religion, and, in a spirit of resignation, passed his last days in prayer and meditation in the company of his pious daughter, Jahanara, till at last death ... relieved him of all his miseries.” (p. 477)

It is said that Shahjahan, weary of this life of

confinement, conveyed to Aurangzeb this message in the form of a verse:

‘Kill us or pay us or set us free.’

Aurangzeb sent another verse in reply:

‘When the wise bird is caught in a net it should remain patient.’

This might be a fiction rather than fact. There is, however, a lesson to be learnt from this. Sometimes, by accident, or due to some mistake, one is enmeshed in circumstances which are unbearable and from which it is not possible to extricate oneself. It is foolish in such situations to take action on an impulse without considering the consequences. Just as when a bird is caught in a net, the more it flutters its wings, the more it enmeshes itself. Likewise, when in such a situation, if one loses patience, one becomes more and more entangled. This is true both for individuals and for nations.

## Viewing Things from a Positive Angle



Sufi Shafeeq Balkhi and Sufi Ibrahim Adham were contemporaries. It is said that once Shafeeq Balkhi came to his friend Ibrahim Adham and said that he was going on a business trip, so he had come to meet him before leaving, because the journey would take several months. A few days after this meeting, Ibrahim Adham saw that Shafeeq Balkhi was back again in the mosque.

He enquired as to how he had come so soon from his journey. Shafeeq Balkhi replied that during his business trip he reached a place which was unpopulated, so he set up his camp there. There he saw a disabled bird which could not fly. He felt pity for it. It made him wonder how this bird could survive in this deserted place. Meanwhile, when he was engaged in this thought, another bird arrived. It had something in its beak. When it landed near the disabled bird, the thing which it had in its beak fell down in front of the disabled bird and it ate it. Then the strong bird flew away.

Seeing this, Shafeeq Balkhi exclaimed, “Subhan Allah (Glory be to God!), when God can send food to a bird in this way then why do I need to travel from one place to another for my survival? Therefore, I cancelled my trip and returned home.” After listening to this, Ibrahim Adham said, “Shafeeq why did you prefer to become like the disabled bird? Why did you not want to be counted in the category of the bird which survived itself as well as succouring others by its labour?” On hearing this, Shafeeq Balkhi kissed Ibrahim Adham’s hand and said Abu Ishaq: “You have opened my eyes. What you have said is absolutely correct.”

From a single incident, one took the lesson of discouragement whereas the other took the lesson of encouragement. In every incident there are always two sides. How one views a particular incident is a test of one’s own calibre. From one point of view a thing appears to be wrong and from another point of view the same thing appears to be right. Viewing an incident

from one angle, a negative lesson is taken while from another angle, a positive lesson is taken.

## Life's Labours Are Never Lost



Iana Devangaddy of Bangalore was a student at Cambridge when Jawaharlal Nehru went to study there. He developed a close association with Nehru. It was because of this relationship that his son, Deren Angaddy, heard a lot about Nehru during his childhood. Impressed with his personality, Deren used to impersonate him. Later Deren became a film actor.

When Attenborough planned to produce a film on Gandhi, with an investment of Rs. 25 Crores (about \$ 25 m), Deren was selected to play the role of Nehru. However, after six months he was told by the film producers that he was being dropped from the list of actors and that Roshan Seth had been chosen to play this role instead. This decision was made six months after Deren Angaddy had been offered the role, during which time he had worked hard to perfect his role. The news shocked him to the point where he committed suicide.

Why did Deren Angaddy take such a drastic step? Was it because he had worked hard to develop an ability which had no further use? Seemingly this had plunged him into a depression so deep that he took his life.

People tend to overlook the fact that professional skill

and ability achieved by a hard struggle are investments. Even if they fail to find an immediate outlet, life's labours are never lost in the long run. Sooner or later opportunities are bound to present themselves to draw on such painfully acquired skills.

## Fighting Frustration



Just a few years ago a Muslim girl of our acquaintance suffered the frustration of being denied a modern school education by an overly religious-minded father who refused to send her to a convent school. She was particularly keen on learning English, and rather than waste her time brooding over the fact that certain avenues were now closed to her, she began studying on her own. By dint of constant effort, she became proficient enough in the language to sit in the matriculation examination—of course, as a private candidate. Unfortunately she failed in one subject at her first attempt, but this did not make her lose heart. It had the effect rather of making her work even harder than before and, the following year, she passed the examination with flying colours. She continued her studies in this way with whatever little help she could get from people in her neighborhood, and after successfully passing the pre-university examination, she did her B.A. (Honours) in English and then went on to do her M.A. Still, she did not feel satisfied with her prowess, for even although she now had a university degree to her credit, she had somehow



not really developed her skills in writing English to any high degree. It seemed impossible to do this without the help of an able teacher, but she remembered the saying: “Where there’s a will, there’s a way!” And she did not lose heart. The strong and unshaken belief that God helps those who help themselves did not fail her. In the course of her struggles, she chanced upon a book published in London, which seemed to solve the problem of not being able to have a teacher. The author, an Englishman, advised foreigners who were interested in learning English to practise writing with the help of a good book, where no teacher was available. They were first to translate selected passages from the book into their own mother tongue. This book was not to be referred to again until these passages had been translated back into English by the students. Then a comparison was to be made with the original. Corrections were to be made, and the corrections committed to memory. Recognizing the value of this technique, she put it into practice over a period of two years, selecting passages from books and magazines with a wide range of topics, vocabulary and styles. This approach proved so successful that she could not only handle all her correspondence independently, but could even write persuasively on topics of general interest in newspapers and magazines. Her skills also made her of great assistance to her brother in his export business.

The technique she employed is one that can be applied to the learning of any foreign language. So it is clear that there are many different avenues which can take us to the top—not just the known, the traditional

and the easy-of-reach. We may find that some doors are locked along the way, but, there are always others that remain open and it is just a question of entering the right one to reach our destination. In the world of today, success lies within the grasp of those who are alert to the opportunities around them. Failure is the result not so much of a lack of opportunities but the lack of will to grasp such opportunities as exist, and to pursue one's course with determination and energy.

## Wise Use of Money



“Here are my entire life's savings.” So saying, an elderly scholar, who had spent his whole life reading and writing, in the utmost simplicity, placed a cheque for Rs. 10,000/- in the hands of his newly-wed daughter and son-in-law. He explained that he had been able to save this amount out of his meagre income by living frugally and never wasting anything. “I could have spent all this on lavish wedding celebrations,” he added, “but I preferred to hand it over to you young people so that you could make a good beginning in life.”

The young couple were extremely grateful for this decision and lost no time in investing the money in a small business. To begin with they had to work very hard to make a success of it, and passed through various difficult stages. But they never lost courage, and a time eventually came when they had considerably increased

their profits and were able to live a happy, comfortable life, knowing, too, that their children's future was assured. But without the scholar's initial providence, foresight and courage in resisting public opinion, they might never have had the wherewithal to make a start in life at all and might well have ended their days in penury.

One's wedding is a very serious event in life, not just an occasion for senseless showing off. It is rather a day to shoulder life's responsibilities as mature, grown-up people and future parents. It is a day for a man and a woman to enter into a 'firm contract' (Quran 4:21), not just an opportunity to impress friends, neighbours and relatives with one's spending ability. It is at all events advisable that the marriage ceremony should be simple and straightforward, thereby avoiding pointless expenditure. Before anyone spends his entire life's savings on gaudy displays—for money, after all is hard earned and difficult to accumulate—he should reflect seriously on the above mentioned incident. All things considered, would it not be better to avoid ostentation altogether and to think of how best one can help the young couple concerned? If this practice were to become widely adopted, it would not only benefit young people in general, but would actually make a positive contribution to national construction. The millions of rupees which are habitually lavished on short-lived magnificence could then be channelized into areas of the national economy which are at present unfairly neglected, thus creating favourable conditions for general economic uplift.

## Making Concessions to Circumstances



On July 19, 1981, the Delhi-Ahmedabad mail left the station as usual at the scheduled time. But it was delayed by forty minutes at the Mahsanah station. When the train moved off from the Mahsanah station, the driver drove the train faster than usual so that it would reach Ahmedabad at the scheduled time. When the train was 2 kilometers away from Dangarwa, the driver saw that a few fishplates were missing on the railway track. He immediately tried to stop the train to save it from any accident, but the fast moving train could not be controlled by sudden braking. The engine and the 12 coaches attached to it slipped from the rails and then the whole train came off the track and plunged into a ditch at the side. Many people died and many were injured.

The lesson in this incident is that by ignoring the situation you cannot start driving fast in your life, because you are not the only one in this world. There are many others. You are not the only active one. Others are active too. In this world, only that individual's journey will be successful who tries to understand the external environment and lead his life by making concessions to it. The same holds true for nations. If this wise course is not followed, then any untoward incident may take place on the journey and will destroy all our plans.

In the present time, Muslims have taken great kinds of initiatives but all of them have failed. The explanation for this failure is only one: “Someone’s conspiracy made their plans go awry.” But this excuse is only evidence of not making proper concessions to the situations.

People unthinkingly drive their vehicles along the road with no inkling of the person who has secretly planned to remove the “fishplates” so as to cause the vehicle to run right off the road.

The “vehicle” might be yours, but the “road” on which you have to drive your vehicle is not. However bitter this reality might be, it is a fact, and it is impossible for any individual to achieve success in this world by ignoring it.

Those people who, by ignoring this reality, drive their vehicles on the road of the world can never reach their destination. All that is destined for them in this world is failure due to their own faulty thinking. They will then lament their fate as being the result of some conspiracy on the part of others.

## Before Beginning, Predict the Ending



**A** caravan of pilgrims set out to visit the cave of Hira in Makkah. There is a path to the mountain on which the cave of Hira is situated. People reach the mountain in vehicles and then climb the mountain on foot. When the people started climbing the mountain, some

of them, because of their feeling of the sacredness of the place, took off their shoes by the roadside. While going up it was morning and that is why they did not face any major problem walking barefoot. But when they were coming down it was afternoon and the red stones of the mountains were hot. Blisters developed on their feet. They remained in a state of discomfort for several days.

Whether it be a journey up a mountain or through life, the principle of success for both is the same, that is to judge prior to the journey how the journey will end. One who does not predict the end of his journey at the outset faces such difficulties on his way which render his journey futile. This law of nature is so immutable that even the most earnest of men cannot escape from its result after falling into error. Even if he does something with good intentions but without considering its consequences, he too will have the same fate as one who intentionally made a mistake. No one's sincerity can become a safeguard against the consequences of his errors.

## How to Find Happiness?



“Happiness is not a station you arrive at but a manner of travelling.” This very perceptive remark, made by Margaret Lee Runbeck, is worth turning over in the mind, for so many of us think of happiness as a destination which we must reach sooner or later,

provided that we just make sufficient efforts to do so. Yet consistent effort to produce happiness so often ends in failure. We think if we acquire enough wealth, heap up possessions, dress stylishly, have a large circle of friends, make interesting trips and so on and so forth, we shall necessarily be happy, but more often than one might imagine, all this is accompanied by a feeling of unease, of inadequacy, even of despair. It is because we have made the mistake of thinking of happiness as the sum of a series of different types of pleasures and, as such, something to be set up as a goal and striven towards. But the more we hurl ourselves at this objective, the further it seems to recede from our grasp. There is also the view that happiness can be attained by avoidance of difficulties, responsibilities and unpleasantness of all kinds. But this negative approach yields no better results than a frantic scrabbling after pleasures. The strangest aspect of this problem is that it is mostly people who never think of their own happiness who achieve the most enviable state of contentment. These others who find that happiness has come to them quite unexpectedly are those who have made up their minds to do without happiness, and to devote themselves to worthwhile tasks without expecting any particular reward. Often such activities yield great happiness without that ever having been their objective.

Happiness is indeed an extremely elusive mental state. Let us suppose that we seem fated never to be happy, because perhaps we are forced to live in conditions of great deprivation or adversity. The best way to deal with this situation is simply to accept it, and then to

consider what its positive aspects could possibly be. Firstly, our being able to accept such a situation shows a strengthening of the mind and a firming up of the character. Then the process we go through to overcome each difficulty in turn is like the successive fine-honing of tempered steel, or the burnishing of base metal until it shines like gold. When we forget about happiness and apply ourselves to the task in hand, we elevate ourselves to a superior plane of human existence, and it is often at that point, when we least expect it, that we find that happiness is ours.

To expect happiness to be a continuing state, however, is to indulge in illusions. It is something which can come and go, for no rhyme or reason, and constant preoccupation with one's state of unhappiness is likely to plunge one even deeper into despair. The absence of happiness, should be accepted, ignored or treated as something to be turned to positive account as a matter of experience. It should never be allowed to make one bitter. It should be considered that if a state of happiness does not last forever, neither does a state of unhappiness. The worst error to fall into is to become preoccupied with one's own happiness to the exclusion of all else. It is more often in giving one's mind, one's affection, one's attention, one's resources— one's very life—to others, that one finds true happiness.



## The General Good



The saying goes that one day the Emperor Akbar said to his chief courtier Birbal: “Birbal, how good it would be if a monarch remained a monarch forever.” Birbal replied: “Your Majesty, you are right. But if this were to happen, how could you have been a monarch today?”

Akbar had started thinking about kingship in terms of himself. He thought that, in this world, if it had been the norm for one king to remain king forever, he himself would have remained a king forever.

But Akbar forgot that if this principle of kingship, which was to his own liking had prevailed in the world, there would have been no chance of his ascending the throne.

It often happens that a person’s thinking is centred on himself alone. He makes plans keeping in view his own personal interest. He forgets that he is not alone in this world. Very soon external realities confront him and cause his plans to go awry. At such a time, one comes to know that one’s personal interest is best served by keeping in mind the collective interest.

Even when you want to benefit only yourself, you shall have to consider others’ interest as well. Your own interest lies in the interest of everyone else. Everybody in

this world is aboard a common ship. It is in safeguarding the ship that one's own salvation lies.

When given the opportunity, there are people in this world who often make the mistake of making rules and regulations centred solely on themselves. When they see something to their benefit, they give it a go-ahead. But this way of thinking often goes against them, because nobody in this world remains forever in any one particular situation.

Opportunities sometimes come one's way and sometimes they favour others. Opportunities are never just open to a single person. They keep going from one person to another.

In such a situation, making rules and regulations considering only one's own self is not a wise decision. Because it might be possible that situations change and earlier what had seemed favourable might later turn out to be unfavourable. Self-centred thinking is neither of benefit to oneself nor to the rest of humanity.

## To Act or Not to Act



**A** ccording to news items which appeared on December 14, 1983 in *The Times of India* and *Hindustan Times*, a Delhi Police party in a Matador van was giving chase to a white Fiat car in a street near the income tax offices, when it made a sudden U-turn to speed away from them. Its driver had obviously panicked at the sight of

a police party on patrol duty. As the police van started gaining ground on the car, one of the car's occupants began firing at the van. Now convinced that it was escaping criminals they had to deal with, the police returned fire. But the fleeing car ultimately sped out of view. That same evening, a dead body was found lying in a street near the Shahadara hospital. It turned out to be the body of one Subhash, a criminal who had been involved in no less than 20 cases of dacoity, and for whom the police were offering a reward of Rs. 15,000, dead or alive. Shortly after being wounded by police gunshots, he had succumbed to his injuries, and been thrown out of the car by the other miscreants.

The fatal outcome of this incident shows how, all too often, the steps we take in haste to avert disaster can simply rebound on us. It was quite possible that if the occupants of the white car had continued their journey in a normal way, they would have aroused no suspicion and would have escaped being hit by the police. Their evasive action and their violence only drove them into a worse predicament.

In this world, there is no one who does not, at some time or the other, have his sagacity put to the test. Those who are ever ready to put up a fight are very frequently doomed to failure. In order to succeed in this world, we have to know when to act and when to refrain from acting. Sometimes one has no option but to proceed with one's journey—to go straight ahead—but sometimes it is wiser to turn off to the left or the right. The exigencies of daily living in this world are an ongoing test of one's wisdom, and it is only those

who can measure up to the severest standards who will ultimately be successful in life.

## The Wise Course for Recovering Loss



Once, a dispute arose between two farmers, over the boundary of their fields. The dispute, which to begin with, concerned a piece of land, developed into an issue of honour. Withdrawing their respective claims, they thought, would amount to losing face. Thus the quarrel which had started on a petty issue was blown up out of all proportion, and neither party was willing to make a compromise. Things went from bad to worse. Murders were committed on either side, and crops were cut down and burnt, until eventually the matter was brought to court. The procedure was lengthy and the cases were brought to an end only when both the parties had lost everything in the process—fields, orchards, jewels and so on. To recover something of lesser value, they had lost everything.

Another farmer found himself in a similar situation. But, instead of taking immediate action, he chose to stop and give the matter very serious consideration. He also consulted his friends as to what steps he should take. Finally he came to the conclusion that the boundary dispute should be settled not actually at the boundary, but on some other front.

He started to think over the issue not in terms of

today but in terms of yesterday. He was deeply hurt at the usurpation of a part of his farm and he felt the same sense of dishonour and material loss as the men who had acted in haste.

How was it that his rival had had the audacity to infringe upon his land, he thought. A great deal of cogitation led him to the conclusion that it was his own weakness that had made his enemy bold in this matter. It was not so much a matter of a boundary as of his lowly position in society. His position being weak, he could not inspire sufficient awe in his neighbour to keep him from laying hands on his rightful property. Thinking coolly, he arrived at the conclusion that if he were able to improve his status, he would be better equipped to combat his rival in a weaponless battle.

Then his rival would not venture to misappropriate his rights. So, having restrained the impulse to retaliate automatically, he began to work harder than before on his fields. The strength which would have been wasted on destroying the enemy was now utilized in constructive activities. Such positive thinking inspired in him new hope and courage. Not only did he work harder in his fields, but he started a side business as well. His newly awakened consciousness had inspired in him a new zeal to construct his life afresh and, cutting down on his expenses, he put all his efforts into increasing his income. In addition, he sent all his children to school and resolved to give them the best possible education.

Like the first farmer who continued to sue his rival over a period of twenty years, this farmer too had to work for twenty years for his efforts to come to fruition.

For the former, twenty years of effort had amounted to nothing but ruination, whereas, for the latter had been a period of great achievement. His children having received a fine education were employed in important posts. He himself had developed his farm so much that he had to buy a tractor to replace the pair of oxen which had formerly tilled his land. His resources had increased considerably. The very farmer who once had humiliated him sold all his land along with the disputed boundary area to him.

The one who had wanted to settle the boundary dispute at the boundary was a loser; on the other hand, the one who tried to solve the problem on other fronts not only came to possess the disputed land but the whole field belonging to his rival.

When an electric bulb or an electric fan stops working, we do not devote our efforts only to the bulb or the fan to make them work again, because we know that the reason often lies outside the bulb and the fan. Simply by carrying out repairs at the proper place, we can set matters right. For example, by replacing a fuse, we can re-light the lamp and set the fan in motion again. Human affairs too are often of this nature. But it is a pity that what one remembers in terms of material matters is often forgotten in solving social problems.

The normal practice, when a problem arises, is to attempt to solve it there and then in terms of the prevailing circumstances. But since present events so often stem from past events and sets of circumstances, it is more circumspect to seek out the root causes elsewhere.

Confrontation should be avoided at all costs and no factor which can produce positive results should be rejected or ignored. Even if such an approach seems lengthy and complicated, it is the only procedure which can lead to harmonious living in society.

The following words of wisdom were recorded by Ibn Majah (824-887 AD): “When God opens the way to thanksgiving, He opens with it the way to further blessings. And when He opens the way to prayer, He opens the way to fulfilment as well. And when he opens the way to repentance, He also opens the way to forgiveness.”

## No Second Mistake



There was once a government employee who owned a house in the city, and led a comfortable life. When the time came to marry off his daughter, he took a large loan from his office. After the marriage, he had to face a new problem. Every month, half of his salary was deducted for the payment of the instalment of his loan. Consequently, it became difficult for him to run the house. So he and his wife decided to rent out a portion of their house so as to be able to manage their financial problems. They kept a big room with an attached bathroom for themselves and gave the rest of the house to the tenant on rent.

They spent five years living like this. But, eventually

the tenant thought of occupying the whole house. He came with the excuse of having to accommodate a marriage party and asked his landlord if he and his wife could vacate his room for two weeks so that he could put up his guests. Then in two weeks' time, they would return their room. The tenant also arranged a temporary place for the landlord to stay and was able to convince him to vacate his room for the guests. Later, the tenant packed all the belongings of his landlord and took them to the place where he was staying. Two weeks later when the landlord returned and tried to enter his house, the tenant refused to let him in and said, "Now the house belongs to me."

Some friends of the landlord suggested to him that filing a case against him would take almost 10 years to solve the problem, so he should gather a few people and enter his house by force, and get his house vacated by the tenant. He did as he was advised, but the tenant was a clever person; therefore as soon the landlord "attacked" him, he called the police and had a criminal case registered against him. The proceedings of the case were prolonged for a period of ten years and even more cases were added. The landlord was ruined in the process and the ownership of the property was still unresolved. Ultimately, he was suspended from his job because of the criminal case filed against him.

Once you have made a mistake, do not make another one. If you have lost something after committing one mistake, you should never commit another mistake, as a result of which you will suffer further losses.



## Every Cloud has a Silver Lining



Long before Sir Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of Great Britain, he went to South Africa to act as the *Morning Post*'s military correspondent during the Boer war. In the course of his duties there, he was arrested by the Boers along with a group of British soldiers, and, since the Boers made no distinction between military personnel and war correspondents, he found himself locked up in prison. Churchill promptly sent a message to the then South African Prime Minister, John Christian Smuts, urging his immediate release on the strength of the international agreement that newspaper correspondents on wartime missions were not to be jailed. Subsequently, at a dinner party at the White House in Washington, at which both Smuts and Churchill were present, Smuts wryly recounted how he had taken note of Churchill's representation but had only just started to go into his case when he was informed that Churchill had already managed to escape.

Years later, when Churchill had become a member of the British Cabinet, Smuts reminded him of this incident, and was surprised to be told that Churchill had had no regrets over the delay in processing his case. He explained to Smuts that if he had been released immediately, he would have been the loser by £9,000.

“You see, I sold the story of my thrilling escape from jail to a magazine for nine thousand pounds!”

One should always look at the positive side of a situation, for every cloud has a silver lining.

## A Purposeful Life



An express train is tearing at full speed towards its destination. A continuous spectacle of lush crops and brimming streams and woody glades flashes by on either side. But however much the landscape attracts attention, the express train shows no interest in it. It ploughs across plains and mountains, over land and rivers, without reducing its speed. Small stations are dotted along the line, but even they do not interrupt the headlong flight of the train. It carries on, as if it will stop nowhere.

It is much the same with a purposeful life. One who has definite purpose in life will give it his full and undivided attention. He will not waste his time on peripheral issues. A purposeful person is like the traveler who spends every moment of his time steering himself towards his destination. Alluring worldly attractions may hover enticingly before him, but he closes his eyes to them. Luxurious shade invites him to cool down, away from the scorching sun. Splendid mansions invite him to rest his weary legs from the long, hard road. But he has no time for these things: all he sees is the

goal ahead of him. He is beset by all kinds of different compulsions, but he steers clear of them and continues on his way. His determination to reach his destination does not alter with the ups and downs of life. The speed and direction of his journey remain constant through thick and thin.

A purposeful person is quite unlike a wayward traveler who, lacking direction, sometimes sets off in one direction and sometimes in another. A man with a purpose knows where he is going. The road he must tread clearly stretches out before his eyes. There is no question of his interrupting his journey or diverting his attention towards other things. He travels on and on until his purpose is fulfilled, his destination reached.

If life is to be invested with meaning, it is essential that a target be set. And one should be absolutely certain of the worthwhile nature of this target. In pursuit of it, one must have the total support of one's conscience: it should permeate one's entire being, coursing through one's body just as blood runs through one's veins. It is by exercising his powers of concentration while setting his heart on a particular target that a human being becomes different from the animals. When one focuses upon an overarching purpose, one's life undergoes a drastic change. One becomes a completely different person. So total is one's absorption in one's quest in life that one has no time for petty side issues. One pursues one's goal with unswerving dedication, not stopping to rest until it is reached.

## Total Involvement



**E**lias Howe (1819-1867) was born in Massachusetts, U.S.A. He died at the young age of 48. Although his life was short, his contribution to the world of clothes—that of the sewing machine—will always be remembered.

The sewing machine invented by Elias Howe was at first utilized, not for sewing clothes, but for stitching shoes. The main breakthrough was the development of a lock-stitch by a shuttle carrying a lower thread and a needle carrying an upper thread which passes through a hole situated at the tip of the needle.

For thousands of years, man had been accustomed to making a hole at the base of the needle. So, following the common practice, Elias Howe made the needle of his machine with a hole at the base, instead of at the tip as is now the case. The placement of an eyelet, simple as it may seem to us now, remained a big hurdle for its inventor for quite some time. It was only a dream which finally brought about the desired solution.

As he was racking his brain to perfect his machine, Howe dreamt that he had been captured by a primitive tribe and was ordered to produce an operational sewing machine within twenty-four hours, failing which he would be speared to death. He tried hard, but could not accomplish it. When the deadline was up, they surrounded him and raised spears to kill him. Scared,

yet still concentrating, he observed that each spear had an eyelet at the tip. He kept on gazing at the eyelet and then woke up with a start. The solution was right before him. For the machine to work, the placement of the hole had to be neither in the middle nor at the base, but at the tip. His lucky dream helped him, in 1845, to produce a sewing machine that would complete 250 stitches a minute.

What is a dream? It is the result of complete involvement. What we think about during the day, we dream about at night. Howe succeeded in inventing a machine only because he had engrossed himself in it to such an extent that he came to dream about it. Such is the case with any undertaking, whether one wants to invent a machine, or bring about a revolution in human life. One achieves success in one's aim only after complete involvement. Only when the thing one has set one's mind on becomes a part of the subconscious mind is it reflected in one's dreams.

## Having a Purpose in Life



In 1931, Japan conquered Manchuria in the north eastern area of China, where it established the government of its choice. After that China's relations with Japan soured. On July 7, 1937 the Marco Polo incident took place in Beijing (Peking). This event awakened suppressed sentiments, which led to a military

confrontation between the two countries. This finally culminated in the Second World War. Since that time there had been enmity between Japan and China. Then after a lapse of some years, an agreement was signed between the two countries, according to which Japan was to set up a steel mill in China.

But after the signing of the agreement, the government of China suddenly cancelled it.

However, new opportunities opened up for Japan when the new Prime Minister of China, Deng Xiaoping, put an end to the extremist version of communism and adopted a new open door policy. This allowed Japan to break fresh ground with China, which caused an influx of the Japanese into China again. If you go to China today, you will have to book your air passage three months in advance, for every flight from Japan to China goes full.

China affords great opportunities for business, which Japan wants to avail of to the greatest possible extent. To facilitate commercial interaction, the Japanese lost no time in shutting their minds down to all previous painful memories. As a tourist once put it: Japan decided that it would bear all offensive behaviour unilaterally. The same tourist wrote that during his stay in Tokyo (June 1987), Radio Beijing announced that China would build a museum that would show, through pictures, the injustices and tyranny inflicted upon the Chinese by the Japanese. This Museum was to be inaugurated in 1987 to mark the 50th year of the tragic event of Marco Polo.

When the Japanese were asked to comment on this report, they maintained silence. When they were exhorted to speak out, they said: “You know our Chinese friends have a way of twisting our tails, and appealing to our conscience.” Japan had an aim and that was to promote its business interests. This aim for them was character forming in that it taught them the wisdom of forbearance, the avoidance of talking of things of no importance and speaking only when there was a real need. Having a definite objective caused them to forget past grievances and to bury all complaints and war initiatives unilaterally, so that the path to their achieving their goal might become free of obstacles.

This is a standard piece of psychology, whether the aim be to transact business or carry out any other project. And when any group loses the ability to follow this line, it indicates that they have lost their purpose in life. When there is no clear objective before them, the individuals of such a group lose in character.

At present the greatest weakness of Muslims is that they have no character. You will find that in every field people have lost their character. No solid foundation can be erected upon them. Wherever you try to bring them into play, they turn out to be like a wall of unbaked bricks—unstable.

The main cause of this weakness is that today our people have lost all awareness they ever had of a purpose in life. As a group, they have become aimless. They lack the drive to build the future either in this world or the next. This is their real weakness. If this consciousness could once again be revived, they would once more

be a living people—a people of good character, just as they were in the past. It is of paramount importance to impress upon individuals how vital it is for them to have a sense of purpose in life. For having an objective in life awakens a man's potential. It turns him into a real man again.

## All the Blood in One's Body



Professor Paul Dirac, a recipient of the Nobel Prize and many other awards, was considered—after Newton and Einstein—the greatest scientist of modern times. He died in Florida, U.S.A., in October 1984 at the age of 84. He is known mainly for his development of quantum mechanical theory—in effect the physics of the smallest part of the atom—and his effective prediction of anti-matter before it had been experimentally discovered. His “anti-matter” and “anti-universe” became the leading physical ideas for explaining the character and contents of the contemporary universe, its origin and history. J.G. Crowther's obituary to Dirac in *The Guardian* (November 4, 1984) was fittingly given the headline “Prophet of the Anti-universe”.

Dirac's discovery of the first anti-particle, known as a positron, revolutionized the world of nuclear physics. Students were naturally interested to know how he had arrived at this world-shaking discovery. His answer often proved somewhat disconcerting. When people asked



him how he got his startling ideas about the nature of sub-atomic matter, Crowther writes, “He would patiently explain that he did so by lying on his study floor with his feet up so that the blood ran to his head.” Dirac’s answer might appear to be tongue-in-cheek, but in fact what he said was quite true. Great intellectual feats can only be accomplished by letting all the blood of one’s body run to one’s head—by channeling one’s entire energy into the intellectual pursuit one has undertaken.

Few people actually do this. They tend rather to diversify their efforts. Their failure to concentrate on a single goal renders all their efforts incomplete and ineffective. Every worthwhile task demands all the strength that an individual can muster. The only way to be successful in one’s work is to give it all one has got.

## The Determination to Achieve



In November 1922, a thirty-four year old Spanish priest by the name of Fr. Henry Heras (1889-1956) landed in Bombay Harbour. India fascinated him, and, feeling that it would be fertile ground for Christian missionary work, he decided to settle there and pursue his missionary activities.

Being a foreigner, he had to find some base from which he could operate. He decided, therefore, that he would enter the teaching profession, establish himself, and then start preaching both inside and outside the

college campus. With this objective in mind, he went to meet the Principal of St. Xavier's College in Bombay. After satisfying himself on the score of his testimonials, for the young priest was a historian with a degree in history from his own country, the Principal asked him what branch of history he would like to teach. "Indian history," was his immediate reply. The Principal then asked him what he knew about the subject. His answer was frank, "Nothing." The Principal was then naturally skeptical about how he was planning to teach the subject, but the young Fr. Heras simply replied, "I shall study it." Obviously there was something in his demeanour which struck the Principal as being sincere and determined, for he gave the young man what for him was going to be a very difficult appointment.

Undaunted by the task ahead of him, Fr. Heras took up the study of Indian history with such tremendous zeal that he not only became a competent teacher of the subject, but eventually established himself as a historian of the same class as Sir Jadunath Sarkar and Dr. Surendra Nath Sen. The Heras Institute of Bombay stands today as a living memorial to Fr. Heras and his life's work. Had Fr. Heras not been imbued with missionary fervour, he might have remained quite content to secure a job for himself, teach European history with which he was perfectly familiar, and receive a regular pay packet at the end of the month. But because he was so determined to place himself in a position where he could communicate with the youth of the country at close quarters, he took up the extraordinarily difficult task of learning a completely unfamiliar subject in order to teach it.

If one has a purpose in life, one will overlook all other considerations, in order to concentrate on achieving one's goal. Everything one does will be directed towards that end. Mundane profits, temporary benefits and easy living will have no attraction for one so inspired. Losses and hardship will be manfully endured if this serves to bring one closer to one's objective.

## Gerard of Cremona



Gerard, born in Cremona, Lombardy, in 1114, was a mediaeval scholar who translated the works of many major Greek and Arabic writers into Latin, there being a great body of scientific and philosophical literature in those languages which were well worth making available to all the known world at that time. In this way, he performed the same service for his countrymen as Hunain ibn Ishaq had done for eastern Arabia.

He went specially to Toledo, in Spain, to learn Arabic, so that he could read the *Almagest* by Ptolemy, the Greek astronomer, geographer and mathematician who lived in the second century A.D. The *Almagest* was a vast computation of the astronomical knowledge of the ancients, and was accepted as authoritative up to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. As such, this was one of Gerard's most significant translations. He was assisted in his task by two other scholars, one Christian and one Jewish. With this, and other such books, the

gates of Greek and Arabic sciences were opened for the first time to the West.

In the field of medicine, he translated books by Buqrat and Galen, almost all of the books by Hunain and Al-Kindi, Abul Qasim Zahrawi's book on surgery and many other books on the physical sciences, including the pamphlet on fossils which is attributed to Aristotle. Besides these, he rendered into Latin Ibn Sina's massive volume on law and many other books by Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ishaq, Sabit and others.

In 1187, in Toledo, Gerard fell ill, and felt that his end was near. He wondered to himself what would happen when he was gone. "These books in Arabic are so precious," he thought, "and who is going to translate them into western languages?" His reflections moved him profoundly and he was fired with new zeal and energy. In spite of his rapidly failing health, he then succeeded in translating the remainder of his valuable collection of books. Legend has it that in the space of one month before his death, he had completed the translations of no less than 80 books.

When one feels sufficiently inspired to perform a task, one undertakes it at all costs, even on one's deathbed, and even when one's external circumstances are totally adverse. It is one's will and one's motivation to work which are of prime importance. Health and strength are secondary.

## Not a Minute to Spare



**A**leksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn (d. 2008), a Russian novelist who was deeply moved by the trials and tribulations of his people, gave concrete shape in his stories to their unenviable existence. He inevitably incurred the wrath of the Soviet authorities, and in 1976 felt forced to seek asylum in the U.S. where he lived on quietly, in Vermont, busily writing various books.

In May 1982, he received an invitation from the American government to participate in an official ceremony to be held in his honour at the White House in Washington. Besides other dignitaries, the U.S. President himself intended to grace the occasion. This programme included a special 15 minute meeting of Solzhenitsyn with the American President, Mr. Reagan. Solzhenitsyn, however, replied to the President on May 3, 1982, regretting his inability to attend the programme. He wrote: “The lifespan at my disposal does not leave me time for ceremonial encounters.”

His well-defined objective—to narrate in novel form the heartening tales of his countrymen’s lives—occupied his mind to such an extent that he felt he had not a minute to spare, and had no choice but to reject invitations to events which were likely to prove time-consuming, even if the invitation came from the U.S. President himself.

When a person has a specific and worthwhile goal before him, he sets a great value upon his time, but when bereft of a goal, time hangs heavily upon his hands. It is then that ceremonial gatherings and vain pursuits become welcome occupations. He carves out no real life for himself but depends upon others for occupation and distraction. In this way, he drifts along, like a ship without a rudder, to the end of his useless life. On the surface, he has led a full and busy life, but, on closer inspection, he discovers, too late, that his achievements are nil, and that he has frittered away his precious existence in empty, meaningless diversions.

## Something More to be Done



Lord Robert Clive (1725-1774), one of the top Britishers who struggled hard to make India a British colony in the 18th century, came at the age of eighteen, to Madras in 1743 and joined the East India Company as a clerk. His salary was five pounds annually. This amount was quite insufficient for his expenses. He was burdened with debts and, due to disappointment and depression, he quarreled with his colleagues and officers.

Later an incident took place which changed the direction of his life. One day to end his unsuccessful life, he put his loaded pistol to his head and pressed the trigger. But to his surprise, his pistol did not work. He opened his pistol and found it loaded with bullets.

Although he had fully intended to kill himself, he was still alive.

This was a very strange occurrence. Realizing this, Robert Clive cried: "Certainly the Almighty has saved you for some important purpose!" Now he resigned from his job as a clerk and joined the British army. At that time both the British and the French were trying at the same time to set foot in India. Finally, a battle was fought between the two forces. In this war Robert Clive proved himself by showing extraordinary capability and bravery. Subsequently, he made a great deal of progress and was appointed the Commander-in-Chief of the British army. Clive who had wanted to kill himself in frustration finally rose to the position of being the first British conqueror of India.

All of us at one time or the other are faced with such incidents, when we emerge safe from an extremely dangerous situation as though a miracle has happened. However, very few people learn their lesson as Robert Clive did. There are very few who come to understand from these incidents "Your time has not yet come, you have yet to complete your work in this world."

Every person has been allotted a fixed time and certain opportunities. This fixed time and these opportunities are not taken away from him until the Almighty wills it to be so. If after the night the Almighty makes you see things anew in the morning, you should understand that there are more days left for you to do your work. If you succeed in saving your life in this world so full of grave incidents, it means that, according to the plan of

Almighty, you have still to do something which is as yet unaccomplished.

## Proceeding with Caution



**W**hen rivers have to be crossed, small animals can swim across and larger, lightweight animals can swiftly walk across. But watch an elephant who is about to make the crossing. He does not step out briskly like other creatures. First he tests the riverbed for hardness or softness, making sure not to put his whole weight on his forefoot, then, when he is sure of his ground, he sets forth. Even once launched, his progress is slow, for he is still afraid of becoming irremediably stuck in soft mud. He proceeds with caution, testing the riverbed at every step.

Who taught the elephant to do this? Surely it must have been God who gave him his instinct for survival, thus setting upon him His seal of divine approval. God has given us this example to show us that when there are signs of danger on our path, we should not advance carelessly, but should move with similar caution, gauging the nature of the “ground ahead”.

Man is endowed with far greater brain power than the elephant. No one lights a fire near stocks of gun powder. No engine driver is careless about shunting petrol bogies. But most of us tend to forget that prudence is a principle to be followed also in social life. Every society



is comprised of a variety of people who create different types of environment. In every society there are ‘marshy places’, there is ‘petrol’, there are ‘thorns’ and there are ‘pits’. The wise are those who try to avoid such difficult, even explosive situations, thus saving themselves from the trammels of confrontation.

Those who have some goal or the other before them never allow themselves to become enmeshed in such things, because that would mean being diverted from their objective. A purposeful person always looks ahead to the future—straight forward and not towards the right or left. He always thinks of long-lasting consequences rather than momentary considerations. He looks at things, not from the point of view of personal desires and whims, but from the point of view of reality.

## The Strength of Character



Power is generally associated either with wealth, or muscularity, or both. But the greatest aspect of power has nothing to do with material things or physical prowess. Its real secret lies in strength of character—something which can be possessed by the poorest and the weakest amongst us.

Maulana Mohammad Qasim Qasmi, a 30-year old teacher at the Hussain Baksh School in Delhi and also the Imam of a mosque, recently decided to open a watch repair shop for which he needed a full-time skilled

worker. No one seemed to be immediately available, but one day a middle-aged man, one Mohammad Deen Kashmiri, who turned out to be a watch repairman came to his mosque. It appeared that he had actually come to Delhi to look for work and expressed great confidence in his own skill. Maulana Qasim, however, asked him if there was anyone in Delhi who would stand guarantee for him. Mohammad Deen then said, “My guarantor is none other than God. If you can put your trust in His guarantee, then I shall present Him as my guarantor.”

Maulana Qasim was so impressed by Mohammad Deen Kashmiri’s way of expressing himself that he hired him to work at his shop. Several months have passed since then, and now both employer and employee are satisfied with the successful running of the shop by the grace of God. But if Mohammad Deen Kashmiri had not been able to impress Maulana Qasim with his strength of character, the enterprise would have come to nothing. It was the aura of trustworthiness and determination produced by this innate quality in this humble man which carried the day.

## Trust is Golden



**W**ith just a few hundred rupees as capital, a man from Delhi started a business. He used to buy remnants of cloth which he would sell from door to door. When his business had grown somewhat, he

obtained permission to sit on the pavement in front of a shop and sell his merchandise there.

This freelance cloth-merchant built up a good deal of trust with his wholesaler, whom he impressed with his honesty and fair dealing. The wholesaler began to give cloth on credit to the vendor, who always made an effort to settle his debt before the appointed date. This habit made him even more trustworthy in the eyes of the wholesaler, who granted him more and more cloth on credit. After just a few years, the wholesaler was giving this street-vendor Rs. 150,000/- worth of cloth on credit, an amount which he would not have given anybody else except on the basis of a considerable cash down-payment.

Clearly, such a large amount of cloth could not be accommodated on the street. The cloth vendor now required a shop. He bought one, and continued to run it in a principled manner. His profits continued to spiral, and before long he was among the leading cloth merchants of the old city.

It is a mistake to think of money as the greatest asset in life. The greatest asset is trust. On the basis of trust one can buy anything. What one lacks in other departments one can make up for it in trust. Trust is an invaluable asset which can buy even more than money.

But the way to establish trust is not by repeating how worthy one is. No, it is by acting in a trustworthy manner. The outside world is very severe in this regard. Unless one proves one's trustworthiness by impeccable actions, one cannot expect to receive the benefit of the

doubt. Only if one consistently shows oneself worthy of trust over a long period, as the cloth vendor showed himself in his dealings with the wholesale merchant, will one be rewarded with trust in this world.

## Determination Plus Diligence



A competition was once held to see who could write the largest and the most beautifully formed letters of the Urdu alphabet in the sand along the banks of the Yamuna. Among the many calligraphers who had gathered to compete was Ustad Yousuf Dehlavi (d. 1977), who was renowned for the extraordinary command he had over his art. Writing in the sand with a bamboo shoot, he covered a distance of one entire furlong with the first 17 letters of the alphabet (from Alif to Shin) at which point he was requested to stop, as this was quite enough to demonstrate the superiority of his skill. He then asked for the letters to be coloured and photographed from a plane, so that they could be viewed all together on a reduced scale. He claimed that the letters in the photograph would look exactly the same as his own handwriting done on a normal scale. After this, none of the other competitors even dared to demonstrate their art.

After Partition, he left for Pakistan, where he continued to earn distinctions. On one occasion, he was asked to write words of welcome on an arch through

which Shah Saud, the King of Saudi Arabia was to pass, while on a visit to the country. The Governor General himself came to supervise the welcome arrangements, and during his inspection was amazed to see the truly majestic writing on the welcome arch. He sent for Ustad Yousuf, lavished great praise on his work and asked him how long it had taken him to complete it. Seven days, was the answer. The Governor General then instructed his secretary to give Rs. 7,000 to Ustad Yousuf as a token of his appreciation. A cheque for this amount was immediately handed over to him.

Once asked from whom he had learnt the art of calligraphy, he said that he had not learnt it from anyone—not even from his own father, who had also in his time been famous as a calligrapher. He explained that he had learned simply by copying from examples of the work of the great calligraphers of the Mughal period which are preserved on tablets in the museum at the Red Fort in Delhi. For a period of ten years, Ustad Yousuf used to visit the Red Fort daily to study these masterpieces. Each day, he would memorize one couplet and then try writing it in an identical style when he came back home. The next day, he would take his work to the Red Fort, compare it with the original and then, if necessary, correct his mistakes. In this way, his work was refined and perfected, without a teacher and without money having to change hands.

There is a lesson in this for anyone who aspires to perfection in any chosen field. Even without money, other kinds of resources or guidance, a person can

achieve success, provided his desire to do so is keen enough, and his diligence matches his determination.

## Beyond Road Blocks



When a road is under repair, a notice bearing the words ‘Road Closed’ is put up to warn unwary travelers. But this does not mean that the path to one’s destination is irrevocably barred. There are always other highways and by-ways—it is just a question of looking around for them. Sometimes one can reach one’s destination just as well by zig-zagging through narrow lanes and alleyways. The only difference is that this takes somewhat longer, and one has to keep one’s wits about one to negotiate narrower roadways and sharper turnings. But arrive one finally does.

Life’s journey is very often like this. One would like to proceed by broad straight routes, moving fast and reaching one’s goal in the most direct possible way. But, so often such roads are blocked, and achieving success begins to seem a very difficult matter. But for every major route which is blocked, there are always several minor roads which are open. It is just a question of having to go about things in a roundabout way. This is particularly true if you meet with an adversary and feel that you are unable to confront him head-on. It is then that you must find some indirect means of dealing

with him. Often, compromise or adjustment is the best solution.

When in one particular field there seems to be a discouraging lack of opportunities, one can certainly search for and find opportunities in some other field. When you fail to find a place for yourself in the front row, you can always make do with one in the rear until a place up ahead finally falls vacant for you. When you cannot find people to extend a helping hand to you, go on fearlessly and strike out on your own. When you need things from people to help you in life and no one seems ready to be generous, stop thinking of how deprived you are and instead try to earn God's blessings.

For every closed door, there is always another which is open—but only to those who have the eyes to see it and the courage to march through it.

## Reward for Capability



It is standard practice that whenever a book is given to a printing press to be printed, the proofs of the book are shown to the person concerned before it finally goes to print. Generally the proofs are printed on large sized ordinary pages and handed over unbound to the author. Such proofs may show any mistakes in the setting and design, pagewise, but they do not give a clear picture of what the book will look like in its final form after printing and binding.

When the owner of a certain printing press in Delhi received a book for printing for the first time from a New Delhi embassy, he felt he must make a good impression and to this end, he devised a new way of printing the proofs for the embassy staff members concerned. Using good quality paper, he printed the pages on both sides and bound them in book form.

These proofs that he offered were like an advance sample of the book. The embassy people were so pleased with this very professional presentation that they decided to give him all of their future orders for printing.

Sometime later, the owner of another printing press told the embassy people that the press they had been patronizing was overcharging them. Taking what he said at face value, the embassy people assigned some printing work to him on a trial basis with the promise that it would cost them less. In due course the proofs were prepared. They were done in the old way on very ordinary paper and without binding. When the embassy people examined this work, not being able to imagine what the final form of the book would be like, they judged it to be totally substandard. They therefore rejected it and cancelled their order. They then requested their former printer to resume doing their work.

Events show, that if you have some special capability, you will in the end be suitably rewarded for it.



## Utmost Devotion



**M**r. Surjit Singh Lamba (b. 1931) who worked in the Law Ministry and lived in Kirti Nagar, New Delhi, was gifted by nature with a photographic memory. This means that just by reading anything a few times, be it prose or poetry, he could remember all of its details. He demonstrated this skill many years ago when he visited our office in June 1983, by reproducing whole articles of Al-Risala from memory.

Being a great admirer of Iqbal, he had learnt hundreds and thousands of his verses by heart, thus becoming a specialist on his life and works. In 1983, Mr. Lamba went to Pakistan where he was hailed as an authority on Iqbal. One Mr. Amir Husain of Lahore, who was also renowned as an expert on Iqbal, challenged Mr. Lamba to recite more verses by heart than he could himself. So convinced was Amir Husain Lahori of his superiority that he offered to hand over Rs. 5000/- in cash to Mr. Lamba if he could beat him. Mr. Lamba accepted the challenge, and it was agreed that, turn by turn, each would recite any verse from any part of any poem by Iqbal and that the other should have to recite whatever followed. Mr. Lamba was able to recite, faultlessly, whatever followed on from Amir Husain's cues. But Amir Husain was ultimately unable to match his performance, and so lost the contest. Explaining his prowess, Mr. Lamba remarked, "I have been hovering

around the candle of Iqbal like a moth for the past ten years. It is only if you have hovered around it more than I have that you will be able to outdo me in recitation.”

It is only such utter devotion—no matter what the field of activity—which can lead to success. There are few worthwhile things in life which cannot be likened to the “candle”. Only those who have hovered around it more than others in this world of struggle and competition can aspire to advance in life, for life is very much a matter of give and take. It is by putting everything we have—brains, efforts, talent, money, energy—into whatever we are doing, that we can hope to derive some benefit from it. To receive, we must give. The more we give, the more we receive. And never can we hope to receive more than we have actually given.

## Idleness



**W**hen I see a man and his personality pleases me, that personality is diminished in my eyes when I come to know that he does no work.

The same tradition has been recorded by Ibn Jauzi in his book, “Talbees-e-Iblees”, in which Mohammad bin Asim says, “I came to know that when Umar saw any young individual and he liked him, he would ask him, ‘Do you have a job?’ If his answer were in the negative, he would become less important in his eyes.” The reality is that remaining idle is the worst thing for

any individual. It swallows up all his good qualities. Although an unemployed individual seems to be alive, in reality, he is lifeless. He can have no delicate feelings whatsoever. And it is such feelings which make a man a man in the real sense.

One way in which a person remains jobless is when he shirks hard work or is unable to find a job which does not entail hard work, and he just fritters away his time waiting for the form of employment of his choice.

Another form of idleness derives from a person inheriting wealth, or his having other sources of income for which he has made no personal effort, for example, the interest on money deposited in a bank, or the rent from a property which he receives every month. All these sources of income give rise to idleness and that is fatal for a person, no matter how well settled he may appear to be.

Every person must have a purpose in life. Every person ought to find some lawful activity for himself and must keep himself busy in his work. One who does not have any such occupation does not have a life. You will very seldom find a jobless person who is of a high intellectual calibre.

## In the Nick of Time



**A** medical college professor, putting a student through an oral examination, asked him, “How many of

these pills would you give to a man who had suffered a heart attack?” “Four,” replied the student. A minute later, he piped up, “Professor, can I change my answer?” “You can, by all means,” said the professor, looking at his watch. “But, regrettably, your patient has already been dead for 40 seconds.”

Certain matters in life are so critical that they require the appropriate step to be taken without a moment’s hesitation. But an instant decision must also be a correct one, otherwise the consequences could be drastic, and could mean a lifetime of repentance.

Our moments of decision-making are often very similar to our attempts to board a train. Catching a train requires preparation. We have to pack up our luggage, making sure we take the right things with us, buy a ticket, arrange transport to take us to the station and we must, of course, already be on the platform at the appointed time, otherwise we are surely going to be left behind. For the train is no respecter of persons. It arrives on time and departs on time, and pays no heed whatsoever to tardy passengers. If we are like the medical student who was caught on the wrong foot because of lack of preparation and who was much too late with the correct answer, the train of life will go on in its scheduled course and we shall be left standing, wondering what to do next and how to avert the disastrous consequences of our failure to get on board. It is, therefore, necessary to be prepared for all eventualities in life. That means assiduously acquiring a good education and losing no time in gaining useful experience relevant to our chosen occupations. It above all requires a mental and physical

readiness to seize opportunities when they come our way, and to be firm of purpose, never permitting one's energy to be frittered away in pointless vacillation.

## Making the Best of Things



**W**hen a certain young Mullaji was appointed the Imam of a mosque, he was expected, as a matter of duty, not only to lead the congregation in prayer, but also to give daily lessons from the Quran. For this his remuneration was a mere Rs. 25 per month, but because he was also given a room to live in and two meals a day, he tried to make the best of it. Having a roof over his head gave him a much-needed sense of security, and he also hoped that his situation in the mosque would eventually provide better opportunities for his son's education.

However, the treatment meted out to this young Imam by the Namazis (devotees at prayer) was very far from being cordial, for they tended to regard him as their servant. For very minor things, he was taken to task and humiliated. Why was there no pot for water to be seen, where had the broom gone, and why could the place not be kept cleaner, etc.? The young Imam could put up with financial constraints but when it came to suffering continual humiliation, that was another matter. He finally decided that in order both to keep his mental balance, and to improve his situation, he

must find some additional occupation which was not associated with his work at the mosque. He knew that he could not immediately relinquish his duties there, for that would have meant having nowhere to stay. He therefore enrolled in the Tibbiya (Medical) College, and, side by side with his tasks at the mosque, he launched himself on a course of study. It took him five years to complete his medical studies, during which time he would console himself, in the face of disrespectful treatment, with the thought that he was striving to provide himself with a happier alternative, that he was fitting himself for a worthy career. A time would come, he told himself, when he would never again have to hang his head before any member of the congregation. Finally the day dawned when he received his medical degree. His success had taken great patience, fortitude and single-mindedness. So that his energies should never flag, he had to keep his attention firmly focused on his ultimate objective of extricating himself from a life of constant mortification. Now with the degree in his possession, he was ready to start his practice. After thanking the people of the mosque, he submitted his resignation and went off to hire a small clinic in the city. He went with a certain quiet confidence and firmness of purpose, for the bitter experiences of his life and his struggle for betterment had taught him many a useful lesson.

In the running of his clinic, his hard work and intelligence soon enabled him to earn enough to buy a house for his family. A year later, he was offered a lecturership in the local college. This was an event which

changed his entire life. Yesterday's 'Mullaji' was now the honoured and respected 'Doctor Sahib,' and what was equally important was that he now had no financial worries. If, in his early years, he had responded to the adversity of his circumstances with mere bitterness and complaints, and had taken no positive action to overcome his difficulties, he could never have had anything better to look forward to in his future life.

Adverse circumstances should be seen for what they are—stepping stones to new and better horizons.

## Moon Mission



In this world of competition it is necessary to enter the field fully prepared. If you enter it inadequately prepared, failure will almost certainly await you.

The American Astronaut, Neil Armstrong, stepped on to the moon for the first time in July 1969. The moment he set his foot on the moon, the control mission in America received these words uttered by him:

“That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.”

Armstrong and his two colleagues were selected from amongst the top 30 astronauts of the U.S. He possessed to a very high degree all those qualities which were necessary for this difficult, historic mission—extraordinary skill in flying, intelligence, strength, ability to absorb information, mental and emotional balance

and the courage to accept challenges unhesitatingly. Once selected, he had to undergo rigorous training. For instance, he had to remain immersed in deep water for long periods so that he would become used to weightlessness. So that he could deal with every possible emergency, he did intensive courses in astronomy, space flight, rocket flight, the physics of the moon, etc.,—all with the help of computerized space data.

The 3100-ton Apollo 11 seemed a giant. It was as high as a 36-storey building, with 8 million parts and 91 engines installed in it. On the top was the comparatively small machine, the Columbia, in which the astronauts were seated to set off on their historic journey. The space machine was duly blasted off, circling the earth for two and a half hours. Then its speed increased to 403 miles per minute and, on reaching an altitude of 3000 miles, the Columbia separated from the rest of the machines. It was so equipped that the seating space for the astronauts was only as much as in an ordinary taxi. Finally, they alighted on the moon from where they gathered 46 pounds of moon earth, leaving equipment worth 5 lakh pounds behind them. They also left their footprints on its surface which, hopefully will remain intact for half a million years.

It was only after such highly elaborate preparations that the “small step” could be taken which was going to result in such a “giant leap” for mankind.



## Starting from Scratch



“ I have reached my present position by climbing a ladder and not by coming up to it in a lift.” This observation was made by a tailor who, having started with nothing but his own two hands and the will to work, had become eminently successful in his line of business. “Making a good coat is not child’s play. The whole process is so complicated that without detailed information as to how to proceed, long experience and a high degree of skill, it is almost impossible to accomplish. It is only after a lifetime of hard work that I have succeeded in running a prosperous shop in the city.”

The tailor went on to explain how he had done his apprenticeship under the guidance of an expert tailor. Just learning the art of cutting and sewing had taken him five long years. When he opened his own little shop, he discovered that he had difficulty in giving his customers a good fitting. This was because during his apprenticeship, he had never really grasped the fact that people could be of such different shapes and sizes. He therefore set himself to the task of studying the human anatomy, but it was only after many years of effort that he could make a coat with an absolutely perfect fitting. He eventually became such an expert in this that he could even give perfect fittings to those who unfortunately suffered from deformities—such as

hunchbacks. “In any type of work, there are many things which one has to learn on one’s own. Often one cannot foresee these things at the outset, and each obstacle has to be overcome by hard work and ingenuity.”

The tailor talked of many things of this nature concerning his skills, and it seemed to me as though I were listening to a lecture on the building of the nation by some very experienced person.

In reality, the only way to solve our economic and social problems is to follow the example of the tailor. After this initial apprenticeship, he had gone ahead and done things on his own. He had gone up by the stairs and not by the lift. There are no buttons which you can just push and then automatically reach your goals. You can only make progress step by step. Progress can seldom be made by leaps and bounds. By means of the ladder you can progress even to the stage of owning the lift, but you cannot make a success of your life by starting with the lift and expecting it to do everything for you.

## From Strength to Strength



**A**n Englishman by the name of John Menon arrived in Glasgow in 1782 and proceeded to establish a newspaper called the Glasgow Advertiser, later renamed the Glasgow Herald. This was no mean achievement considering that his total assets at that time consisted of

a wooden printing press and £200. Today the Glasgow Herald's circulation has risen to 200,000, but there were times, while it was still a new venture, when it appeared on the verge of foundering. What saved it was John Mennon's boundless enthusiasm. No matter how adverse the circumstances, or how serious the differences between his partners and himself, he still found the grit and energy to forge ahead. Far from closing its doors, his newspaper went from strength to strength.

Having originally been printed on a fairly primitive, hand-operated press, it is now being printed on highly sophisticated automatic machines. Gone are the days of typesetting and metal infusion. Now the letters are projected on to the plates by laser beam. Printing and folding are carried out automatically, then wrapped in polythene. The batches of newspapers are then taken to the dispatch department. The whole process has been streamlined and speeded up by computerization. It is a matter of great satisfaction to both proprietors and readers that the newspaper survived long enough to benefit from all these new and improved techniques. Few are aware that it almost ceased publication before the end of the eighteenth century.

Its continuing to be published is thanks, principally, to the enthusiasm and perseverance of its founder. Indeed, no great work can be sustained and brought to perfection without these qualities. Even tasks of lesser magnitude require great keenness and consistent hard work, very often over long periods, if they are ultimately to be successful.

## The Top Position is Vacant



In the course of conversation, a group of Muslim youths were complaining about the system—problems in admissions, unemployment, etc. An experienced senior person was also sitting amongst them, silently listening to everything. At last he spoke out: “Your complaints are totally meaningless. You are searching for a position where all the vacancies have already been filled. And you do not try to seek out the places where there are still vacancies. You should strive for excellence. Then there will be no further question of disappointment for you. This is because while general low-rung positions may not be vacant, the top position in every field is very often vacant.”

Personal excellence is the secret of success. Whether you are a student or a merchant, a lawyer or a doctor, whichever field you belong to, try to attain excellence and you will surely achieve success. Even if all you know is how to make an excellent rat trap, people will themselves start knocking at your door. The fault of people in general is that they produce the same old kind of trap which is already available in the market and then they complain that their product is not selling. If you work hard and produce a distinctive trap, surely people will rush to buy it.

Ordinary posts are occupied while top posts lie

vacant. Then why should you not try to reach out for this superior position which is still waiting for you? If you work harder than others, if you develop a high standard rather than an ordinary standard and enter the field of life with improved abilities, it will be impossible for you to be sacked or remain unemployed. There is a position for you everywhere, because it is vacant and waiting for someone to come and fill it.

## The Cause Lies Within



**W**hen the President of India, Mr. Giani Zail Singh, went to the U.S. for an eye operation, he was admitted to the same Texas hospital where his predecessor, Sanjiva Reddy, had been previously treated. In Delhi, rumour had it that when Mr. Zail Singh was due to be taken to the operation theatre, the chief surgeon came to him and asked, “Are you ready?” Promptly came Giani Zail Singh’s reply, “No, I am not Reddy, I am Zail Singh.” (*Hindustan Times*, December 4, 1982)

This anecdote may well have been concocted, but the question remains, how was it that anyone could dare to make such a joke at the President’s expense? One very simple reason could be that Mr. Giani Zail Singh was not good at English. This is common knowledge. But had Dr. Radha Krishnan or Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

been in his place, there would have been no attempts at such humour.

The outside world knows you as you have introduced yourself to it. It sends back its reflex responses according to the picture you have given it. This being so, when you find others mistreating you, do not seek the fault in them. Seek rather the fault within yourself. By recognizing your own shortcomings and doing your best to remove them, you can better safeguard yourself against the mistreatment of others.

A Greek artist is once said to have sculpted a statue of a man holding a bunch of grapes in such a realistic fashion that when he placed this statue at a crossroads, birds flew up to it and began to peck at the grapes. His friends congratulated him on having made the grapes appear so real that even the birds had been deluded. The artist was pleased with their felicitations, but he was not pleased with himself. He said, "I have actually failed in carving the likeness of the man, otherwise the birds would never have dared to come near him." The artist then made another attempt. The grapes were again so realistic that they attracted the birds. But this time they hovered at a distance from the statue, because the eyes of the man were so lifelike that they did not dare approach him.

Had the artist been content to bask in the praise of his friends, he would never have produced his ultimate masterpiece. It was his innate sense of his own shortcomings that spurred him on to absolute perfection.

Striving for excellence develops our personality on successful lines.

## Dreams and Success



**M**r. Ram Ratan Kapila runs a refrigerator and air-conditioner business by the name of Kapsons, with its offices located on Asif Ali Road in New Delhi. Needing a catchy name for his firm, he advertised for one in the newspapers, promising a handsome reward for the best slogan. In spite of advertising repeatedly, no apt slogan was forthcoming. He kept racking his brain day in and day out, but could not hit on anything that sounded just right.

Six years went by, then one night Mr. Kapila dreamt he was in a beautiful garden, with birds chirruping and perfect weather. Delighted with his surroundings, he exclaimed, “What wonderful weather!” It had taken him six years, but he had found the right catch phrase at last: “Kapsons: the weather masters.”

Dreaming is an activity which goes on in the sleeping state, often crystallizing unformed thoughts and desires. What has been going on during the day frequently appears in dreams at night. History abounds in tales of discoveries which have been made through dreams, and problems—which had apparently been insoluble—being successfully solved on awakening from an illuminating dream sequence. An inventor’s mind, when totally

engrossed in his invention, continues to project the ins and outs of problems even when he is asleep. It is not unusual for answers of seemingly unanswerable questions to appear in the course of dreams. But this only happens as a result of total intellectual association with any given subject. Success is the result of dedication and assiduity. It is never the result of some unasked for miracle.

## The Psychology of Success



**W**orld champions often possess equal physical strength and capabilities and receive training of an almost equal standard. Then why does one win and another lose? This question has been a topic of research in America for the past three years. The report of the group of scientists working on this has recently been published. They chose the top international wrestlers and made comparisons of their physical strength and psychological reserves. They found out that there is one marked difference between the winners and the losers in the world competitions, this being not physical but psychological. It is, in actual fact, their state of mind which plays the most crucial role in winning or losing a competition. The experts found that the winners were found to be more conscientious and in control of themselves than the losers. The report is summed up with these words: “Losers tended to be more depressed



and confused before competing, while the winners were positive and relaxed.” (*The Times of India*, July 26, 1981)

This applies equally to the broader field of life. In life when two individuals or two groups confront one another, their victory or defeat does not depend so much on material resources as on intellectual and psychological reserves. The conviction that one’s goals are worthwhile, the observation of discipline with no contradiction between words and thoughts, cool thinking even in times of crisis—all these are qualities of mind and heart which determine success, and obviate failure in the wider field of life.

## The Principle of Give and Take



Once, when an uneducated Indian returned after a two year stay in Iraq, he was asked how much he had saved. He replied: “I could not earn much but after spending on my daily expenses I managed to save 2 lakh rupees.” He was then asked the secret of accumulating money. He replied: “Brother, I have discovered that only when you reduce your needs can you save money.”

The secret to earning money is that one should work with patience, rather than following one’s own preferences. One should strive to achieve one’s goal while making concessions to others. To become wealthy means extracting wealth from others’ pockets. If you do not give any concessions to others, why would they

give you the opportunity to take away their wealth from their pocket? The secret to possessing wealth is to kill your desires. One should follow the priorities of others rather than following one's own. The same is true of other matters as well as religious matters. In this world a person has to work among many other people. He has to face challenges with patience. That is the reason why in this world success is possible only when one comes out of one's self, ignores his own whims and fancies and finds his way by making concessions to external circumstances.

He must consider others along with himself. It is a reality that in this world a person, in terms of his desires, tastes and needs is acknowledged in the eyes of others only after the sacrifice of his own self.

Only after giving something to the world is it possible for a person to receive something in return from this world.

## The Spirit of Selfless Devotion



The people of this world can be divided up into two distinct categories. On the one hand, there are those who want an immediate reward for all that they do, with their recompense exceeding the work they have put in. Then there are those who are not out to get any material reward at all. Just the knowledge that they have contributed in some way to a worthwhile

cause is sufficient reward for them. If they receive no recompense for their efforts, it does not cause them concern or arouse their anger. They play their part, but forget about their personal contribution, so engrossed are they in the cause for which they are working.

Outwardly, both groups appear to be the same, but, in reality, there is a world of difference between the two. The first group, one might say, keep the markets of the world turning over, while the second group turn over new pages in human history. Such is the extent to which the two differ.

It is the second group who make meaningful, valuable contributions to the betterment of humanity, for it is they who are able to join in a common struggle, without which no worthwhile work can be achieved in this world. Whenever a number of people work together for a common goal, it is inevitable that some should receive more credit than others. Some are hailed for their achievements, while others are denied all recognition. This is true of all movements, whether popular or prophetic in nature. There is only one way for a common effort to prosper, and that is for people to forget about their rights, and remember only their responsibilities.

Unless there is a spirit of selfless struggle among those participating in a common cause, it is not only those who receive no recompense who will feel ill-treated, even those who are rewarded for their contribution will feel that they have not been done justice. Seldom does the reward a person receives for his efforts live up to his

expectations. It is a case of either being satisfied with nothing, or never being satisfied at all.

Those who are destined to perform great deeds in life are those who do not seek any reward for what they have done; the very fact that they have done something worthwhile is sufficient reward for them. The knowledge that they have played their part is enough to make them content, even more so than those who have been abundantly rewarded for their efforts.

## Proving One's Worth



**A** young aspiring Muslim student from Azamgarh, A.M. Khan by name, stood nervously before the Principal of Hindu College and said, “Sir, I should very much like to be admitted to the B.Sc. course in your college.” The reaction was sharp. “The admissions are closed. How do you expect to be admitted in the month of October when you are already several months late with your application?” Unforeseen circumstances had prevented young Khan from applying sooner, but he simply said, “It would be extremely kind of you if you would help me.” Then he added hesitatingly, “One whole year will be wasted for me if I am not granted admission.” The Principal’s reply was stern. “There is just no question of further admissions.”

The Principal talked in such an offhand manner that it should have been obvious that there was no point in

persisting. Even so the student was determined to try his luck, although all he really expected was to be asked to leave the room immediately. On seeing the insistence of the student, the Principal finally asked him rather dryly what his marks had been in the previous examinations, because he felt certain that he must have failed to get admission elsewhere due to his low marks. If this were the case, the Principal would have had good grounds for rejecting his application. But the student's reply was just the opposite of what he expected. He said, "Eighty five percent, sir."

These words worked like a miracle. The Principal's mood changed all of a sudden, and he asked the student to sit down and show him his certificates. When he had seen them and was satisfied that the student's claim was true, he told him to write out an antedated application.

Not only was the student then given admission in spite of such a long delay in applying, but he was also granted a scholarship by this very same Principal who had been so reluctant even to give him a hearing.

Had the same student approached the Principal with a third class degree, and had been refused admission as a result, he would surely have gone away full of hatred for the Principal concerned, and would have remarked to his friends that it was prejudice which had come in his way. He would not have admitted that he had been refused admission because of his poor results. He would have publicly laid the blame on the Principal. It is not always clearly understood by aspirants to high positions that the response of the society we live in is usually an echo of our own condition. We tend to attribute

the evils afflicting us to society so that we may shake ourselves free of the blame.

When a person enters life fully prepared to meet its challenges, the world cannot but give him due recognition. Never in any environment does he fail to receive the position of honour which is his due. This results in his being able to maintain high moral standards. His experiences are then marked by bravery, confidence, broadmindedness, gentlemanliness, acknowledgement of others' worth and a realistic approach to life. He has the will and the capacity to enter into proper human relationships. Society having recognized his talents and he in turn having given due acknowledgement to society, he can rise above the negative attitude of hatred and prejudice.

The reverse is true when, because he cannot come up to the required standards, he fails to prove his worth; when he enters life with inadequate training, he surely fails to find a place of his choice in the world. As a depressed personality, he almost certainly develops a low moral character. He falls prey to negative psychology—anger, complaint, even criminality. Failure in life gives birth to this negative psychology because it is seldom that the person concerned blames himself for his failure. He almost always lays the blame on others for his own shortcomings. Inadequate preparation for life brings two evils simultaneously—failure on one's own part and uncalled for complaint against others.

A stone is hard to all and sundry. But it presents no problems to anyone who has a tool which can break it. The same is true of the more complex obstacles that

face us in life, for it is only if you enter the field of life equipped with the proper skills, that you feel entitled to claim what is your due. Even after the “last date” you can be given admission to a college without anyone else intervening to help you. But without the necessary skills and ability, you will fail to find the place you aspire to.

Anyone who wants success to come his way in this world of God will first have to make himself deserving of it. He must know himself and his circumstances. He must organize and channelize his energies properly. He must enter the field fully armed in every respect, then others cannot fail to recognize his true value. He must be like the tree which forces its way up through the undergrowth to take its place in the sun.

## A Distinctive Capability



Some years ago, I chanced upon an article by a western writer in which he presented his findings on the reason behind the wealth and fame of certain prominent individuals. After considerable research on their lives, he concluded that those who reached a pinnacle of success possessed two special qualities: ‘curiosity and discontent.’

Curiosity always kept them engaged in their work and discontent spurred them on in their onward journey.

Another aspect of the successful individual is pointed out in a 108-page educational report prepared by Mrs.

Anita Straker, Mathematics Adviser of Wiltshire, for her school's council. This report makes this observation on the qualities of gifted children: "Pupils who are impatient with anything that is second best, are probably gifted." (*Hindustan Times*, February 2, 1983)

It is a unique quality in a person if he declines to accept anything which is not the absolute best. This quality is the key to all successful achievements.

Such thinking compels a person to move forward towards absolute truth without compromising on any half-truth. It elevates him from being an inferior character to being a superior character. This thinking does not allow him to be content with small achievements. It continuously pushes him towards more and more successful achievements. It makes him do his duty by preferring only the ideal. Moreover, he achieves happiness by doing his duty to the full. It keeps motivating the individual so that he does not stop except at the highest good, and does not let himself be content with anything less than perfection.

## Seize Every Opportunity



The end of the 14th century saw the beginning of a new era. As a result we are fortunate that today, in the 21st century, we have every favourable opportunity needed to start a new and better existence.

When the sun rises and night ends, it is a silent



announcement by nature that the earth's rotation on its axis has been completed. Now its second rotation is about to begin. Anyone can start his journey in its light and reach his destination.

The sunrise each morning makes a person stand between two things: one is the opportunity which has passed and the other is the opportunity that now presents itself. One who can avail of these opportunities will surely attain his objectives. Therefore, in this world of trial, opportunities are only for those who can avail of them; for those who fail to grasp an opportunity, an opportunity is not really an opportunity.

Success, in other words, depends upon making the best of available opportunities. No one can start his journey from the day which has already passed. Forget about lost opportunities; take stock of the opportunities which are on offer today and utilize them. By God's will, you will definitely achieve success. Always remember that a day once passed never comes back for anyone. It is not therefore, going to come back for you either.

## In the Entrepreneurial World



In a survey carried out on American businessmen who have made it spectacularly to the top, an analysis has been made of what it has taken to place them on their respective pinnacles of success. Their extraordinary feats in business and industry have been attributed largely

to their “hard struggle, a devotion to work with such a sense of involvement that family, entertainment, etc. come to take a secondary place.” However, according to one piece of research the key feature which is the common denominator in all of the case histories was their having been “masterful opportunists, keenly alert to any chance of personal advancement” (*Reader’s Digest*, May 1982). This is not to say that hard, dedicated work did not play a major role, but, obviously, without that initial plunge taken by the budding entrepreneur, no subsequent meteoric rise in life would ever have been possible.

Taking the plunge, needless to say, almost invariably involves taking risks. It is rather like plunging into a mountain stream. What one knows and what one does not know about it, give one equal grounds for hesitation. There is the intense cold of the water, the swiftness of the current, the danger of being dashed against rocks, swept over rapids and hurled headlong down waterfalls, and then—how deep is it? The man who is keen to reach the other side will first look for the safe, easy way. He will simply cross a bridge. But where there is no bridge, he shall have to measure up his own strengths against the crushing powers of nature. Is he strong enough to battle the current, are his reflexes fast enough, has he the wit and adaptability to deal with sudden and unexpected crises? Can he find ways of protecting himself, warding off danger? Can he even trust himself to do the right thing when it comes to the crunch? The man who is really determined to reach the other side of the stream, will summon up all his strength, courage

and intelligence, and will plunge straight into the icy waters before him. He will naturally choose a vantage point from which to do so, but, once having found this point, he will no longer hesitate.

In the entrepreneurial world, there are risks to be taken which are no less formidable. Some are fortunate enough to find the safe, easy bridges to success, but, for the majority, the plunge into the mountain stream is an unavoidable hurdle on the path to glory. Often, opportunities suddenly emerge before a person on the brink of launching himself on a career. It is his ability to seize upon the opportunity, then grasp it when the time is ripe that will make all the difference to the direction his career takes from that point onwards.

Opportunity seldom knocks twice, and the potentially successful person is the one who fully realizes this. Often too, a successful career is one in which a whole series of opportunities have had to be seen and thoroughly exploited. No career is ever such a cut and dried affair that new opportunities may be complacently ignored. The most successful individuals are those who are ever alive to the state of affairs around them, and who keep abreast of whatever events are likely to improve or damage their prospects. There is a great deal to the old saying: "Strike while the iron is hot!"

## Every New Morning



Once a businessman was asked what success was? He answered:

“When you wake up in the morning, jump out of bed and shout: ‘Great! Another day!’ Then you are a success.” The fact is that a new morning following the night is a great thing, because it gives us another day for work. One who has a real passion for work will be eager to embrace another day. It is such a person who can do great deeds in this world.

The rotation of the earth on its axis is a unique event. Because in the vast universe there are other planets such as Mercury which travel in their orbit without rotating on their axes, so that on one side there is always day and on the other side, there is always night. The earth is an exceptional planet in that it rotates on its axis while circling the sun. Due to this, day and night come one after another on the earth. This is an astonishing arrangement made by God. This is how God Almighty has given man the chance to work in the day time and rest at night.

If a person were to think deeply on this whole system, he would find it so astonishing to see the day after the night on earth that he would jump from his bed as soon as the morning approached and would thank God for granting him a precious opportunity for work. Only

those who consider morning as a precious blessing can succeed in using their mornings as new opportunities.

## Endeavour is What Counts



**W**illiam II (1859-1941) became King of Prussia and Emperor of Germany on the death of his grandfather, William I in 1888. Intelligent but impetuous, he believed in military power. Yet, the military might that Germany developed during the reign of William II did not succeed in saving his empire from eclipse. In 1914 his support for Austria helped to precipitate a European war, and Germany's resulting defeat brought about his abdication. He retired to Doom in Holland, where he lived quietly until his death in 1941. His abdication and death in exile provide living proof of the fact that it is not military might that keeps kings in power. Rather, it is the ability to correctly interpret national and international circumstances, and deal with them effectively.

Shortly before the outbreak of World War I, William II went on an official visit to Switzerland, where he was profoundly impressed by the discipline displayed by the Swiss army. While inspecting a military parade, he jokingly said to one of the soldiers: "Germany's army is twice the size of yours. If the Germans were to attack your country, what would you do?" "Sir, we would have

to fire twice instead of once,” came the Swiss soldier’s grave reply.

If the Swiss soldier was able to reply with such confidence and equanimity, it was because of a certain resoluteness of character backed up by military expertise.

Whether faced by numerical superiority or by other daunting factors, it is clear that a combination of expertise and determination can win the day. Some are fortunate enough to be innately resolute, but those who are lacking in this quality can achieve much by prayer. Prayer firms one up in one’s resolutions and sees one through to the achievement of ultimate goals. Expertise, on the other hand, is something which must be acquired by struggle, effort and the constant application of intelligence. No problems should be regarded as insuperable, no situation so adverse that it cannot be turned to good account. It is endeavour which matters, and it should be constantly borne in mind that no amount of protest, whether social or political, can make up for a lack of endeavour.

The secret of all success is patience. The cause of all failure is impatience.

## No Frustration



**A**braham Lincoln, the builder of present-day America, is famous in the political history of the country. But Lincoln did not achieve this success all at once. To

reach this level of success he had to surmount countless hurdles. Lincoln's life has been described as follows.

This man failed in business in 1831. He was defeated in politics in 1832. He failed once again in business in 1834. He had a nervous breakdown in 1841. In 1843 he hoped to receive his party's nomination for Congress. But this did not happen. He ran for the Senate and lost in 1855; he was defeated again in 1858. A hopeless loser, some said. But Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States in 1860. He knew how to accept defeat—as a temporary phase.

Success very often follows failure. In this world, success is only for the person who has the courage to accept defeat. Everything has a price tag and acceptance of failure is the real price of success. Those who do not pay this price will never be able to reach the destination of success in this world.

There is only one way to success in this world, and that is thinking of failure as something temporary. Without losing one's patience, one should devote oneself to converting one's failure into success.

## Failure: An Analysis



**W**hen India's 62 Olympic participants returned to New Delhi at the end of the Los Angeles Olympic Games (July-August 1984) there was a complete absence of any fanfare at the airport for the home-coming of the

athletes. The reason was obvious. They had not won a single medal, neither gold, nor silver nor bronze.

A sportsman who was about to retire from the field of athletics expressed his views to *The Times of India* (August 17, 1985) on the reasons for this abysmal failure: “A lack of scientific and systematic training was the main reason for India’s poor showing. We did our best, but that, unfortunately, was not good enough. The training of Indian teams should start well before an event and not just three months beforehand.”

This statement is applicable not only to sports, but to all competitive spheres of existence.

In a world where everyone is jockeying for position, one has to be fully prepared for whatever venture is to be embarked upon. If one is caught unprepared, the outcome is inevitable—failure!

Whatever preparation we make, should be thorough and completely in accord with the demands of the times we live in. If we fail to keep pace with modernity, we can never hope for success in a society which is so preoccupied with innovation. We must at all times keep a finger on the throbbing pulse of life so that we may remain attuned to the imperatives of the day. It is only in this way that we shall understand exactly in what ways we need to be prepared, and can take the appropriate steps while the time is ripe.



## Failure Turned to Success



**W**hen a fire devastated Spencer's, Madras city's most famous store, it quickly restored its business by putting up a signboard reading: "You can bet ours is the only store today with nothing but fresh stock."

This is an example by which one can see that if a person does not lose his grip on things, even after suffering a disaster, he can achieve success once again by using his failure to pave the way for greater achievements. The above store in Madras was devastated by a fire. Apparently it was total calamity. But the shop-owner used this incident as a new means to his success.

When a shop is burnt down, it means that the old stock in the shop no longer exists. Now the shopkeeper immediately bought new products for his shop, knowing that customers prefer to buy fresh products. When he made this announcement, people immediately believed him, because they knew that this shop had been destroyed by fire. They believed that the stock was new, and rushed into the shop to buy things. His loss was soon compensated for thanks to the many purchases made by customers.

In this world, new opportunities lie hidden and waiting to be discovered even when a person's entire resources are burnt to ashes. No one should ever lose hope. He should immediately use his brains to find the

new path to take. He will find that where his previous opportunity has ended, a better opportunity is there, ready and waiting for him. Where one phase of history seems to have come to an end, another better phase of history begins to take shape.

## Going Against the Age



In one of the posh colonies of the city there was once a man who roamed about, calling out: “Utensil polisher, utensil polisher!”

Although he kept moving about along all the streets of the colony, nobody paid him any attention. He could not find any work in this vicinity.

Was it a matter of prejudice, or did people not pay any attention to the man because of their vanity or arrogance or pride? Perhaps the man thought like this. An illiterate man, he had inherited this job from his forefathers and remained engaged in this work for forty years. With this background his mind had become so conditioned to this job that he could not think of anything else.

But one who is aware of the world beyond his profession, who can think beyond his own sphere, can easily understand why he did not get work in this colony. The simple reason was that this sort of work was done only on utensils of copper or brass, while the residents of the colony were now using utensils of stainless steel.

Now this being so, how could he get work polishing copper and brass utensils?

To achieve success in the present times, one should acknowledge the need of the times. One should be aware of present day requirements. Anyone who does not grasp this will meet with the same fate as the above mentioned man. He will keep roaming about among people who use stainless steel utensils and will find no customers. He will accuse others of discrimination for his failure and blame others for his ignorance of the changing requirements of the times.

People who want to succeed in life, regardless of which profession they have chosen, must keep abreast of the times. In this age of science, where merit counts, to do otherwise is to descend the slippery slope to failure.

## Through Fire and Water



**A**s Dale Carnegie—the most pragmatic of modern thinkers—once remarked: “The most important thing in life is not to capitalize on your gains. Any fool can do that: The really important thing is to profit from your losses. That requires intelligence; and it makes the difference between a man of sense and a fool.”

It is seldom in this world that aspirants to wealth and fame meet with nothing but success throughout their careers. Many are the trials and tribulations through which they must pass before they can savour the fruits

of their endeavours. The people who ultimately succeed are those who are undaunted by adverse circumstances, who waste no time in lamenting over their disadvantages and who give their attention instead to overcoming whatever difficulties they face.

The idea of profiting from one's losses may seem paradoxical, but it is something definitely worth aiming at, whether it be the welfare of an individual, a group or a nation which is at stake. It is not, after all, the one who has never had to face any kind of difficulties, who is necessarily the most successful in life. The truly successful person is one who can carry his ambitions into effect no matter what hurdles he has to surmount. He is the one who will arrive at his destination no matter what obstacles are strewn in his path. He is the one who is prepared to battle through fire and water right to the very end.

## Look Before You Leap



**T**o make a daring escape from a jail in Sydney, Australia, a prisoner climbed underneath the hood of a truck. At the truck's next stop, he clambered out and found himself in the yard of another prison 6.5 kilometers from the first one (United Press International).

The obsession with the thought of managing an escape from the prison's miserable life so dominated his

mind that when he saw a truck passing by, he took it for granted that it would release him from his confinement.

This goes to show how the steps we take sometimes lead us further away from our destination, or simply lead us nowhere at all.

To turn life's journey into a success, a traveler must find the right conveyance. In this world, everyone requires some means or conveyance, so to speak, to achieve his goal. But it is necessary for one to inquire into the destination before one boards the conveyance. Leaps at random do not serve the purpose. If one misses the right 'conveyance' one is likely to meet the fate of the Australian prisoner—arriving at one jail from another.

## Learning on One's Own



**W**hen you want a tailor to stitch a coat for you, he takes your measurements. The purpose of this is to understand the structure of your body, so that the coat will fit without being either loose or tight. But knowing only a few measured parts is not enough for him to stitch a well-tailored or standard coat. A tailor master has to know a lot more besides the measurements of certain parts of the body. This is because each body is shaped differently, and as such, cannot be measured with total accuracy. The tailor can only succeed in stitching a

good coat if he is prepared to use his judgment about the unmeasured parts.

This also applies to understanding the other affairs of life whether it relates to managing a house or managing a religious mission. Whether it concerns the reform of a community or the communication of the message of religion, one can achieve success only when one has such devoted workers at one's disposal who have the ability to understand things without being told every detail about them, those who have the ability to find a satisfying answer in every situation.

Those who only know the facts which are recorded in a list and think that where the list ends, their work also ends, can never achieve success, for circumstances can arise about which they have no prior information. Such situations call for people to understand things without having them explained to them. If they are not insightful enough, they should trust those who are responsible and are in charge of affairs, and listen to their advice.

Regardless of the mission if one does not acknowledge this reality, one will become disaffected for no good reason. Without knowing the truth of the matter, one will form a one-sided opinion, however unrealistic that might be, and then will resentfully distance oneself from the mission.

To make a mission successful, it requires a deep level of understanding and a big heart. Those who do not possess such qualities will eventually find themselves

relegated to the dustbin of history, no matter how highly they may esteem themselves.

## A Simple Formula for Success



A man who had opened a shop selling locks used to see people passing by his shop every day in the market. They just glanced at his shop and moved on. One day something happened which gave him a lesson on the secret of business. He went to a cloth market to buy some clothes. There were many shops close to one another but he was undecided as to which shop he should enter. In the meanwhile a shopkeeper who saw him passing by his shop called out, “Sir, come inside and have a closer look.” This encouraged him to enter the shop.

He realized from this experience that when customers come to the market they are unfamiliar with it. They just pass by the shops, for they can’t decide which shop to enter. But when someone sympathetically calls them inside his shop, that helps them decide.

Such a person will most probably succeed in getting customers inside his shop. Many people do not have an exact idea of what they want to buy. If you learn this secret, it will only take average intelligence for you to be able to have plenty of customers. This may be called customer-friendly behaviour. The seller of locks began to follow this principle in his shop. He used to

sit in the doorway of his shop and would read the facial expressions of the passer-by. His vision became so sharp that he was able to tell from customers' faces whether they were looking for a lock or were just walking along there for some other purpose. When he guessed someone was a customer for a lock or any other lock-related item, he would immediately invite him to step inside his shop. In this way, his business suddenly began making good progress. A time came when he became the best salesman in the market.

The secret of success lies in following simple rules. People generally think that success is something which can be achieved only by doing something great, or by utilizing great means or resources. But you can reach the peak of success just by your polite words, hard work, making good use of your limited resources and patiently doing your work, with perseverance. None of these things are too big or difficult for the common man to achieve.

## Sharing and Cooperation



**W**hen a certain tyre company in a western country was on the point of launching its goods on the market, it ran an advertising campaign which promised that whoever demonstrated a real defect in their tyres would win a prize of \$ 50,000. People naturally flocked to buy them. If they found a defect, well and good.



If not, they had nothing to lose, because they would actually have purchased a good set of tyres.

The company did then actually receive a number of complaints of which 20 per cent appeared to be genuine. The complainants were duly sent invitations to a seminar, their travelling expenses to be paid for by the company. This gave them the opportunity to air their respective views as to how the tyres could be improved. A concrete proposal was finally arrived at by consensus and rewards were distributed at the closure of the seminar.

By taking into consideration the suggestions of its customers, the company was able to improve upon the quality of the original tyre. Although the cost had to be increased considerably, the tyres sold far outnumbered previous sales. Formerly the tyres had been manufactured according to the company's own formula, while the improved version was based on the opinions and suggestions of the consumers as well. It was only natural that people should regard the product as being far superior to the original one.

In this world, all people—not just manufacturers and consumers—are dependent upon one another. It is, therefore, only sharing and cooperation which can lead to success in this life. It is the principle of give-and-take which should be most active, like two-way traffic. A system of benefits can never be a one-way thing. Reciprocity should be the order of the day.

## Fighting Off Despair



A few years ago, a group of passengers who were waiting at the Modi railway station were horrified to see a young man (later identified as Ramesh Dhobi from Maharashtra) kneel down and stretch his arms across the railway line in the path of a fast-approaching train. It was too late for anyone to come to his assistance, and the inevitable happened—his arms were severed from his body. The passengers were fortunately able to rush him to the hospital so that his life at least would be saved. When the doctors had attended to him and he was finally in a fit condition to speak, they asked him what had caused him to do such a gruesome thing to himself. It seems that he had been so haunted by the spectre of continuing unemployment, that he had come to the railway station in a fit of severe depression. The repeated disappointments of never being able to find work had ultimately made him feel that his life was worthless. *The Times of India* of August 14, 1981, records him as saying, “My hands are useless as I can find no work, and living is shameful without work.”

I had no sooner finished reading this newspaper report than I walked a friend who also seemed to be in a state of mental distress. But, as it turned out, his was the opposite problem. Now that he was no longer able to farm his lands himself, he needed a responsible person to take charge of his fields and their irrigation.

His fields were fertile and numerous, and he had a good water supply from a canal, but there had to be someone who would effectively take over all the work from him. But up till then, no one had come forward to take on this responsibility. My friend lamented the fact that he would lose the one lakh of rupees a year that the produce of his farm brought him, if his fields had perforce to lie fallow. What he had come to tell me, in effect, was that he had decided to sell his lands.

It is one of the great ironies of life that there are hundreds and thousands of unemployed, and yet many jobs just seem to go abegging. There is, in fact, no dearth of work in this world. The unemployed must simply cultivate two all-important qualities—diligence and perseverance—and they will find that jobs come to seek them out. One thing they must never do is give in to despair. If they do, they merely reduce themselves to the same crippled state—mentally, if not physically—as poor Ramesh Dhobi from Maharashtra.

## Having One's Share



**T**he Bata Shoe Company is named after the family which founded it. Originally, the Bata family lived in Czechoslovakia, where they began manufacturing shoes as far back as 1620. Thomas Bata senior, father of the present proprietor, established a shoe factory for the first time in 1925. His career was cut short though

when his private plane lost its bearings in heavy fog and crashed, burning him to death on the spot. On his father's death, Thomas Bata junior became president of Bata Ltd.

The Bata Shoe Company, the largest shoe manufacturer in the world, is now doing business in 114 different countries, having sold 315 million pairs of shoes throughout the world in 1982. Its greatest volume of business is in Canada, with India ranking second. It has 90,000 direct employees not to mention thousands of indirect employees.

Mr. Thomas Bata junior visited India for the fortieth time in 1983. On this occasion, a correspondent asked him what he thought was the most important factor in his success. Mr. Bata replied, "In manufacturing shoes which range from cheap to costly, we take special care to fulfil the actual needs of our consumers. We do, in fact, look after our customers better than anyone else."

What we learn from the Bata Shoe Company's success is that if you want to take, you should try to give. It is only in giving to others that we can have our share too.

## Success through Hard Work



Joseph Conrad, born in 1857 in the Polish town of Berdiczew, was orphaned in infancy, and since he had neither a formal education nor the backing of relatives, he had to support himself by working as a seaman. He

travelled to various countries, at last reaching England in 1886, where he became a British citizen.

During his stay in Britain, (Conrad died there in 1924), he worked extremely hard to learn English, and his progress was such that he succeeded in becoming a novelist. His books, acclaimed as works of great literary merit, were eventually accepted as English classics, and, amongst the living writers of his time, he was ranked second only to Thomas Hardy.

An Englishman once told me that his English teacher in college had instructed him to “read Joseph Conrad, because he writes beautiful English.” Yet, according to the publisher of his book, Lord Jim, “he made his name as a stylist in English, although he was unable to speak a word of the language before he was nineteen.” The critical seal of approval has been set all the more firmly on his books by their having become permanent additions to the curricula of British universities.

Conrad’s career as a writer is a clear indication that anything can be achieved by hard work. One may be born poor, but that does not mean that one cannot educate oneself, or—as in Conrad’s case—master a foreign language as if it were one’s own. In spite of being insignificant in the eyes of the world, it is quite possible, by dint of hard work, to write something so great that the best minds of our civilization feel compelled to read it.

## Interest and Involvement in Work



A full time employee in a busy institution was simultaneously a sub-editor of an English newspaper. He diligently undertook all the responsibilities of his regular job and also the editorial tasks of the newspaper. Someone asked him, “How do you find the time?” He answered: “Time is nothing but a function of interests.”

It is a fact that to bring any task to completion, time is not the most important factor. What is of real importance is interest. It is a person’s interest, which stimulates him to complete any piece of work. With interest and dedication, an individual will get through more work in less time.

Once someone received an offer of work in a foreign country. For foreign travel one has to complete many legal procedures and he had only three weeks at his disposal to get his passport. To travel at the given time appeared to be very difficult. But he pursued the matter day and night, and then on the very day he was due to fly to his destination, he received his passport.

The same kind of opportunity presented itself to another man. He lived in a village far from the city, so he wrote a letter to a relative who lived in the city: “It is difficult for me to come to the city, so would you please arrange my passport and the money spent on this will be my responsibility.” The relative replied, “O.K.,

I will try". The man just trusted his relative. He had full two months at his disposal but still none of the arrangements could be made and he was unable to fly abroad. At last he received his relative's message saying that for some reason he had not been able to oblige him. This message reached him when the time for him to depart was already over.

The former had applied himself to getting his passport with great interest, so he completed the task in spite of having very little time. The latter did not take any interest, as it was not for himself. That is why trivial things became an excuse for him to do nothing in spite of his having a long time in which to help his relative.

When a person takes an interest in his work, his mind becomes fully dedicated to accomplishing his purpose. He is ready to make any sacrifice to this end. The result is that he completes the task in a matter of days which, another person who has no interest in it, is unable to do in weeks and months.

## Plan the Best Use of Your Resources



**D**elivering a speech at a public function in New Delhi, Admiral S.N. Kohli, former Navy chief said, "Success is wholly a thing of the mind. When one has the will, one will find ways and means to achieve one's goals, but in its absence one will simply say, 'It's just not possible.'" As an example he cited an incident which had taken

place during the Indo-Pak War of December 1971. An attack had to be made on Karachi harbour and the only war planes the Indian navy had were designed basically for defensive roles. The attack was nevertheless carried out quite successfully—much to the astonishment of the enemy. This success was obviously not the result of superior equipment but of the available equipment having been “intelligently used”.

The principle so aptly illustrated by Admiral Kohli applies to individuals and nations alike. Success comes to those who firstly have the determination to achieve their ends and who, secondly, put the resources at their disposal to the best use. In the process much care, intelligence, ingenuity and farsightedness are vital. Conversely, failure often results not so much from a lack of resources as from available resources having been under-exploited or wrongly used. Take the case of the villager who decided to build himself a brick house in his village. Unmindful of the fact that his resources were severely limited, he dug the foundations of his modest dwelling so deep that people began to wonder if it was a house he was building or a fortress. Friends began to express their doubts about his ability to complete it, and unluckily for him, they proved to be right. So much building material had been used in the base that there was little left for construction above ground-level. With great difficulty, he managed to build the walls, but then there was nothing left to roof them over with. Finally, he managed somehow or the other to provide a roof for just one room so that he could start living in it, but the rest of the rooms remained forever open to



the sky. Had he not squandered precious materials in the foundation, he would have had enough material to complete his house. As it was, his bad planning had left him almost without a roof over his head.

Success comes to those who have the determination to achieve their goals and put the resources they have at their disposal to the best possible use.

## Having the Courage to Err



Two friends, Ahmed and Iqbal, both lived in the same city. Ahmed was a graduate while Iqbal's education had not gone beyond the eighth standard. It happened once that Iqbal had to go to an office on business and was accompanied by his friend, Ahmed. When the business had been transacted, and they were both coming out of the office, Ahmed said to Iqbal, "You were speaking such horrible English! With such bad English, I would never have dared to open my mouth!" Iqbal was not the slightest bit disconcerted at being so roundly criticized. Exuding confidence, he said, "Speak wrong English so that you can speak correct English!" Then he added, "Although you are a graduate and I have not got any degrees, you will soon find that I will start speaking in English and you will never be able to do so."

That was twenty years ago. Now Iqbal's words have come true. Ahmed is still at the stage he was twenty years ago, but, Iqbal, astonishingly, has made great progress.

He now speaks English quite fluently and no one can fault him on grammar and pronunciation.

This daring attitude on the part of Iqbal certainly proved to be of great advantage to him for, at the outset of his career, he just owned a small shop in the city, whereas today, he runs a big factory. His maxim: “Speak wrong English so that you can speak correct English,” had obviously in his case been the key to success. This principle on which Iqbal operated has a bearing not only on language but on all practical concerns in life. In the present world, the potentially successful are those who are possessed with courage, who advance fearlessly and take the initiative in the face of risks. Only those who have the courage to err will accomplish anything worthwhile in life. Those who are afraid of making mistakes will be left behind in the race of life, and their ultimate goals will recede further and further into the distance.

## “Peccavi”



When Sir Charles Napier conquered Sindh in 1843, his victory message to the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, bore the single word, Peccavi.

A strange message indeed, considering that there had been no prior understanding between the military officer and the Governor General as to what this word was supposed to imply. But the Governor General was

not at a loss even for a moment. He recognized the word as a Latin expression meaning “I have sinned”, and immediately gathered that Napier had conquered Sindh.

Although this message may have been so worded more in order to be facetious than to keep the information secret, it illustrates how necessary it is for there to be capable and quick-thinking people in charge of affairs whenever a situation calls for delicacy and finesse. It is not always that a communication can be explicit to the point of being blunt, and it is very often essential to be able to read between the lines. This calls for great alertness, a sharpening of the intelligence and, above all, the widest possible education.

One of the realities of life is that everything cannot be immediately made explicit. There are many things which have to be surmised without their being explained. Those who have the capability to learn such a lesson are the ones, who engage in worthwhile tasks. Those who are lacking in this capability will only indulge in irrelevant activities and then when they see that there is no result of their activities, they will blame others for it, bear grudges and make complaints against others.

The most fortunate person in this world is one who has such colleagues or friends who know the language of silence, who will hear unspoken words and who will sense the meaning of unspoken words. Only those who read between the lines and learn from this can be successful in this world.

## An Ordinary Step



A doctor once started up a clinic and in a very short time he became successful. He had a very special way of immediately greeting all of his patients. Generally, doctors expect their patients to greet them, but in this instance the doctor himself started to greet his patients. This kind of behaviour ingratiated him with his patients. Soon his clinic became popular, even though he did not have an MBBS degree. He was only a Registered Medical Practitioner.

A shopkeeper once noticed that if a customer had many bank notes he would generally give the oldest notes to the shopkeeper and would keep his clean notes for himself. He realized that customers like clean new notes. He decided to use this psychology on his customers. He made it a point to return only good currency notes to his customers.

The shopkeeper had all types of notes in his desk, but when he gave the customers change, he would give them only new notes, separating out all the dirty notes. In order to collect clean notes, he deposited all his notes in the bank and exchanged them for small currency notes. He used to mix clean and dirty notes in his cash register so that customers could see that the shopkeeper was giving them change in clean notes by first separating them from all the dirty notes.

Obviously, there was nothing extraordinary about this step on the part of the shopkeeper but his method impressed customers a lot, for they got the impression that their shopkeeper cared for them. Slowly, he impressed his customers with this ordinary practice. His shop became so popular that it was always full of customers.

The secret of success lies in your developing some distinctive quality which demonstrates that you are the well-wisher of others and this can be done in any ordinary way, even just by speaking a few kind of words or by exchanging dirty notes for good, clean notes.

## Problems and Opportunities



“Starve the problems, feed the opportunities,” so goes an old saying. Simple words, but imbued with great profundity. One who understands the message of these words and acts accordingly will find the doors of success opening to him, while one who lives in ignorance of them will find all doors closed to him.

The crux of the matter is that an individual in this world is forever caught between problems and opportunities. But whatever problems he has to contend with, there are always golden opportunities, not too far away, just waiting to be availed of. This is true equally of individuals, communities and nations—all find themselves in the same situation.

And it is here that people are being tested in this world. One person, seeing only the problems that confront him becomes caught up in them. Such a person is bound to miss his opportunities. On the other hand, one who concentrates on using the opportunities available to him as best he can will not find much time to worry about the problems afflicting him. If one 'feeds' problems, inevitably one is going to 'starve' opportunities, while if it is opportunities that one 'feeds', it will be the problems that are left 'hungry'. To make the most of opportunities, one has to make light of problems.

Experience shows that, far from helping anyone, becoming caught up in problems just leads to gloominess and depression and from the practical point of view is a waste of time. It is better to concentrate on making the best use of one's opportunities. Not only will new avenues open before one, but the problems that so afflicted one will gradually pale into insignificance.

## A Lesson from a Tiger



Jim Corbett, after whom a famous national park in India has been named, was an expert on the nature of tigers. He once wrote: "No tiger attacks a human being unless provoked." People who live in jungle areas where tigers roam will confirm the truth of Jim Corbett's words. There is usually no cause for concern when one

comes face to face with a tiger. Unless it is provoked—or harbours deep-rooted suspicion of human beings—the beast will ignore one and continue on its way.

And how does this suspicion form in some tigers? Tigers are by nature not ill-disposed towards human beings. Only very few of them can be called man-eaters, and even they are not born as such. They become man-eaters, not through any fault of their own, but through the folly of human beings. Usually it is inexperienced hunters who do the damage. They shoot at a beast, wounding but not killing it. A tiger injured in this manner becomes man's enemy. Wherever it sees a human being, it attacks and kills. The same is true of most beasts of prey. They only attack man when they have already been wounded by him.

This fact from the world of nature holds deep significance for man. It shows that one should not presuppose that anyone—not even the most savage of people—is one's enemy. If that is how one looks upon others, one will in return be treated as an enemy. If one does not view others with animosity, others will not see you as an enemy either.

The second lesson is that one should not take measures against anyone without sufficient preparation. If the measures that one takes are indecisive, they are sure to be counter-productive. The other party will only become further provoked, and there will be a heightening of tension between the two.

Everyone has certain needs and desires in this world, which they set about fulfilling. The secret of life is not

to stand in a person's way. If one does not make oneself a target for another's vengeance, but lets everyone continue pursuing his own goal in life, then one is not going to find one's own path blocked by others. One will find people so absorbed in minding their own business that they have no time to interfere with that of others.

## The Importance of the Foundation



**T**he construction of a house starts from its foundation. Even if an engineer wants to build a skyscraper, he has to start with its foundation. To start from the base, in other words, means to accept the reality of where a person is standing and think deeply to find the point from where he can start his journey. We are not the only entities in this world. Apart from us there is nature, which functions by its own natural laws. Then there are other people who have their aims and each one of them wants to achieve his own goals. In this situation, it is necessary for us to acknowledge realities and, proceeding on the basis of those realities, we should try to attain our objectives.

The greatest key to success in life is the acknowledgement of reality. One who acknowledges reality gives proof that he is aware of his 'pluses' as well as his 'minuses'.

This awareness tells him what is good for him and what is bad for him. He knows the difference between



beginning and end. He knows from where he has to take his first step and the destination where he wants to establish himself.

Acknowledgement is not an act of cowardice. It is in fact, an act of bravery. Acknowledgement is not humiliation. It merits rather a higher degree of respect.

One who does not acknowledge reality lives in a world of illusion. Contrary to this, one who acknowledges reality gives proof that he has come out of the world of illusion and is living in the real world. He can look at things in their actual form.

To grasp things in their real sense is the beginning of wisdom. Only one who possesses the ability to do so will be able to achieve success, whereas one who does not possess this ability will hardly be able even to begin his journey and even if he does manage to begin his journey, he will not be able to proceed with it. He will remain stuck along the way. He will never be able to reach his destination.

## Winning Over Others' Confidence



The director of a renowned institution had occasion to place an order for the printing of five thousand copies of a particular book. When the copies reached the institution, the owner of the printing press received a telephone call from the director of the institution demanding that he come and meet him immediately.

The moment the owner of the press reached the institution, the director stormed in and vented his anger on him. He said to him, showing him a few printed copies: "Look how badly they are cut!" The owner of the press inspected the books and found that the cutting was actually skewed and because of this, one angle of the book was out of shape. He looked at the copies but remained silent. On the other hand, the director went on displaying his anger. At last when the director was done, the owner of the press said quite sincerely: "Why are you so upset? It's my loss and I should be the one to be upset."

"What do you mean? How is it your loss?"

"It is obvious that I cannot give you the book in this condition. I will take these books away and print new copies for you. It is my responsibility. I have to give you proper work, no matter how much of a loss I may suffer." The director's tone changed as soon as he heard the owner of the press talk like this. The same person who had been expostulating angrily now became sympathetic, simply because the owner acknowledged his mistake. The director had not been expecting such an attitude. But when he saw that the owner of the press was not only acknowledging his fault but was also ready to compensate for it, it was natural that he should be impressed.

Changing his tone, he said, "No, you need not suffer so much of a loss." When the press owner saw that the director had become sympathetic he said, "There is a solution to this. Please give me a few copies of the book, I will try to mend them and if I succeed, perhaps

reprinting will not be necessary.” The director said: “Please do whatever you can.” The owner returned later with ten copies of the book, having carefully cut the corners of the book again. The director was pleased with the result. He said: “This is perfect. Please mend all the books in the same way.”

The press owner said, “A mistake which is an inch in the customer’s eye, I am ready to consider as a foot.” Such a procedure is very important if success is to be achieved in any business. By satisfying the customer, you can have him agree to anything. The press owner added: “In fact my thinking is that if I make a mistake and it comes to my notice, I must myself inform the customer that I have made a mistake and be ready to compensate for it any way he wishes.” The result is that the customer is won over, and without any inconvenience the matter is resolved.

## Admitting One’s Fault



Once when a professor of Urdu language was taking a poetry class, he came across a phrase in the textbook which was printed as follows: “The beloved shall comb her hair with *panja-e-sil*.”

The professor explained “*panja-e-sil*” as “the hands of the grinding stone”. That is, the hair of the beloved will be properly combed by the *panja-e-sil* opening all the knots. Students were confused. Because even after

the professor's explanation, the meaning of the phrase was unclear. All he had done was paraphrase the poetic words in prose form. Meanwhile an intelligent student of the class stood up and said:

“Sir, may I say something?”

“Yes.”

“Sir, this might be a printing mistake. I think this is not “*panja-e-sil*” but rather it is “*panja-eshal*”, which means “lifeless hands of the comb”. A comb resembles the fingers of a human being. Being a lifeless thing, the poet has called it “*panja-eshal*” (lifeless hand). The poet laments that his fingers could not comb the beloved's locks, while the comb, which is lifeless, is lucky enough to have found an opportunity to comb the beloved's hair beautifully.” After this explanation by the student, all students in the class became happy. They realized that the phrase which was incomprehensible even after the professor's explanation became comprehensible. But the professor did not admit his ignorance, he immediately said: “Right, right. There is no difference between “*panja-e-sil* and *panja-eshal*.”

If one does not accept the fault even after it is laid bare, he only seeks to prove that he is greater while the reality is of lesser importance. But the truth is quite the opposite. What in effect happens is that the person only belittles himself.

## A Business Secret



There are many restaurants in the neighbourhood where I live. I have been passing by the area for the last ten years and it is very obvious that only one out of all these restaurants has been consistently doing good business. The others are still in the same condition they were in ten years ago. I asked the owner of the successful restaurant what the secret of his success was. “Very simple,” he replied, “Where other restaurants buy their supplies by the kilo, I buy them in bulk. Every time I have to buy anything I go through the whole market and buy goods at the minimum rate. Due to the large quantity of goods I buy and the making of cash payments, I get good discounts.” Then he said, smiling, “Gain has to be made from the market and not from the customer.”

Usually, shopkeepers believe that to charge the maximum amount from the customer is good business. This is just exploitation and those shopkeepers who get a bad name for exploitation can't expect customers to patronize their shops. This is the reason for the failure of shopkeepers of this kind. The best way of doing business is that, at the time of purchasing goods, you should try to get them at the lowest price, so that you make a higher profit, even after selling at a low cost to the customer. This rule is workable for any business. In every business, a shopkeeper buys goods from

somewhere which he sells to his customers. Whether this purchasing is done in one phase or in many phases, it will always have many sides to it. Usually, to save himself from hard work, a shopkeeper tries to meet his needs by taking some shortcuts. But if more effort is put in, the same commodity can be bought at a lower price.

This obviates the customer being charged more due to the shopkeeper having avoided doing any hard work.

An ordinary shopkeeper always tries to make up for his unwillingness to work hard by charging the customer more. But this way of operating does not take the business person towards great success. The best way of doing business is to sell things to the customer at very reasonable prices and try to cut costs in the phase prior to the sale of goods to the customer. Profit making should be done more from the market and less from the customers.

## Super Performers



**A** book published in America in 1986, entitled *Peak Performers*, makes a study of the lives of a number of individuals in modern America who have played a heroic role in life. One point which the writer especially emphasizes is that a great mission can trigger in a person the powerful urge to superior effort which ultimately leads him to exceptional achievement.

America sent its first manned spacecraft to land on the moon in 1967. The launching of the rocket had been the result of the combined effort of a large number of experts who had been engaged to work for this mission. One member of this team, a computer programmer, said that something extraordinary began to happen as the work got under way. Thousands of ordinary men and women, who were working to bring the space programme to fruition, had all of a sudden been transformed into super achievers. They had started performing with an efficiency that they had never in their whole lives been able to muster.

Within the short period of 18 months, all of the work had been accomplished with exceptional rapidity.

“Want to know why we’re doing so well?” he asked. Pointing to the pale moon barely visible in the eastern sky he said, “People have been dreaming about going there for thousands of years. And we’re going to do it.”

It is an undeniable truth that what inspires an individual more than anything is to have a great mission before him. That is what arouses a person’s hidden potential and makes him capable of all manner of sacrifices. It makes him, in short, a peak performer.

A person who is satisfied no longer strives, doesn’t dream, and doesn’t create. And if we are dominated by fear, we will achieve nothing.

## Exceeding Expectations



Lee Iacocca was born in 1924 to very poor parents who, in search of employment migrated to America from Italy. Iacocca worked hard for his education and obtained his masters degree in engineering. After completing his studies he got a job in the Ford Company. He continuously received promotions right up to being the president of the Ford Company. He subsequently developed differences with Henry Ford and in consequence had to leave the Ford Company in 1978.

Iacocca was then appointed as the President of another company—the Chrysler Corporation. This company was bankrupt at that time. Iacocca worked very hard for three years and managed to turn the company around. In fact, he now says with pride: “I am the company.” In his autobiography, he writes of many important things to be observed and many precious experiences in the successful running of an enterprise. One of these is as follows: “The key to success is not information. It is people. And the kind of people I look for to fill top management spots are the eager beavers. These are the guys who try to do more than they are expected to.” (*The Times of India*, September 22, 1985)

In carrying out any task, exceeding expectations is a sure sign of a sincere and educated person. Those who



try to work in this way are bound to achieve a success even greater than their own hopes would lead them to expect.

## The Price of Success



Once a student's guardian complained to the school principal that the school syllabus was so lengthy that the students would have to spend too much of their time studying it. The principal replied: "The solution to this problem is very easy. You can prepare a brief syllabus. In reality, the time factor depends upon what standard you want in the student." Nature takes a hundred years to grow an oak tree. But it takes only six months to grow a vegetable like a cucumber. If you want a low standard of education, a few years of learning will be enough. But a high standard of education requires spending much more time on studies.

This is the rule for all of life's issues. Only a very little progress can be achieved with the minimum of effort. But if you want to achieve greater success, you must work hard. Just a little effort is not likely to bring you any great success.

Mr. Harold Sherman makes the same point: Every worthwhile accomplishment has a price tag on it: how much are you willing to pay in hard work and sacrifice along with the patience, faith and endurance to obtain it?

In the market one gets only what one has paid for. Likewise, every promotion, all progress, every success have their price, and one will achieve only that success or progress for which one has worked hard, neither more nor less.

## To Achieve Something Big



**A**n English poet once said: “The one who wants to achieve something big is busy in his work when common people are fast asleep.”

This means that real achievers do not work only at normal times but are also busy even when others, free from their work, are taking rest. He works more than the common run of the people. This is why he achieves greater success than others. It is a reality that great success is always the result of great effort.

It was once pointed out to C.V. Raman, the famous Indian scientist who was awarded a Nobel Prize, that the credit for all those important discoveries which scientists have made should not go to the scientists, because most discoveries are made by chance. Dr. Raman answered: “Yes, but this kind of chance happens only to the scientists.”

For example, discoveries concerning electricity often happen while the scientist is conducting research in his laboratory. During research something lights up and then the scientist starts investigating. This shows

that although new discoveries happen all of a sudden, this occurs only to one who is continuously engaged in investigation and research. If a person is sitting idle, this kind of good fortune will never come to him.

The same is true of all other kinds of success in life. Greater success comes more often to a person while he is engaged in his work, working hard day and night. Then suddenly an opportunity arises and he makes advances by availing of it there and then. This opportunity arrives suddenly without any prior notice. Anyone who works at day and remains indolent at night will be unable to avail of any opportunity which presents itself at night. In the same way, one who works at night and remains indolent during the day will be unable to avail of any opportunity which presents itself in the daytime. Great success is always attained after a great struggle. There is no other way to achieve great success.

## Overcoming Arduous Situations



**A**n incident I heard a long time ago is an excellent example of successful person. A twelve-year old boy came running home one evening hoping for something to eat. He was ravenously hungry. His mother looked at him sadly. “I’ve nothing to give you,” she said. “There’s not a thing in the house to eat, and I’ve no money to buy food.” She began to shed tears of despair. Her husband was a poor man—a daily labourer—and when

days passed and he could not find work, it meant that everyone went hungry. The young boy thought for a moment, then asked his mother if she didn't even have twenty-five paise. "I do," she said, "but what can you buy for a whole family with just twenty-five paise?" Her son told her not to worry and begged her to give him her last coin. Too weary and hopeless even to argue with him, she handed it over and he rushed outside with a look of determination on his face. He collected a bucket of drinking water and a glass on the way out, then bought a piece of ice from a nearby stall and cooled the water with it. Then he made straight for a cinema queue where people were standing in a line, sweating, waiting to buy their tickets. He started walking up and down the line shouting, 'Water! Cold Water!' and soon attracted the crowd's attention. People gratefully began buying his glasses of cold water. Some kind souls even paid him more than he asked for. With part of his earnings he bought more ice, and went back and sold more glasses of cold water. He kept this up indefatigably until the queue had disappeared. By this time he had managed to earn fifteen rupees, with which he went home triumphantly to his mother.

From then on, he started selling something or the other every day. During the day he studied hard at school and in the evening he would go out and do his best to make money. He kept this up for ten long years, somehow managing to study while he met the household expenses.

Now he has completed his education. Although employed on a monthly salary of Rs. 850, he is still

continuing with his side business in the evening, and, thanks to his hard-earned money, has now even been able to rebuild his house. His neighbours, friends and relatives respect him and his parents bless him.

Difficult circumstances can be used as a spur to success, provided that such arduous and trying periods in one's life inspire in one a new sense of determination and one is not overwhelmed by a sense of frustration. The really important thing in life is to make a proper start. When an individual is willing to start his journey from the right point, every step amounts to making progress. Nothing then can stop him from reaching his goal. It only takes "twenty-five paise" to start your journey—something which is surely possible for all of us. Such a journey cannot lead anywhere but to success.

## Shaping One's Own Personality



God created wood but He did not build boats. He placed iron in the earth but He did not mould it into the form of the machine. He created aluminium but He did not undertake the task of utilizing it to build ships. What is the reason? The reason is that God wants man to perform this second phase work. On the one hand, God created all kinds of raw materials and, on the other hand, He endowed man with the reason and intelligence to make use of them. Now God desires that man should shape the raw materials into machines;

unmoulded matter should be converted into moulded matter.

This is how natural resources are pressed into the service of building civilization. Exactly the same is required of man. God gave man the best form or personality. At the level of nature, He gave him the best form of existence. However, this human personality in its initial form was a kind of raw material. Now man himself has to take that God-given thing and shape it into a new form. It is like writing his own blank pages of nature. This is the test of man. It is on the success or failure of this test that his future depends. It is required of man that he mould consciousness into realization; that he convert his feelings into the remembrance of God; that his actions should have divine characteristics. He should make himself God's servant to the ultimate extent.

Once a living creature has emerged from his mother's womb, it is up to him to shape his own personality. Man is born with the power of speech. Now it is up to him to make use of this power of speech to bring about the acknowledgement of the truth.

No one should misuse this power of speech in the denial of the truth. Man is endowed with fine capabilities as his birthright. There are some who make use of these capabilities for immediate gain, unlike others who devote these capabilities to achieving noble ends. Everyone exists on nature's bounty. Some grow thorns while others grow orchids or flowers.

## The Fire of Revenge



**A** famous British psychologist once observed: “Hatred is like an acid. It can do more damage to the container in which it is stored than to the object on which it is poured.”

If you nurse hatred for someone with the intent of harming him, a fire of hatred will burn into your heart which will flare up day in and day out. But it will affect the other person only if you are successful in harming him in some material sense. But it is very rare for a person to successfully harm another in the way that he desires. The plans of one who acts under the influence of hatred turn out in most cases to be unsuccessful.

In every situation one of two punishments is destined for one who is consumed by hatred. The fire of revenge will burn in him until he is successful in having his revenge, but after that his conscience will bear down upon him. By killing his enemy he kills his own peace of mind forever. In his passion for revenge, his human feelings are buried, but, after achieving success over his enemy, his passion for revenge cools down and then his conscience awakens and pricks him throughout his life for having done something very wrong.

A criminal defense lawyer once told me that he often met criminals charged with murder. But the murderers he had seen throughout his life were such as had guilty

feelings. In a fit of passion they had committed murder but when their passion was spent, their hearts heaped blame on them. This is the state of every criminal. No criminal is able to free himself from his own feelings. After the crime every criminal's mind becomes a psychological prison in which he suffers endlessly. The reality is that negative activity is directed primarily, but unwittingly, against oneself. The result of negative activity is that whether or not it reaches others, its harm reaches oneself.

To develop a positive personality one should be completely free of hatred against others.

## No Double Standards



Sir Richard Dobson is a successful industrialist in England. He was the Chairman of British American Tobacco for thirty one years, and Chairman of British Leyland for one year. British Leyland is well known for manufacturing double decker buses. Sir Richard Dobson lives in Marchmont Road, Richmond, a posh area of London. This is a very quiet road and only billionaires reside there. Once a road in the Richmond area needed repair, so that bus number 65 which plied on this road, had to be diverted temporarily to Marchmont Road. Sir Richard Dobson, with his very grand house, disliked the bus passing in front of his home and he particularly objected to its emitting exhaust fumes. The Guardian



quotes his letter of protest which he had published in a London newspaper:

“The smell of diesel fuel alone is an affront and a health hazard.”

Sir Richard Dobson ran businesses based on cigarettes and buses. Both emit smoke and pollute the air. Throughout, he was engaged in the smoke business. He did not realize the harmful effect of this smoke when it was reaching others' houses but when it happened to reach his house, he became greatly agitated. Everyone sets different standards for himself and for others and, without any doubt that is the greatest weakness of human beings.

A high moral character requires that we set the same standards for ourselves as we do for others.

## Living with Contentment



**A** man who once started his life in an ordinary job now owns a large business. He once said in a meeting: “When I was an employee earning Rs. 200, I considered myself a man worth Rs. 100. Now when my business has reached 2 crores, then too I consider myself a man worth 1 crore.” This is what is known in religion as contentment. This contentment relates to individual as well as community matters.

This statement, which a man once made in all sincerity, is the greatest secret of success in life. In most

situations, one remains unsuccessful only because one thinks of himself as being of greater worth than he actually is. He aspires to more than his talent would warrant, and not being content with less, chases after more. If a man were to follow the principles of the above-mentioned businessman, he would never face failure. One who is able to spend but acts thriftily will never suffer from any economic crisis.

It will never happen that a man who has the strength to run but still walks slowly, will get tired and sit down in the middle of his journey. One who treats his opponent with patience where he is in a position to harm him, will never face defeat from his opponent. It was once observed that interest in the short term can be sacrificed for long term gain.

This is undoubtedly a very important principle of success. But only those can follow this principle who take action after thinking of the consequences and not those who react impulsively.

## The Asset that Wins Affection



**L**ord William Bentinck, British Governor General in India from 1828 to 1835, has the dubious distinction of being remembered as the man who ordered the destruction of the Taj Mahal in Agra—an order which, fortunately, he was never able to have carried out. This was revealed at the turn of the century by the

then Viceroy, Lord Curzon. The East India Company had been going through hard times, Lord Curzon explained, and it was suggested to Lord Bentinck that a sale of the Taj would fetch Rs. 100,000—enough to extricate the company from its financial crisis. News of the Company's intentions circulated, and there was stiff opposition to such a move. This infuriated Lord Bentinck, who then went one step further and gave orders for the total destruction of the Taj. Opposition to the imperial command stepped up, with both Hindus and Muslims joining in one massive voice of protest. The danger that a full-scale rebellion would ensue if the Taj was destroyed prompted the Governor General's advisers to persuade Lord Bentinck to withdraw the order.

It was not the people who saved the Taj Mahal. It was its own beauty which saved it. If the Taj Mahal had not been beautiful, it would not have won such overwhelming support; Hindus and Muslims would not have united behind it to foil the British government's designs.

Had the constructors of the Taj Mahal been able to reproduce in themselves the beauty which they produced so perfectly in their work of construction, they too would have been protected by their own quality. Just as virtue in a thing wins support for its cause, so virtue in humans has the same effect. It wins appreciation from strangers. It even wins friends from the enemy camp.

The Taj Mahal's virtue lies in its beauty, while a human being's beauty lies in a virtuous nature. But a person's beauty should not be like that of a snake—a

beautiful appearance marred by a venomous sting. How do people “sting”? By presenting a challenge to others’ political and economic interests; by repeatedly resorting to violence in their dealings with others; by constantly alienating people with senseless, impulsive actions. Any virtue that one might have is cancelled out by such a “sting”, and prevents one from winning people’s affection.

It is the Taj Mahal’s silent beauty that has won people’s hearts. Who would have time for it if, in all its beauty, it tormented those who looked upon it?

## Initial Preparation



**A** term well-known to people in the textile industry is pre-treatment. Pre-treatment is the process which coarse cloth is put through so that it can be worked into a fine, finished product. Without pre-treatment, cloth is not suitable for further processing and cannot ever therefore have any fineness of texture.

For instance, cloth has to be dyed. But before the dye can be added, the cloth has to be cleaned. This cleaning is the “pre-treatment” for dyeing. If the cloth is not properly cleaned in preparation for dyeing, the colour will bleed. Besides, colour does not stand out on cloth which has not been thoroughly cleaned in advance. It is estimated that about 70% of the rejected cloth which comes through the mills of textile factories, has

been rendered faulty by the application of dye without adequate pre-treatment of the fabric.

Just as prior preparation is indispensable in the textile industry, so also is it essential in human affairs. We cannot expect our initiatives to reach a successful conclusion if we do not prepare the ground for them in advance. Any move made without sufficient preparation is doomed to failure, just as cloth which is dyed without having been pre-treated is doomed to join the reject pile.

Journalism, for example, cannot come into existence without industry. If one does not possess the know-how needed to handle sophisticated equipment, one will not be able to progress in the highly competitive world of journalism. It is not enough just to gather a team of reporters and put pen to paper; one must first have access to and a technical understanding of the machinery needed to convert reports into the columns of a newspaper.

The same is true in the political arena. If a party wishes to attract votes, it must first show itself to be united. How can a party which is itself in disarray expect others to join its ranks? The need for initial preparation makes itself felt in every walk of life—in private affairs as well as in public life. Those who seek to achieve high ideals, but do not wish to suffer the tedium of first doing extensive groundwork are building sandcastles which will never stand up to the test of time. Their ambitions are no more than flights of fantasy which will never get off the ground in this world of hard realities.

## The Result of Being Impatient



On January 15, 1986, an Indian Airlines flight took off from Mumbai for Delhi. But just fifteen minutes later, it landed back at the Mumbai airport. It had started half an hour late due to some technical issues, and when the airplane was in the sky, a passenger sent a note to the pilot, one Captain Bhatnagar, asking why the flight was late by half an hour?

The Captain called the passenger into the cockpit and tried to explain the reason for the delay. The passenger, dissatisfied with his explanation, punched him on the back and said: “I have seen pilots like you.” (*The Times of India*, January 16, 1986)

Captain Bhatnagar was naturally alarmed at this. He immediately turned the flight back and landed again at Mumbai airport. Then there was chaos that went on for quite a long time. At last the officers of Indian Airlines had to arrange for another pilot for the flight.

As a result the flight to Delhi was delayed by three hours. The passenger could not tolerate half an hour’s delay but the price he had to pay was that he was three hours late in reaching his destination. Moreover, the officers of the Indian Airlines set up a high level commission to investigate the matter. The said passenger could perhaps save himself from punishment, but still

he could not escape paying a price in terms of his own wasted time.

Impatience can have very negative consequences. It always pays to be patient.

It often happens that a person is under the impression that he is on track to achieve his goal, whereas in reality, he is headed towards non-achievement. He thinks he is fast approaching his desired destination whereas, as per the consequence of his approach, he is going further away from his goal.

## Staying Cool



The most delicate and dangerous part of space journeys is when the spacecraft returns to the earth's atmosphere. Take the case of the Apollo-8 spacecraft, for instance. Before the capsule touched down on December 27, 1968, it had to negotiate a precipitous return to the earth's atmosphere. Because of the earth's gravity—seven times that of outer space—the speed of the spacecraft soared, reaching an astronomical 39,000 kilometres per hour. Because of its extraordinary speed, the heat of the spacecraft rose to terrifying proportions. Air friction started heating up the space vessel as soon as it entered the earth's atmosphere. Soon it became literally red hot, reaching a temperature of 3,300 degrees Celsius.

No animal can survive at such a temperature. How

was it, then, that the three American astronauts aboard the craft were able to remain unaffected by the blazing inferno that had built up around them? The reason that they were able to return safely to earth was that the spacecraft in which they were traveling had been constructed in such a way that its interior would not be affected by the severity of conditions on the outside. In spite of the incredible heat on the outside, inside the craft the temperature was just 21 degrees Celsius. Imagine—3,300 degrees on the outside, 21 degrees on the inside!

This event out of the realm of space travel has an important lesson to teach us in our lives on earth. Time and again in life we run into highly charged situations. Outwardly, it seems impossible to go on. Under such conditions, there is only one way to survive, and that is by not letting oneself be inwardly affected by one's outward situation; by suppressing one's emotions and keeping one's feelings under control. Only then will one be able to maintain one's inward cool. One will not be able to survive life's crises if one lets one's inward condition become as highly charged as one's outward situation. But if one does indeed remain inwardly calm and composed, one will be able to survive the heat of the external circumstances, and safely reach one's destination.

If hate and anger are directed against one from the outside, one must not let such feelings penetrate to one's inner being; instead one should cultivate feelings of forgiveness in one's own heart. If the whole world wishes one evil, one should still only have good feelings



for others. There is no other way of succeeding in life. If one adopts the same feelings as one's outside environment, the challenges of life are sure to become more than one can bear.

## Keeping Calm in the Face of Adversity



**W**hen Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) escaped from the island of Elba after his first term of imprisonment, he was accompanied only by a small group of loyal soldiers. Once dethroned, he now again aspired to the throne of France. But in the very first encounter, he found himself face to face with 20,000 French soldiers. Napoleon, although considered one of the most courageous leaders the world has known, avoided a direct confrontation with his opponents. He did not make the mistake of foolishly ignoring his own military weakness. At the crucial moment, when he and his little band of men stood face to face with this enormous army, he stepped forward, completely unarmed and stood calmly before his enemies. Then with great composure he unbuttoned his coat and bared his chest. In a voice now charged with emotion he addressed the great throng of soldiers—many of whom had served under him in the past: “Which one of you is willing to fire at the naked chest of his father?” The battlefield rang with shouts of ‘No one!’ Almost all of the soldiers belonging to the enemy camp rushed to Napoleon’s side. So that despite his initial lack of

military resources, Napoleon emerged victorious and once more ascended the throne of France. If, in the destitute state he was in at that time, he had attempted to do battle with the French army, he would surely have been slaughtered on that very battlefield.

Whatever an individual's resources, if he has to deal effectively with a situation, he must be able to make a proper assessment of it. And this he will not be able to do if he panics in the face of danger. It is only if he does not lose his nerve and keeps his mind open to what is practical that he will be able to overcome the obstacles in his path. Inevitably, his success depends upon his being able to make a well-considered choice of whatever material and mental resources are available to him and then putting them to proper use. History abounds in instances of the weak overcoming the strong, simply by strategic deployments of resources. The reason for such success is not far to seek: often the enemy is not as strong as he appears to be. Everyone has his Achilles heel. It is just a question of finding it and then ruthlessly exploiting it. Just as Napoleon exploited the French troops' old and sentimental loyalty to himself—that being his only mainstay—so can ordinary individuals take advantage of their enemies' vulnerability in order to gain their point without the kind of confrontation which could be disastrous to both sides.

## Responding to Criticism



There is a saying in Hindi: “One who can bear the blows of words is my guru, and I am a slave to him.” In other words, a man of this mettle is fit to be a great leader.

There is an English saying which runs:

“Sticks and stones may break my bones,  
But names can never hurt me.”

Although words do not actually break one’s bones, the blows they deliver are the hardest of all to bear.

Mr. J. Krishnamurti (1895-1986), a well-known Indian thinker, who died at the age of 91, spoke fluent English and attracted large numbers of the English-speaking public to his lectures. Abroad too, his speeches were listened to with great interest. Even so, Krishnamurti often bewailed the fact that his words fell on deaf ears and that no one was actually willing to put them into practice. In a speech at Madras, he said that for fifty years he had been travelling the world over, putting his thoughts across to people, but that no one paid any heed to them. “Will you now change yourselves?” he asked the gathering, then, answering for them, he said, “After having heard me, you will go back and continue to live as you have been living up till now.” At this, an infuriated member of the audience stood up and said, “You keep on saying this, year after year, that we do not

follow you! Then why on earth do you keep on repeating yourself?" Very softly, Krishnamurti replied, "Sir, have you ever asked a rose why it blooms?"

On being criticized, one often becomes incensed, but one never gains anything by letting oneself get into such a state. This is because, in anger, one is not able to control oneself, and will express one's negative feelings in terms which ill-befit the occasion. Conversely, when one's emotions are kept well under control, one's answers will be so tellingly appropriate as to silence all haranguers.

## The Positive Side of Danger and Insecurity



In the jungle, one set of animals perpetually goes in fear of another set. That is why they are always on the alert, this being necessary for their very survival. In this way their natural potential is developed and there is no danger of their faculties atrophying or going into a decline. It is because of this that the great parks meant as animal sanctuaries provide artificially for danger. For example, in the deer park, a tiger or a wolf will be allowed to enter, so that the deer retain the alertness they need for survival. In this way they are always kept active and lively, and retain their natural vivacity.

The same is true of human beings. A human being

has infinite potential, but it remains hidden under normal circumstances, and is awakened only in the face of challenge. This phenomenon is observable everywhere. Families who have access to every comfort and luxury become dull and lifeless. On the other hand, those families who are beset with difficulties are more geared to making use of their potential.

It is in the hard school of life that an individual receives the best of training and learns perseverance. The alertness which emerges from insecure conditions is one of the most valuable qualities of the human personality.

History shows that those who have achieved the heights of success are the ones who have really had to face the pressure of circumstances. This law of nature applies equally to individuals as well as to nations.

## Accepting Defeat



In 1831, an American citizen went into business. In 1832 his business failed, so he entered the field of politics, but was no more successful in that sphere. He reverted to business in 1834, and was again a failure.

In 1841, he had a nervous breakdown. Once recovered, he again entered the political arena, in the hope that his party would nominate him as a candidate for Congress. His hopes were dashed, however, when his name failed to appear in the list of candidates. The

first chance he had to run for the Senate was in 1855, but he was defeated in the election. In 1858, he once again stood in the congressional elections, and once again lost.

The name of this repeatedly unsuccessful person was Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). So great were his services to his country that he is now known as the architect of modern America.

How did Abraham Lincoln manage to gain such a great reputation in American political and national history? How did he win his way to such a high position? According to Dr. Norman Vincent Peal, the secret behind his success was that “he knew how to accept defeat.”

The great secret of life is realism, and there is no form of realism greater than accepting defeat. To do so is to acknowledge the fact that, far from being ahead of others, one is behind them. In other words, it is to know where one stands in life. Once defeat is accepted, one is immediately in a position to start life’s journey afresh, for such a journey can only commence from where one actually is; it cannot start from a point that one has not yet reached.

## After Being Broken



The atom is the final unit of matter, just as the individual is the final unit of society. If one succeeds

in breaking an atom, one does not destroy it but converts it rather into a greater force, known as atomic energy. Matter is energy in a solid form and energy is matter in a dispersed form. When the atoms of matter are broken and converted into atomic energy, they are transformed into a force much more potent than in their material form.

A locomotive consumes two tons of coal in seventy miles; a motorcar uses up a gallon of petrol every twenty to forty miles. But when uranium weighing just twelve pounds is converted into atomic energy, it is able to convey a high-speed rocket on a 40,000 mile journey into space. That is how great the difference is between ordinary material energy and atomic energy.

The same is true of that unit of society known as man. When man is 'broken,' his horizons expand vastly. Just as breakage does not destroy matter, so defeat does not ruin man. Matter increases in strength when broken up. So man, when defeated, gains new, increased strength.

When man is beset by defeat, his inner forces are released. His senses are aroused. His concealed strength comes to the fore and he sets about redressing his setback. Spurred on with new resolve and determination, he devotes himself to the task of regaining what has been lost. An irresistible spirit arises within him. Nothing can arrest his advance. Like a river flowing to the sea, he surmounts every obstacle in the relentless pursuit of his goal.

The occurrence of an atomic explosion in matter turns it into a vastly more powerful substance. The

human personality, too, contains huge, latent potential. This potential bursts out into the open when there is an eruption within one's soul. It breaks free when some shattering disaster afflicts one. The strings that have held one down are torn apart and begin to vibrate to the tune of life.

## Unwavering Self-Sacrifice



A certain Mr. Suresh Kamdar once went to visit one of his relatives in a Kolkata hospital. Another patient arrived there at that time to undergo an operation and was in immediate need of a blood transfusion. It was a matter of life and death for this patient. Mr. Kamdar felt sympathetic towards this patient and learning that his blood group was the same as his own, A positive, he donated his blood. A life was saved that day.

After this experience at Kolkata, when he was just 29 years, he decided to make blood donations a permanent option. For 24 years after that, he voluntarily donated blood approximately a hundred times. He has been awarded medals of distinction by the Red Cross society. (*The Times of India*, December 2, 1985)

There are always people who temporarily inspired, make blood donations. But such people are very rare who donate blood on a regular basis, and keep on doing so till the end of their lives.

These people are apparently doing some trivial work.



But they are the ones who are doing great work. These are the people who create history. These are the people who take the nation forward through their sacrifice. If the first type of sacrifice creates leaders, the second type of sacrifice creates a nation. If the first type of sacrifice builds the present, the second type of sacrifice builds the future.

A large house cannot suddenly rise up on its foundation. It takes years for it to be built. For years on end, brick is laid upon brick and only then can the structure which rises up be called a house. A pond does not suddenly fill up. Only if it rains consistently over a long period does it come into existence. The same is true also of human beings. In human life, big ventures only take shape when many individuals are ready to combine their small efforts over a long period of time. Human success is the result not of short-term initiatives, but of patience and perseverance.

## Talking Tall



**A** group of sightseers going around Delhi zoo in the winter of 1985, looked at various animals in turn then paused in admiration before a great rarity—a solitary white lion which was pacing up and down outside its den. “This is the only white lion left in the whole world!” exclaimed a member of the group: “You see, the Maharajah of Rewa owned two white lions,

both of which he handed over to the Indian government after Independence. One of them died, and we are now looking at the one which is left—the sole survivor of its species!”

If this gentleman had cared to walk a little further, he would have seen a board attached to the white lion’s cage on which the zoo authorities had given detailed information, namely, that 69 white lions still exist in the world today, 25 of which are to be found in India alone. Yet, just a few yards away there was a gentleman who claimed that there was just one white lion left in the whole world, and that was the one in the Delhi zoo.

How ignorant people can be of established facts, and yet how keenly they feel the urge to expound their views as if there were nothing in the world that they did not know. Before holding forth on a subject, one should make a thorough study of it, for opinions based on inadequate research are bound to mislead the unwary. Empty utterances may impress the ill-informed, but to the knowledgeable, intelligent listener, they are simply a proclamation of the speaker’s ignorance.

Sadly, it is often the greatest of ignoramuses who make the weightiest of pronouncements.

## The Virtues of Dependability



In 1984 during a visit to Europe, Habib Bhai from Hyderabad purchased a camera from a shop at

Lausanne in Switzerland, at a cost of about Indian rupees 5000. Before long he realized he had made a mistake. He could have bought it in Saudi Arabia much cheaper—for about Rs. 3000, and he had been planning to visit Saudi Arabia on his way back to India. He decided to return the camera, but was at a loss to know what he should say to the shopkeeper. Still, he could not resist the idea of going to the shop and trying his luck. He went up to the saleswoman at the counter and asked her for a refund on the camera. Much to his astonishment, the lady did not even ask him why he wanted to return it. All she asked was: “Do you want the money in Indian or American currency?” She handed him a slip to take over to another counter where he would receive his money back. The money was immediately refunded as if it made no difference to the shopkeepers whether they had money or goods.

The reason that the camera was taken back without demur was that the shopkeepers were sure that before long another customer would come along and buy it. Their commodity was of a dependable quality: if one person did not require it, another would.

## The Bigger the Better



In his book, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, first published in 1948, Dale Carnegie mentions that when he started writing it, he offered a two hundred-dollar

prize for the most helpful and inspiring true story on “How I Conquered Worry.” A story written along these lines was sent in by a Mr. C.R. Burton, one of the most significant parts of which we reproduce below:

I lost my mother when I was nine years old, my father when I was twelve. We were haunted by the fear of being called orphans and treated as orphans. Then Mr. and Mrs. Loftin took me to live with them on their farm. Mr. Loftin told me I could stay there ‘as long as I wanted’. I started going to school. The other children picked on me and poked fun at my big nose and said I was dumb and called me an ‘orphan brat.’ I was hurt so badly that I wanted to fight them but, Mr. Loftin, the farmer who had taken me in, said to me: ‘Always remember that it takes a bigger man to walk away from a fight than it does to stay and fight.’

What is meant here by ‘bigger’? In this context it has nothing to do with being taller or stronger, but signifies greater-hearted, broader minded, and more able than a ‘smaller man’ to sustain injury or insult without losing one’s composure. One’s ‘bigness’ here has to do not with hardihood, but with moral courage.

## No Acknowledgement



**A** family of New Delhi received a telegram. Its title was: ‘Nani expired’.

This means nani (grandmother) has died. After

reading this telegram all the members of the family became distressed. The family set out for the place where nani lived, from where the telegram was sent. When these people reached the destination, distressed, and after spending a good amount of money, they found there that nani was very much alive.

They found out that the real title of the telegram was 'Nani Reached'. But due to the mistake of the clerk it got changed to 'Nani Expired'. (*The Times of India*, December 6, 1983)

The telegram office was informed about this grave error. But the response of this was as printed in these words of the newspaper:

The P&T department has not yet accepted the charge of inefficiency, regrets only the inconvenience, if any. (*The Times of India*, December 7, 1985)

The above example is not only the example of the department of telegram. In fact, in the present world, it is true of most of the people. "I made a mistake" is only a sentence of four words but it is difficult in the present world to find even four people who may utter this line. The only words that exist in the dictionary of the people are "You are at fault". Their dictionary is empty with the words "I am at fault". People do not accept their own fault at any cost, even at the cost of truth. Therefore in trying not to acknowledge their single mistake they continue to commit lots of mistakes.

The beginning of developing a positive personality is acknowledging one's mistakes.

## Mistake after Mistake



If a person does not accept that he has made a mistake, he very often tries to prove that others were at fault, and in that way covers up his own mistake.

There was once an unemployed man who had it suggested that he should start up some kind of business. The man said, "I don't have the necessary capital." The friend said that if somehow he could arrange ten thousand rupees he would lend him another ten thousand. Then with twenty thousand rupees he could start a small business. The man managed to arrange ten thousand rupees from somewhere. But when he asked his friend for the money he had promised, the friend made an excuse to back out of his promise. Then the friend started abusing the man, and on subsequent occasions tried to prove him to be in the wrong.

Why did the friend behave like this? The answer is that, consciously or unconsciously, he wanted to hold the other person responsible for not fulfilling his promise. He had an inner sense of guilt, yet he did not want to admit that he had failed to fulfil his promise. He wanted to give the impression that he had been ready to give the money, but that this man did not deserve that favour. That is, his own worthlessness was responsible for the lapse on his part. "His own incompetency deprived him of the money, and not my weakness." A

person will either accept his mistake or find faults with others.

Such a person thinks that he is being very clever whereas the reality is that he is only worsening his wrongdoing. To begin with, the friend was only guilty of not keeping his promise, but now he became guilty of levelling false accusations at another.

Whenever anyone makes a mistake, it is better for him to admit his culpability. The acceptance of a fault ends the matter at once. But when a person does not accept his faults, he will certainly find fault with others and will repeat his mistakes. A person satisfies himself either by accepting his own faults or proving that the other person was at fault. If he fails to do the former, he will certainly have to do the latter. But the latter would be worse for him than the former. Making a mistake is a human weakness. But falsely blaming others is a great crime. It is adding insult to injury.

## Supreme Success



In the present world there is no need to be a magician to become a super achiever in any field. A man of middling abilities can also prove himself through a superior performance. A man only requires to know the simple realities of life and avail of them. (*Reader's Digest*, October 1986)

An American author who did thorough research on

this, says: “In a study of 90 leaders in business, politics, sports and the arts, many spoke of “false starts” but never of “failure”. Disappointment leads to greater resolve. No matter how rough things get, super achievers always feel there are other avenues they can explore. They always have another idea to test.”

If you face failure and blame others for that failure, then the passion you have for hard work will cool down. All you will do is agitate and complain about others and you will not be able to do anything yourself. But if you hold yourself responsible for your failure, your mind will be engaged in making new strategies. You will become more active instead of becoming dull. When you struggle anew, you will achieve far greater success.

To develop your personality, accept the responsibility for your failure. If one strategy does not work, then try another. You will surely achieve superior success.

## Complaining against Others



There is no limit to complaints, not only in relation to the common man but they are made even against the Prophet. Even God is not exempt from this general practice. There are a number of people who regularly blame God for their problems. There is also an on-going debate in philosophical circles on the problem of evil. Certain self-styled thinkers claim that either God does not exist or, if He does exist, He is not by any means



perfect. If God had indeed been perfect, the problem of evil would not have existed.

Complaints are sometimes real, but very often they stem from the warped mentality of the person making the complaints. This is the reason the Quran says that whenever you hear anything against anyone, investigate it. By investigation it will become clear whether the statement is true or false.

There are different types of complaints, the least justifiable type being that which derives from the complainant's sense of personal inferiority. Most people like to think of themselves as being superior to others. But when they come across people whom God has made superior to them, they find it very difficult to accept the superiority of such people. Usually, one is unable to accept the fact that another person is superior to oneself. One cannot bear the diminution of one's own personal worth. That is something which is destructive of personality.

To maintain the semblance of one's superiority, one starts proving others to be at fault.

One falsely accuses others. One tries to humiliate others so as to bolster one's own sense of superiority. To develop a positive personality one should refrain from such actions.

# The Human Personality



If from a vessel containing water a single drop is found to be brackish, it means that all of the liquid is undrinkable. We need sample of only one drop to know with certainty what the rest will be like. Much the same is true of the human personality. It is like an overbrimming vessel which keeps on shedding drops for other people to savour, to find sweet or brackish as the case may be. Small instances of an individual's behaviour and quite short interludes in his company are generally sufficient to tell us what his overall personality is like—unless we are dealing with the greatest of dissemblers! A thoughtless remark, an unfair manoeuvre, a failure to give much-needed sympathy or support, a devious transaction—all these are the plain indicators, like those brackish drops of water from the larger vessel, which indicate the lack of integrity or callousness of the person you are dealing with.

The human personality has the same homogeneity as water. A single human weakness cannot therefore be considered in isolation, as if it were an exception. It has to be looked upon as being representative of the entire personality. If an individual proves unreliable in one matter, he is likely to evince the same unreliability in other matters; if he is guilty of untrustworthiness on one occasion, the chances are that this trait will show up time and time again. There is only one kind

of person who is an exception to that rule, and that is the one who subjects his own behaviour to constant re-appraisal, who is continually scrutinizing himself for weaknesses and faults and who, once having found such faults, wastes no time in rooting them out.

A person who has made a mistake can completely erase the marks of what is an unfortunate experience for others by admitting his mistake and begging forgiveness. Some people are pricked by their consciences, but do nothing to assuage the ruffled feelings of others, thinking that to do so would be sheer weakness and would mean a loss of face. Such people can never have healthy social relationships and can never win the respect of their fellow men. They do not realize that a person displays his true mettle when he sees his own wrong actions for what they are, and humbly asks forgiveness.

It is only he who has learned the art of moral introspection who will, in the long run, prove himself a person of unassailable integrity.

## Social Behaviour



A certain Mr. Ajwani was appointed as a sales representative for a large pharmaceuticals firm in Calcutta in 1965. His predecessor had been engaged at a monthly salary of Rs. 1,200 plus rail expenses. Mr. Ajwani made it clear that he would not accept less than Rs. 3,000 per month and that he would only agree to

travel by air when he had to visit other towns to take orders. The director who was interviewing him pointed out that, in terms of his total expenses, that was far too much. But Mr. Ajwani replied, "I will give you a far greater amount of work in return. Just give me a chance and you will see." There was something very engaging about the way he put his arguments, and finally he was appointed as the firm's representative for the area of Gujarat.

In those days a certain famous lady doctor had a flourishing practice in one of the towns of Gujarat, but although her clinic required great quantities of medicines, she refused point blank to meet pharmaceuticals agents if they were males. It had so happened that an agent had once used his knowledge of palmistry as a pretext to hold her hand and then kiss it. After this very disturbing affair, she had come to feel apprehensive about the behaviour of other agents, and refused to allow any of them even to enter her clinic.

When Mr. Ajwani was on the point of setting off on a business trip which was to take him to this very city, he told his director that he was confident that he would get orders from this lady doctor. The director told him not to be so naive, for everyone knew that this was a sheer impossibility. Her attitude was so well-known that none of the agents had the remotest hope of ever meeting her, far less of receiving orders from her.

Undaunted, Mr. Ajwani set off. In the plane, he found himself seated next to an elderly lady who appeared to be from a good family. They had hardly taken off when the old lady had a sudden fit of coughing. Some sputum

came into her mouth and she became quite flustered. Mr. Ajwani, seeing how awkward she felt, quickly placed his handkerchief in front of her mouth so that she could spit into it. Then he went to the bathroom and disposed of it. His thoughtfulness impressed her greatly and they chatted amicably for the rest of the flight. When the plane landed, they disembarked together, he helping her with her hand luggage. On coming out of the 'arrivals' lounge, she was distressed to discover that no car had come to receive her. Mr. Ajwani once again offered to be of help, saying that he could easily drop her at her home by taxi before going on to his hotel. She gratefully agreed to this and on reaching home, made a note of his name and address before saying goodbye to him.

Shortly afterwards, her daughter came back home and was surprised to find her mother there. She felt very sorry that the message about her arrival had never reached her, and that her mother had had no car to receive her and bring her home.

"You must have had difficulty in coming home alone," she said to her mother. "Not at all," the old lady replied, and, her eyes shining with gratitude, she told her the whole story of the kind gentleman she had met on the plane. The daughter was very favourably impressed and immediately telephoned Mr. Ajwani at his hotel to thank him and invite him to dinner. Mr. Ajwani promptly accepted her invitation, and, when they were introduced to each other, he discovered to his great surprise, that she was none other than the famous lady doctor who hated male agents. When she

learnt that Mr. Ajwani represented a pharmaceuticals company, she lost no time in placing a sizeable order with him, and added that since she always needed large quantities of medicines in her clinic, he could take it that she would be a regular customer and that he could keep sending her supplies every month. After dinner, he immediately made a trunk call to his boss from his hotel to give him the good news. His boss could hardly believe his ears and thought at first that he must be joking. But two days later, he thought differently when he received the cheque and the order signed by her. On a subsequent occasion when I had a chance to meet Mr. Ajwani, I asked him, just by the way, to give me some good business tips. He replied, "Polite conversation and gentlemanly behaviour." I added, "Yes, even when there appears to be no obvious advantage!"

Polite behaviour falls into two categories. One follows the conventional etiquette reserved for relatives, acquaintances and people with whom one's interests are associated. It is socially beneficial in that it makes relationships easier, smoother and more generally civilized. Even if such behaviour is sometimes artificial, it has a certain positive, social value. The other kind of good behaviour is completely natural, straight from the heart and based on genuine consideration for others. When it becomes a matter of habit with people from all walks of life, it is of inestimable value in all human relations. It is not, of course, something which one "switches on" in the hopes of immediate reward, but is rather something which eventually benefits one in

innumerable, often intangible, ways, simply because it makes for social harmony at its best.

## Consistent Character



**H**uman civilization is really just an extension of nature: man takes simple matter and converts it into buildings, machines, factories, industrial plants and all the other artifacts of the modern world. What enables him to do this is the fact that all things have been invested by nature with certain consistent properties. Once man has discovered these natural properties, he is able to use them to his own advantage. These properties make up the character of a thing; they are absolutely predictable: everything in nature can be relied upon to act in a certain way. All the advances of human civilization are the result of this predictability. Any change in the properties of basic matter, or unpredictability in its character, would reduce the whole of human civilization to ruins.

If one wants to build a bridge across a river, one uses steel because one knows one can rely on the strength of that metal to hold up the bridge; if steel turned out to be as soft as wax, the whole edifice would crash into the water. For the construction of buildings one uses bricks and cement, which one is sure will solidify into a firm structure; but if stones and cement were like a pile of sand, the buildings would collapse. One knows that when magnetic field and motion come together the

resultant movement of electrons will produce electricity; if this did not happen, the world would suddenly be submerged in darkness.

Such occurrences would mean that things had lost their specific character and the building of civilization would then become impossible. Human civilization can only be fashioned when the things that are essential to it do what is expected of them—while they maintain their basic character. What good would an ice-factory be, for instance, if the water that was put into it turned into steam instead of ice? How could cars and other machines be produced if the iron cast into furnaces refused to melt?

Just as the things which contribute to human civilization have to display certain properties for civilization to flourish, so also do the individuals who constitute human society have to do what is expected of them if society is to run smoothly. They too have to maintain a certain character. The worth of all material objects is dependent upon their reliability in performing the functions that are expected of them. In the same way, an individual's worth depends on his ability to maintain a consistent character under all sorts of conditions. There are certain attributes that constitute a human character; only if one displays these attributes can one be counted as a true human being.

If a person does not display the facets of human character that are expected of him, all one can say is that he has lost his human worth. A society made up of such people is doomed to unrest and discontent. Society is only as good as the individuals who constitute it. The



inevitable result of inconsistent and irregular character on the part of individuals, then, is instability in the society to which they belong.

The corruption of human society manifests itself when its members break their promises instead of keeping them; when they are petty instead of open-minded; when they are miserly instead of generous; when they think only of themselves instead of society as a whole; when they are vindictive instead of forgiving, rebellious instead of accommodating; when they vainly pursue their own interests instead of acknowledging the rights of others; when they seek to pull other people down instead of lending them a helping hand; when, in short, people fail to treat others as they would have others treat them.

A society will only prove to be strong if its members prove to be human beings in the real sense of the word, if they display the character that is expected of them as human beings. Where resolve is required, they should remain as solid as steel; where pliability is required, they should be as soft as running water. They should remain as still as stones when silence is expected of them and as firm as mountains when constancy is the order of the day. When strong initiatives are required, their enthusiasm should cascade like a torrent. It is such people, who speak and act as true human beings, who constitute a strong and stable human society.

Individuals of this nature are as indispensable to human society as commodities like petrol and steel are to human civilization. If the things that contribute to civilization did not do what was expected of them,

civilization as we know it could not survive; so if people were not to show consistency, reliability and predictability in their character, human society would crumble.

## Working on the Individual



A man was riding his bicycle one day when, all of a sudden, his brake jammed. Luckily, there was a cycle repair shop nearby, so he took his bike there to have it fixed. Thinking the mechanic would fix the brake at the point it was jammed at, the cyclist was surprised to see him tap away with a small hammer at a completely different place. Before he could even express his surprise, however, the mechanic handed the bike over. “That’s fixed. You can take it away now,” he said. And off the cyclist rode, with his bike once again running smoothly.

What was true of this bicycle is true also of human society. When there is something wrong with society, people usually jump to the conclusion that where the malaise lies, there also should lie the cure. But this is not the case. Usually, the root of the malaise is to be found in a different place, far away from the symptoms. Until the cause is removed, the malaise itself will not go away.

For instance, there could be a lack of solidarity in society. Society may be vitiated by an atmosphere of intrigue, with the result that its voice carries no weight

in the world. Having detected these symptoms, one who determines to right the ills of society might well think that the remedy would be to call meetings and conventions in order to bring people together, feed them emotional speeches and pass high sounding resolutions, and so on.

But this is not the way to cure society's ills. To do so, one has to work on the cause, not the symptoms, for usually one will find that while a problem seems to be afflicting one part of society, the solution lies elsewhere. If there is a lack of solidarity, for instance, the reason for this is surely the failure of individuals to stand together. It is the individual, then, who has to be worked on. Solidarity has to be reinstated as an ideal at the individual level before society can ever be blessed with cohesion. For it is a law of nature that for a tree to bear good fruit, it is the seed, not the fruit itself, that has to be improved. Similarly for human society to flourish, its individuals need to be worked on.

## The Need for Self-Appraisal



**W**illiam Blake once said: “Great things are done when men and mountains meet. This is not done by jostling in the street.”

This is quite true. It is a fact that to achieve some great goal, great acts are needed. It is only after scaling the heights of a mountain that one reaches the top. Just

raising slogans or making speeches at big gatherings does not mean that any great work can be accomplished.

In order to undertake any great work and bring it to its conclusion, it is necessary that we try to estimate and understand the situation thoroughly. It is necessary that we be willing to take stock of our resources and external possibilities and only then go ahead. We must fully grasp the fact that, when we begin our journey, we are going to confront many other travelers on our way.

Then we should also be willing to make every sacrifice that our cause entails; this may mean expenditure of time and money; it may mean the relinquishing of opinions or the suppression of emotions. Sometimes we have to reckon with others, and sometimes it is ourselves that we have to reckon with. There are times when we can walk and times when we can only stand still.

No great goal is ever realized without facing difficulties, without surmounting great obstacles. The entire process involves a great struggle. Activity that benefits the coming generations when we have passed away; which shapes our future; which changes the course of history—demands untiring struggle and infinite wisdom. Those who think that organizing processions and raising slogans is all that is called for are grossly underestimating the importance of the task at hand. Such actions serve only to worsen the situation. They cannot produce any enduring benefit for posterity.

## Know Your Shortcomings



**H**e was in his old age, but he had not married because he was in search of an ideal spouse. People asked him, “Throughout your life, you did not meet anyone who would become an ideal life partner?” He replied, “I happened to meet a woman who was ideal but the problem was that she too was in search of an ideal husband. And, unfortunately, by her standards I was not the ideal one.”

Generally people are expert at pointing out others’ inadequacies, and that is why they are unable to live with anyone. If a person recognizes his own inadequacy he will realize that he too is standing at the same place where he finds others standing. The acknowledgement of one’s own shortcomings develops humbleness and amiability. Contrary to this, if he can see only the inadequacy of others, he will become proud and arrogant, and it will become difficult for him to live with anyone.

The study of psychology tells us that all qualities cannot be found in a single individual. Each one of us has distinctive qualities. If a person has some good quality, he will also have some other qualities which stem from his original quality. For example, if a man is brave, he will also be resolute. If he is a gentleman, he will accordingly be humble. If he is sensitive, he will

become angry sooner than others. If he is intelligent he will have a critical attitude. If he is of a practical bent—more so than others—he will be lacking in mental acuity, and so on.

This being so, the best option is to ignore the weaker side of a particular person and concentrate on his brighter, stronger side, if we want to benefit from his abilities. This is the only way we can tap into another's qualities. Whether it be the relationship of wife and husband, owner and employee, or a relationship between shopkeeper and partner, everywhere there is a need to follow this principle. If we want to have a rose, we have to tolerate its thorns too. One who cannot tolerate thorns is not destined to possess roses.

It is a fact that a single person cannot on his own achieve anything of significance. To do great things, it is necessary to be able to draw upon the strengths of a number of people. This necessity introduced the concept of companies with joint capital. But the strivings of many people to complete a project is only possible if the individuals concerned have the virtues of patience, tolerance and broad-mindedness. They need to be lenient with each other, and not raise issues over trivial things. They should try to forget things which they do not like instead of constantly bringing them up. Idealism is a good thing but if the ideal is unachievable, the best thing to do is to be practical.

## Patience, Perseverance and Compassion



“Success is a matter of making cool decisions, without constant wavering and changing of the mind, acute observation, initiative, and unremitting attention to a vast number of seemingly insignificant details.”

The above statement would appear to be a sure-fire recipe for material success in a very large number of situations. As it happens, it is a formula evolved from the experience of Campbell Rogers, an expert in poultry keeping of international repute. But this unswerving devotion to taxing minutiae is not all that he advocates. He begins his now famous book, *Profitable Poultry-Keeping in India and the East* (D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., Bombay, 1959) with the notion that success in large-scale poultry farming is largely dependent upon one's temperament. He feels that one who does not love birds and animals can never build himself up in this profession. So that quite apart from patience, diligence, the ability to do without holidays and a keen eye for profit, one must also remain kind, humane, and filled with compassion for living creatures.

With this dimension added to the overall picture, it would be reasonable to say that he gives us a valuable formula, not only for material success, but also for useful, harmonious social living. Just as the successful

poultry man must give his attention to the habits and requirements of his birds, so also must the social being take into account the inclinations and compulsions of others and show his willingness to make concessions to them in the interests of maintaining the happiness and tranquility of society. Success in life is not just a matter of keeping one's nose to the grindstone and taking correct decisions about financial matters, but of understanding one's fellow men and according to them the kindness and respect which one would wish to have oneself.

## The Secret of Harmonious Living



A certain Muslim leader once wrote to the former Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, to complain of the prejudicial treatment of and injustice to the Muslim minority by the majority in India. He issued a warning that if this state of affairs was not remedied, his party would resort to *satyagraha*. In due course, he received a reply from Mrs. Gandhi, one sentence of which was of special significance: “No minority could survive if their neighbours of the majority were irritated.” (*Hindustan Times*, February 21, 1983)

If we consider this statement from an unbiased point of view, we shall have to concede that it not only presents an accurate picture of the prevalent conditions, but also offers a practical solution to the problem.



In today's brash, competitive world, it is inevitable that people have grievances against one another, feel jealous of others' success, envy others their material acquisitions and become consumed by feelings of anger and vengefulness whenever they have some grievance (real or imaginary) against others. There are few households whose even tenor of existence is not marred at some point or the other by such turbulent sentiments. But, for the greater part of the time, such feelings remain hidden, the daily domestic routine acting as a deterrent to their surfacing. However, when something out of the ordinary takes place, those submerged feelings come out into the open.

Peace in society is maintained at the cost of suppressing negative emotions, for the moment they surface, the result is general unrest.

This is an immutable reality of human co-existence. In this world of keen rivalry, no society, no family is exempt from it. This being so, the wisest course to adopt is to let people's ego lie dormant. All negativism should remain buried so that patience and tolerance may prevail. That is the great secret of a peaceful society.

A noted philosopher neatly summed up the attitude which should be generally adopted when he said, "Every man in this world should possess a huge graveyard where he can bury the faults of other people."

## A Practical Solution



“When one’s ego is touched,” an eminent psychologist once observed, “it turns into super-ego, and the result is breakdown.” Much the same thing was said some thirteen hundred years back by Umair ibn Habib ibn Hamashah. During his last days, this Companion of the Prophet Muhammad gave some advice to his grandson, Abu Jafar al-Khatmi, part of which was about patience: “One who does not bear with minor harm from a foolish person shall have to bear with major harm.”

The gist of both these remarks is the same, namely that the only way to avoid being harmed by others is to keep out of their firing line as much as possible, to keep as far away as one can from those who show themselves to be potentially harmful.

Every human being is born with an “ego”. More often than not, that ego is dormant. It is better to leave it sleeping, for the ego can be like a snake which, when aroused, will harm all within its reach.

It is a commonplace in any society for one to be put out, and even aggrieved, as a result of someone else’s foolishness or willful malice. Usually the best way of avoiding great harm from mischief-makers is to put up with their initial offensiveness, for, if one does not, one will set off a chain reaction in which things will go from

bad to worse. Instead of having to bear a relatively small injury, one will be subjected to much greater suffering. And if one has not been able to bear a pelting with stones, how will one fare when great rocks descend upon one's head?

## Social Solidarity



The world of nature is a world of order. How different is the world of man, where human affairs so often descend into chaos, because members of society flout those very principles which should bring order into their lives. Social living, if it is to be successful, should be regulated by laws which are as immutable as the laws of nature. These laws can be effective, however, only if man fully grasps the necessity to adhere to them. One must realize that society without order is like a factory without electricity. It simply will not work.

It should also be realized that the prevalence of certain virtues over their opposing vices is a great contributing factor in maintaining order. Generosity, broadmindedness, forgivingness and gentlemanly behaviour must respectively override miserliness, narrow-mindedness, vengefulness and meanness. Consideration for others must always be one's first response in any given situation, particularly when it concerns the keeping of confidences, for the disclosure of others' faults or secrets shows a mindless callousness

which breeds nothing but ill-will. Above all, promises must always be kept.

Certain traits of character are naturally supportive of social order. Knowing what a situation requires of one, whether it is a matter of conscience or discretion, is always conducive to harmonious living. Just knowing what to say, when to speak and when to remain silent are among the greatest social virtues. Knowing whether to adopt a hard or a soft attitude, whether to be firm or whether to be pliant is equally important.

People who understand these niceties of social coexistence, and put them into practice, are vital to the solidarity of a community; without them, order would degenerate into anarchy.

## Changing Times



**H**ave you ever watched Person A struggle to open a lock, passing through every emotional stage from mild impatience to blazing anger, then finally throwing away the key and picking up a large stone to smash the lock? At that moment, Person B arrives and says, “Try my key. That’s a new lock, you know. Your old key won’t fit.” Person A is by this time so overwrought that he cannot bring himself to do anything but stand back and watch Person B insert the key in the lock. It opens, of course, in an instant.

Person A is like all those people who do not care to

keep pace with the fast-changing world of the present day. They find themselves in altered situations, but persist in applying outdated formulae to them and never fail to become bewildered and irate when their old keys refuse to budge the new locks. They then proceed to waste their time and energy in venting their anger on these changed sets of circumstances which are not obligingly going to change back just to please them. They even allow their anger to reach such a pitch of intensity that they are prepared to smash whatever it is that no longer responds to their old keys. It is unfortunate that there is seldom a "Person B" standing by who will produce just the right key at the right moment.

People normally have to find such keys for themselves. But then it is not everyone who can find them, for their acquisition requires such strenuous efforts as few are willing to undertake. And before embarking on such a course, first of all people have to recognize this as a prerequisite of modern living.

But what do we still see all around us? Rabble-rousers on platforms making speeches, demanding reservations and exclusive treatment, with mountains of printed matter everywhere to echo their words.

They continue to inveigh against social prejudice and discriminatory practices, resorting to public demonstrations to reinforce their viewpoint. But applying outworn tactics to present evils and then expecting that in consequence all the good things of life will automatically fall into their laps, is little better than struggling senselessly to open new locks with old keys. They should be devoting their energies to serious efforts

at all levels to bring about social uplift, an improvement in creativity and the setting of examples in individual diligence.

## Non-Acknowledgment of Truth



Socrates said that if one were so skilled in repartee as to be quite invincible in argument, one could never be sympathetic to the poor.

The meaning of this statement is not immediately clear, for it is difficult to see the connection between skill in repartee and sympathy for the poor. But, on more careful analysis, we find that there is a deep-rooted relationship between the two. What it means is that only such a person can be sympathetic to the poor who knows how to acknowledge the truth, even when that truth pertains to the poor.

The following is an incident which very well illustrates the truth of this saying. A landowner sold his mango orchard to a gardener. When the trees began to bear fruit, they were buffeted by strong winds, which resulted in a heavy loss of fruit. Fearing that he would not get any return on his investment, because he would no doubt incur a loss on the sale of the fruits, the gardener took the fallen mangoes in a basket to the landlord and requested him to make some reduction in the price of the orchard in terms of the loss he anticipated.

At this the landlord became incensed, and asked him

if he hadn't known quite well beforehand that there was no high wall around the orchard to protect it from strong winds. The poor gardener, disheartened by these words, went quietly away.

A friend of the landlord, who was with him at the time, heard the entire conversation, and when the gardener had left, he said to the landlord, "How hard-hearted of you. You showed the poor man no mercy." The landlord replied, "You educated people probably think that one man is responsible for another, but, in actual fact, it is God alone who is the provider of sustenance. He does provide it to all regardless of the circumstances."

One hesitates to speak when confronted by the powerful. But in the presence of the weak there is no such feeling of constraint. What often happens is that one is so carried away by one's own loquacity that one fails to give due consideration to the actual matter in hand. One is less likely then to admit the truth of the matter, or to do justice to it.

## Handling Rough Situations



**Y**ou have probably seen manufacturers of glass frames scoring the surfaces of sheets of glass with a pen-like instrument, then neatly snapping them into two. The cutting edge of this tool is made up of small razor-edged diamonds. Even the huge drills used for boring through

hundreds of feet of rock strata in the search for minerals are fitted with diamond cutting edges. It is the extreme hardness of the diamond which makes these tools so effective.

The diamond is, in fact, the hardest known naturally-occurring substance. It cannot even be scratched. Put it in acid and there will be no effect. But there is another aspect to this wonderful stone. If it is heated to a very high temperature it will disappear—it will simply sublime into carbon dioxide, and if struck a sharp blow at exactly the right point, it will break asunder. You have only to look at diamond gemstones to see what exquisite, multi-faceted forms they can be given by jewelers, because, by studying the inner structure of the diamond, they know exactly where and how to break it.

Similarly, when we find ourselves in difficult situations, we should study them carefully, in the way that the jeweler studies his diamond. We should not approach them, carelessly, from the strongest point, but with circumspection, from the weakest. We should not adopt methods which are likely to gain poor results like aggressiveness or violence, for these only engender bitterness and obstinacy in others. We should resort to politeness and diplomacy—eschew harsh language in favour of gentleness and tact.

We should also consider that there are certain human beings who are known as “rough diamonds.” That is, on the outside they appear to be unattractive and without merit, whereas on the inside they are of great worth. To bring out their worth, so that their true value is apparent to society, it is pointless scratching at



the surface or using acid. If the upright human soul is to be revealed in all its beauty, it must be given the same delicate handling and treated with the same expertise as the master craftsman lavishes on a superb but fragile piece of jewelry.

## Thorough Investigation



Once on a visit to the city of Madinah, an Indian happened to come across an Arab, a Bedouin by appearance, one of whose hands had been amputated. Because it was the practice to cut off thieves' hands in Saudi Arabia, it immediately occurred to the Indian that this man must have been a thief. He felt hesitant, therefore, to meet him, but made an effort—perhaps out of pity, or curiosity, or both—and went forward to greet his Arab brother. He learnt in the course of his conversation with him, that the Arab belonged to a town called Yutma. He owned a big farm with 23 tube wells. The produce of his farm was daily brought to the city market in Madinah in large quantities. He further told his Indian brother that in 1948 he had joined the Palestinian war, where he had received six bullets in his arm. He had to be hospitalized for a long time. In spite of the doctors' best efforts, they failed to cure the wound. To save the arm, therefore, there was nothing for it but to amputate his hand.

This is an example which shows how jumping to

conclusions on the basis of inadequate information can cause great misunderstandings. Every member of society should feel it an obligation to exercise his judgment with extreme caution before arriving at his conclusions. Thorough investigation should always precede the forming and offering of opinions.

Where this is impossible—and this applies to everyone—the only alternative is to keep silent. Speech is silver but silence is golden.

## Encouraging the Young



Charles Darwin (1809-1882) having proved a mediocre student during his school days, was once scolded by his father as being “useless and only interested in hunting and catching mice with the help of dogs.” When his schooling was completed, his father had him admitted to a medical college, but there his performance was equally lacklustre and he failed to complete the course. He then decided to become a priest and joined Cambridge University to study theology. But even there he met with failure.

However, all was not lost, for during his stay at Cambridge, he developed the interest in natural history which was to bring him world renown. This topic was not included in the degree curriculum; it was only his keen personal interest which spurred him on to making a study of it. This, along with his interest in geology, led

him in turn to J.S. Henslow, a man of great learning and wide-ranging interests. Contact with him was the first step on the ladder to the peak of world learning.

It was at this time that the British government, having decided to conduct a coastal survey of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, sent off the naval ship 'Beagle' on a five-year voyage of research (1831-1836). By means of his personal influence, Professor Henslow secured Darwin's appointment on this ship as a naturalist, thus giving him the opportunity to explore the remoter regions of the world. At this juncture, Darwin could not on his own have obtained a position on the 'Beagle'. It was entirely thanks to Henslow's perception of his ability that it became possible for him to go off on this historic sea voyage.

During these five years Darwin had the opportunity to visit a number of different countries, sometimes on foot and sometimes on horseback, he penetrated far into their interiors. As he explored their jungles and climbed their mountains, he made a study of thousands of varieties of plants and animals, and collected samples to take back with him. He also collected the fossils of various animals which had been preserved intact underground.

The observations he made during his travels helped him to establish certain theories about the different species of animals. The most important was the theory that, although animals differ from each other as species, they have certain features in common, such as their adaptation to their environment. It was this initial

observation which, after detailed research, took the shape of Darwin's theory of evolution.

There is a lesson to be learnt from Darwin's life in that it shows how elders' appreciation and encouragement of young people's talents can act as a great spur to their progress and ultimate success. In any society where the eminent display such sentiments towards struggling individuals of obvious merit, it is society as a whole which will be the beneficiary. But where elders are uninterested in sterling human qualities and are willing to listen only to sycophants, the talents of highly endowed individuals will be left to wither away for want of encouragement. A society composed of such elders will never scale the heights of true progress.

There is another incident in Darwin's life which is quite admirable in the example that it sets. It seems that he wrote down his views on natural selection in 1852 and in 1858. While his own theories were yet to be published, he received a letter from Alfred Wallace outlining an unpublished article of his which, in substance, was identical with Darwin's own work. Darwin could have responded by immediately publishing his own article in order to claim the credit for being the first to propound this theory, but he refrained from doing so. Instead, he decided to present Wallace's and his own views in a joint article to the Linnean Society of London. He felt that, presented in this way, his theory would have a much better impact. On June 20, 1858, the theory of evolution was, therefore, presented in the form of a combined article before an assembly of London's leading intellectuals. It immediately became a topic of

great scientific importance. What no doubt hastened its acceptance was Darwin's willingness to forego his own personal glory in favour of contributing to a joint effort. The reward he desired was not recognition of his own personal merits but the general acceptance of this strange new theory. Such self-abnegation is an extremely rare quality, but that is the stuff of which great societies are made.

## Group Loyalty



“**A** fisherman once told me that one doesn't need a cover for a crab basket. If one of the crabs starts climbing up the side of the basket, the others will reach up and pull it back down” (Charles Allen, *The Miracle of Love*)

The nature of the crab has been bestowed upon it by God and the ways of the crab are indeed divine ways. It is through such examples as this that God conveys to mankind how social life should be organized, for unity is one of its most important elements. The best way to establish this unity is that which God has ordained in the world of crabs. That is to say that the moment an individual shows signs of deviation from the norm, it is the duty of the rest of society to bring him back to what is normal, human and decent. The individuals in the “basket” should not let even one of their number slip out of it.

## The Inverted Pyramid



When Vikas Minar, the then tallest modern building of Delhi was completed, the newspapers reported that “the city’s twenty-one-storey building is ready.” The attention of the reader was thus focused on the twenty-first storey, although it was only after years of foundation-laying, and floor-by-floor additions to the building that it was possible for the topmost storey to be built. This is the ‘inverted pyramid’ style of modern reporting, which offers the most eye-catching piece of information first, in order to rivet the attention of readers. It takes no account of the normal progress of work, which would have a clearly distinguishable beginning, middle and end.

This has become such a common journalistic technique, that often the reality of the situation is lost sight of. After all, it is always a certain degree of sensationalism which sells a newspaper, and who, on the editorial staff, cares if the public receives a lopsided view of what is actually happening, provided the circulation goes on increasing.

The ‘inverted pyramid’ is an accepted part of news presentation, but, because it is resorted to by the media, that does not mean that we should allow ourselves to slip into accepting it as a formula to be applied to the destiny of a whole people. If society is to be properly built, we

cannot begin at the top floor. We must begin at the foundations and work our way painstakingly upwards. The makers of promises are wont to make fine speeches about the top floor, but can anyone put the roof on a building before even the first foundation stone has been laid? True creativity has to begin at the base. Solid construction must stand on solid foundations.

## Remove Suspicion



Once, many years ago, when I was buying ticket at Azamgarh railway station, a villager came to buy his ticket just as the train was about to depart. He put his fist inside the ticket window, opened it and dropped a number of small coins on the counter. The clerk was annoyed and said: “Give me currency in notes, I don’t have time to count all this change.” I felt sympathetic towards the poor villager. I immediately took out a note and offered to exchange his coins with my note. But the villager did not accept my offer. He looked at me suspiciously, and then silently moved off in another direction. By moving fast, I managed to board the train. However, my eyes followed the villager out of curiosity. Most probably he was not able to buy the ticket on time and so could not board the train.

Why did the villager not accept my offer? The reason perhaps was “suspicion.” He thought I was trying to

benefit from his weakness and wanted to change a defective note for his coins.

This suspicion was so deeply rooted in him that he could not make up his mind to change his coins for my note, even at the cost of missing the train.

This is the general situation of our society now. Everybody looks at others with suspicion. Everyone suspects the other person to be dishonest. This is the reason for the atmosphere of dishonesty in society. Everyone has deprived himself of many possible gains. Usually to work together, it is necessary to seek the support of other people, but the prevalence of suspicion has ended the possibility of receiving such support.

Suspicion gives birth to suspicion, while trust is born out of trust.

If you look upon someone with suspicion, in response, he too will have his suspicions about you and the distance between you two will keep on increasing. On the contrary, if you develop a relationship of trust with him, he too will repose his trust in you and both will start coming close to one another.

The soul inside each person is one and the same. But generally people develop the misunderstanding that they are different from others.



## Healthy Criticism



In the June 1983 British General Election, Mrs. Thatcher easily won another term as Prime Minister. One of the first things she did after her election was sack her foreign minister, Mr. Francis Pym.

A descendent of John Pym (1584-1643), whose power during the reign of Charles I was so great that he was known as ‘King Pym’, Sir Francis Pym had all the qualities and dignity of a capable and respected statesman. He had held high cabinet office. Why, then, did Mrs. Thatcher dismiss him from her government? The reason was that he had said something during the election campaign that Mrs. Thatcher had not liked. Discussing the role of the opposition in government, he had said that “a strong opposition is an indispensable ingredient of good government,” the reason being that “no government is perfect.” Mrs. Thatcher was unable to tolerate this remark, and dismissed Sir Francis from his cabinet post.

Being unable to abide criticism is a common human weakness. Its most damaging effect is to rob one of one’s friends.

No great task can be accomplished without the help of friends who are fully equipped for the task. The only way to bring such people together is to put up with their criticism. Intelligent people cannot suppress their

thoughts. A broadminded leader, then, will let them freely express themselves; he will not be angered at their dissent. In this way he will ensure the continued allegiance of valuable friends.

One who is narrow-minded, however, will not be able to appreciate the worth of such people. The result will be that a mediocre group of people will gather around him who have the calibre neither to perform great deeds, nor to comprehend them.

## Solutions to Social Problems



**M**r. Malcolm Forbes has, with great pertinence, made this observation about problem-solving: “It’s so much easier to suggest solutions when you don’t know too much about the problem.”

Facing a problem in even the most ordinary of social circumstances can be like having your shirt stuck in a thorn-tree. The more you pull it, the more it gets stuck. Even if you do succeed in extricating it, it gets torn to shreds in the process. It is then that patience is of the essence, for such situations require in-depth study, and attempts to solve such “thorny” problems should be done with great discretion.

Unless one is on the spot, one cannot understand the delicacy of certain situations and it is pointless to offer solution after solution.

Social life is, indeed, a complex affair. It is seldom

desirable to take the initiative without at least having the tacit consent of others. The power and influence of others should never be ignored or underestimated.

All possibilities as well as all known factors should be taken into account and, having done this, one should learn to wait patiently for the opportune moment before taking any action. Confrontation should be avoided at all costs.

One who is truly sensitive to the complexities of societal existence will hesitate a hundred times before offering solutions which may offend the sense of delicacy of his fellow men.

## All to Play a Role



The film 'Gandhi', depicting the life of the father of Indian independence, Mahatma Gandhi, cost £13 million to make. Sir Richard Attenborough, the director of the film, had been trying for twenty years to make the film, but without success. No movie company was ready to sponsor 'Gandhi'; everyone thought that it would never be a commercial hit. But so successfully did Ben Kingsley play the role of Gandhi that the film has become one of the greatest box-office triumphs of recent times. In 1983 it won an unprecedented eight Oscar Awards, one of which went to Ben Kingsley for his performance as Gandhi.

Ben Kingsley's father, a doctor from Gujarat, India,

was married to an English woman. Initially, Ben Kingsley's name was Krishna Bhanji. Later he adopted the name Ben Kingsley. He was chosen to play the part of Gandhi because of his close physical resemblance to the Mahatma. After being selected, he made intensive preparations for his performance of the role.

Long before shooting was due to begin, Ben Kingsley came to India. He shaved his head to make it resemble Gandhi's bald skull. Since he was bulky, he started dieting and lost twenty kilos. He acquired a tan by remaining long hours in the sunlight. He memorized the story of the film from beginning to end. He packed his room with photographs of the Mahatma and time and again watched a 5-hour documentary on Gandhi's life. He practiced yoga for two hours every day in order to acquire the habit of sitting cross-legged for long stretches in the Gandhian posture. Besides this, he used to work at the spinning-wheel for a couple of hours so that he would be able to work it as Gandhi did when shooting began.

Ben Kingsley had a special part to play in a film, and it was for this that he made such lengthy preparations. Only after long and assiduous application did it become possible for him to play the role successfully.

## Working Together



**W**hat a laborious task the preparation of honey is. Only through the continuous effort of a swarm of bees does this delicacy come into being. The reason for this is that there is only a minute amount of nectar in one single flower. Nectar has to be collected from countless flowers for a substantial amount of honey to be produced.

At times, honey bees have to travel a cumulative distance of up to 300,000 miles in order to produce just one pound of honey. Since the lifespan of a bee does not extend beyond a few months, no single bee can produce this amount in its entire life, not even if it spends every second of its life gathering nectar from flowers.

Bees have found a way out of this difficulty. The task that they cannot perform alone, they perform by concerted action. A single bee cannot travel the long distances, or suck at the myriads of flowers needed to produce a substantial amount of honey. But what is impossible for one is possible for many, and bees make honey by working at it together.

Why should there be this involved and complicated method of producing honey? Could God not have placed vast reserves of the substance in the earth, just as He has stored petrol and water under the ground?

Indeed He could, but He has conceived of things in this way so that human beings may take heed, so that they may learn numerous lessons from this sign of nature.

In life, there are some tasks that a person can perform in a short while, on his own. But there are other tasks that cannot be performed by one person alone. The only way to perform these tasks is by adopting the method of the bees—that of combined effort.

This, however, can come about only through the self-sacrifice of individuals. People have to be patient with one another, putting others' needs before their own, thinking of the good of others rather than what they themselves desire. It is through the sacrifice of individuals that there can be such a thing as concerted effort.

## Prior Knowledge Aids Comprehension



**M**atches and lighters have only recently come into vogue in rural India. Just fifty years ago people used to light their own stoves with embers left over from the stoves of others. On one occasion a woman went to her neighbours and asked if they had any fire. “On the mantel piece,” her neighbour replied. The woman’s neighbour was getting on in years and had become hard of hearing, so she could be excused for replying to a question that had not been put to her. Yet there are

many whose faculties are in perfect order who do much the same thing.

Back in 1971 General J.N. Chawdhury of the Indian Army delivered a lecture on national security. Stressing the importance of the role intelligence had to play; he said that in wartime it was essential to know what the enemy were going to do before they actually did it. Military commanders should be able to base their decisions on a sound knowledge of enemy strategy. To illustrate this, he referred to an incident which occurred during the Indian annexation of Goa in 1961. When Indian Southern Command was asked on the wireless if the Portuguese possessed “armoured cars and tanks”, the reply came through: “Everything is OK with the tanks. But they only have a capacity of 15,000 gallons of water.” The question was about war tanks, but the answer that came back related to water tanks.

Any task requiring the coordinated efforts of several individuals can only be effectively carried out if each person involved plays his part properly. If everybody does the job expected of them the work will proceed towards a satisfactory conclusion. Failure on the part of one participant spells failure for the entire project, for one person cannot be expected to do another’s job for him.

## Setting Aside Differences and Grievances



**A** Persian poet writes: “A hundred times have I fought with my beloved; a hundred times have I befriended her. She knew nothing of my fighting or of my befriending.”

This statement may seem to belong to the world of poetry, but it also has enormous relevance to the real world. It gives us an insight into the type of people needed to achieve any great purpose in life, that is, those who possess the quality, mentioned in this verse, of being able to bury within themselves the grudges that they feel towards others.

No great objective can be attained by lone individuals. Several people have to strive together if even the simplest things are to be achieved. But united effort, besides having many advantages, also presents one great problem—the problem of people differing among themselves.

Whenever people work together, it is inevitable that various disagreements and grievances will arise. Sometimes one will receive a smaller share of the credit, while another receives a larger portion. Some attain to high positions while others have to be satisfied with lower ranks. At times, it is something which has



been said which offends another; at others it is some ill-considered action which seems to hurt another's interests. Whatever the bone of contention may be, there are bound to be repeated occasions which lead to resentment. There will always be times when one feels anger, jealousy, vindictiveness and animosity towards some colleague.

There is only one practical solution in such situations. That is, every individual has to turn himself into a self-correcting machine. He must defuse within himself the antipathy which he feels towards another. The grudges which he harbours have to be forgotten. Only then will people be able to work and struggle on together.

## The Cementing of Society



In the days of the steam engine, the engine drivers had no option but to stand at close quarters to a blazing fire. It was all part of being an engine driver, and without that no train could have run. Much the same thing happens to the individuals who make things go in civic life. They are confronted by the blazing fire of their own anger at other members of society.

They rage at wrongdoers, cheats and shirkers, both real and imagined. But just as the engine driver controls both the fire which drives the engine and his own desire to escape from it, so the individual in society must tame both his own fury and a desire simply to run away from

adverse situations. If a society is to hold together and function in harmony, individuals must learn to bear with those who oppose and hurt them. There is no group of people in which differences of opinion do not arise; no group in which there are never feelings of grievance and resentment. It would indeed be unrealistic to expect that everything should be plain sailing.

How then can people live and work together? How, with seemingly irreconcilable differences between individuals, can society be welded into a cohesive whole? There is only one way: people must bury their differences and agree to disagree. But this can happen only if people react coolly and rationally in difficult situations where relations are strained and there seems no way out of the dilemma. It can happen only if people are fully aware of their responsibilities towards others, as individuals, and towards their community as a whole.

This may seem to be asking for the impossible. But this is not so. Every individual does these things in the most natural way within his own domestic circle. In quite normal families, differences of opinion occur almost every day, but the bonds of love and kinship prevail and grievances are finally buried. It is in this way that a family holds together. Every home is a practical example of people agreeing to disagree.

This spirit of give and take which is a matter of instinct in a family, is something which can emerge in a community only through conscious effort on the part of its members. While it is an emotional bond that keeps families from disintegrating, it is a rational effort

which cements society, constraining its members to hold together despite all differences.

## Character Builds the Nation



**T**oyota, a Japanese motor company, has been functioning for the last thirty years without a single day ever having been wasted, and without its production ever once having slackened. This is only one of the many examples which explain the fast development of industry in Japan. General Motors and the Ford Motor Company of the US are the biggest motor manufacturing companies in the world. The annual production of these motor companies is, on an average, 11 cars per employee, while the Toyota Motor Company annually produces 33 cars per worker.

Considering the non-existence or at least paucity of all the major raw materials of industry in Japan—coal, iron, petroleum, etc.—the country still manages to surpass all other countries in industrial progress. One might well ask why. A *Hindustan Times* commentator (August 25, 1981) attributes Japan's success to: "A national spirit of compromise and co-operation, and a willingness to endure short-term setbacks for the long-term good of the nation, company or family."

It is temperament then which plays the most crucial role in the making of a nation. It is important in nation-building in the way that bricks are important in any

kind of construction work. A house made of unfired bricks is unsafe, because any calamity, even a minor one, can bring it tumbling down. A building, on the other hand, which is made of kiln-fired bricks can be trusted to withstand the onslaught of tempests and floods.

A character so tempered that it can be depended upon through thick and thin—like the kiln-fired brick—is what in the long run builds a nation, for it is only such a temperament which can remain attuned to the more and more complex procedures of industrialization and remain steadfastly geared to national progress.

## Building a Strong Nation



**A**n Indian industrialist once had the occasion to go to West Germany in 1965. While there, he visited a factory and, going around it to see how it functioned, he stopped beside a worker and started to put a few questions to him. To his surprise, in spite of his repeating the questions several times, the man paid no attention to him and went on with his work.

After some time a bell rang for the lunch break and the workers filed off to the dining hall. It was only then that the apparently mute and unapproachable worker came up to the Indian visitor, shook hands with him cordially and asked him—a faint element of incredulity in his voice—“Do you talk to the workers in your country while they are on duty?” Without waiting for

an answer, he went on, "If I had taken a break to answer your questions, I would have wasted several minutes of my work time, and this would have been a loss to the company. In the long run it would have been a loss to the nation. We are here to benefit the country and not to make it incur losses."

It is sterling character of this sort which accounts for the success of western nations. In 1945, the Allied Powers had almost completely destroyed Germany, but in a matter of a mere 25 years, Germany became more powerful than it had even been before. The reason for this astonishing progress was that each and every individual of the country considered it incumbent upon him to carry out his duties to the best of his ability.

To him, the individual self was subordinate to the nation. It is true, of course, that everyone was working for himself, but it was not at the cost of the nation. Whenever there was any clash between personal and national interests, he made it a point of sacrificing his personal interests in favour of the greater good of the nation.

The state of a nation depends invariably upon the state of the rank and file of the people who are its mainstay. A nation prospers or declines according to whether its inhabitants are pulling their weight or just mindlessly frittering away their time. A nation is comparable to a machine which works only so long as all its parts are of high quality, well-oiled, properly assembled and in working order. Similarly, a successful nation will be made up of individuals of sound character, well-integrated in society and with a

thorough-going sense of cooperation. The building of a nation means, basically, the building of character. For without character, the utterly selfless dedication, which is a prerequisite for national success, will never manifest itself. Without reforming individuals, the reform of a nation will remain the stuff of dreams—illusory and without substance.

## Having a Constructive Temperament



One Dr. Abdul Jalil of New Delhi once had the opportunity to visit Japan in 1970, where he stayed for six months. He later recounted an incident to me which cast a significant light on the Japanese character. It seems that during his stay in Tokyo, he would often take a 15-minute ride on a suburban train to a place just outside the city. One day, when fifteen minutes had passed and there was no sign of his station, he began to feel uneasy. Sure enough, when the train stopped, it was at some other station, and he realized that somehow or the other he had boarded the wrong train at Tokyo. In some agitation he tried to get help from the Japanese who was sitting next to him, but since neither could speak the other's language, conversation was impossible. Dr. Jalil then thought of writing down the name of his station in block capitals and showing it to his travelling companion. The Japanese could apparently read that much and promptly pulled the communication cord to stop the train, which had just begun to move out of

the station. He hurried Dr. Jalil off the train and took him to another platform which was for trains going in the opposite direction. There he put Dr. Jalil on the right train, and, in spite of the fact that no conversation was possible, insisted on accompanying him to his destination. Only then did he take his leave and went off to board another train which would take him on his way.

Another incident he recounted was that of a car accident which he witnessed as he walked along the pavements of Tokyo. Two cars had collided, both driven by Japanese. The two drivers immediately got out of their cars and stood facing each other with heads bowed. Both said: "It's my fault. Please, forgive me." Only people with a constructive temperament could behave in such a self-abnegating way. A temperament such as this is a major guarantee of a nation's success. By contrast, individuals who care for nothing but their own selfish interests can neither achieve personal success, nor can they make any contribution to the building of their nation.

## The Japanese Experience



In August 1945, the US dropped two atom bombs on Japan, reducing two of its major cities to ruins. Strangely enough, the Japanese seem to bear no grudge against the Americans, for, they say, it had only reacted to Japan's violence in the arena of war. The responsibility,

therefore, needed to be shared by each side. This realistic attitude on the part of the Japanese has seen them through all kinds of adversity and brought them to extraordinary heights of progress in modern times.

Both the major industrial cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bustling with life, became enormous areas of devastation in a matter of minutes. Within a ten-mile radius every kind of life—human, animal and vegetable—was blown to bits. One and a half million people died on the spot. Ten thousand of them simply disappeared. Yet these cities have now been built up once again with wide streets, spacious houses, parks and gardens, all of which have a modern look. Only one ruined building has been left as it was, in order to remind the people of the grim punishment meted out to them during the Second World War.

When the late Mr. Khushwant Singh, an eminent Indian journalist and social commentator, visited Japan, he learnt, much to his astonishment, that the Japanese do not exploit the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to discredit the US. It is other nations, on the contrary, who have exploited the same events for this purpose. When Mr. Singh asked the reason for this attitude, a Japanese replied in a surprisingly calm tone:

“We hit them first at Pearl Harbour. We killed a lot of them. They warned us of what they were going to do, but we thought they were only bluffing. They beat us fair and square. We were quits, and now we are friends.”  
(*Hindustan Times*, April 4, 1981)

A memorial has been erected to commemorate



the dead, the victims of a gruesome tragedy. In the museum are displayed photographs depicting death and destruction on a mass scale. About 70 lakh Japanese visit Hiroshima every year to witness this spectacle.

The Japanese did not let hatred for another rule their lives and future. By virtue of such a temperament, they have scaled great heights of progress in a very short span of time. They have neither petrol resources nor any other mineral wealth, most of their raw materials having to be imported. Keeping all these drawbacks in view, it is most amazing that they have dominated world markets. This is mainly owing to the superior quality of their goods.

Mr. Singh also enquired about the prospects of the legal profession there. He was told that it was not a flourishing business, the reason being that the Japanese preferred settling disputes on their own to going to the courts. Willingness to admit faults by each party is the surest way to bring quarrels to an end. It is only when either party seeks to place the whole blame on the other side that the quarrel takes a turn for the worse. Whereas the very gesture of shouldering the blame softens up the other side, with the result that the dispute dies a natural death.

This realistic attitude has greatly benefitted the Japanese in many respects. For instance, this makes them place their trust in one another. They thus save the time and money they would otherwise expend on lengthy legal proceedings. There are 50,000 lawyers in the US, while there are only 11,000 in Japan. Such legal experts are just not in demand.

Most of the commercial institutions trust in verbal understandings. Formerly it was practiced only among the Japanese, but now foreign investors have also started to take advantage of this practice. Avoidance of unnecessary legal obligations invariably speeds up the work.

Essentially, such an outlook gives rise to unity. It is undoubtedly the greatest force that contributes to the success of a nation. In the words of an expert on Japanese affairs, the secret of Japan's success lies in:

“Never quarrelling amongst themselves, always doing everything together.” (*Hindustan Times*, April 1981)

## Our Potential is Our Wealth



Psychologists have estimated that man puts to use only ten percent of the abilities with which he is born. Professor William James of Harvard University has very aptly observed, “What we ought to be, we are not ready to be.” In spite of the inborn qualities with which nature has endowed us, the successes which should have been ours in this world keep eluding us for the simple reason that we quite unthinkingly consent to lead inferior lives. Then, discontented, we put the blame on others for not giving us our due. But it is inside ourselves that we should look if we are to find the reasons for life's deficiencies. Constantly viewing others with envy and a sense of grievance will lead us nowhere, and can turn us

into our own worst enemies. The fact should be faced fairly and squarely that it is only if we exploit our own potential to the full that we shall meet with success. Any other course will lead to failure.

It is essential, however, to determine at the outset whether our efforts are directed at worthwhile objectives. Without proper direction our potential will be wasted.

In ancient times and even up to medieval times, gold being greatly prized, one of the great preoccupations of the 'scientists' of those days was to strive to convert base metals into gold. Over the centuries, dreams of instant wealth drove innumerable people to superhuman efforts. But all this expenditure of time, money and energy was in vain, for death always overtook them before they could achieve anything tangible. It never seemed to occur to any of them that these metals with which they worked had a different and greater potential than anyone could ever have imagined. Iron, for example, was convertible, not into gold, but into machinery, and could be used as a versatile building material of great strength. In the world of today, western nations having learnt these secrets and directed their energies towards building up the most sophisticated technology. Indeed, they have succeeded in acquiring far greater wealth than mere silver and gold.

## Don't Harm Yourself



Two years after the beginning of World War II, Japan, without having openly declared war, bombarded the huge American military base at Pearl Harbour, destroying it completely. As an immediate major naval victory, it was a matter for Japanese jubilation, but as a piece of military strategy, it was ill-conceived, because it had the effect of bringing the US directly into the war, whereas the latter's involvement prior to this had been only indirect. America's earlier contribution had been confined solely to the selling of arms and ammunition to Japan's enemies. At this point America now formed a united front with Britain and the U.S.S.R., which came to be known as the Allied Powers. Matters came to a head in August 1945, when America dropped the first atom bombs in the history of mankind on the Japanese towns of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, completely obliterating both these industrial centres, and bringing to an end the military power of Japan.

The bombing of Pearl Harbour was, without doubt, Japan's greatest military blunder: it quite unnecessarily brought the U.S. into the war. But Japan, realizing how great a mistake this had been, refrained from committing another. A defeated, but still living nation, it opted for adjustment to the new set of circumstances rather than resistance to them. In this way Japan opened up for itself new and splendid possibilities. Finding no

opportunities in the military field, the Japanese put all their effort into the fields of education and industry. In accepting America's supremacy in political and military affairs, it was then free to divert all its attention to peaceful fields of activity. In consequence, within a period of thirty years, Japan became far more powerful than before. Of the original incident which set in motion this unexpected train of events, a commentator writes:

“That is a queer culmination of Pearl Harbour, but history has many contrived corridors and perhaps Pearl Harbour was one of them.” (*Hindustan Times*, November 30, 1981)

After every failure there exists the possibility of a new, and perhaps different kind of success for all human beings, provided they refrain from harbouring false pride, waste no time in futile lamentations and set about immediately adjusting themselves to the new set of circumstance. Above all, in beginning the struggle anew, they should rid themselves of all feelings of hatred. Of this negative sentiment, Dale Carnegie (famous for his book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*) writes:

“When we hate our enemies, we give them power over us—power over our sleep, our appetites and our happiness. They would dance with joy, if they knew how much they were worrying us. Our hate is not hurting them at all, but it is turning our own days and nights into hellish turmoil.”

Hating others amounts to hating one's own self; it is

a way of injuring one's own psyche. Loving others, on the contrary, does one nothing but good.

## Rise Like the Phoenix



America's participation in the Second World War (1939-45) was initially indirect, in the sense that its role was to supply arms and ammunition and give paramilitary assistance to Britain and its allies. As a result, it became an enemy in the eyes of the Japanese. Japan then secretly planned and launched a major offensive against the American naval base, Pearl Harbour, on December 7, 1941, completely destroying it and, as a consequence, bringing the U.S. directly into the fray. It did not, however, manage to do any major overall damage to the American Air Force, which was spread over a number of other bases.

It was at this time that the atomic bomb was being developed in America. When it had been brought to the stage when it could be successfully used as a lethal weapon, America issued an ultimatum to the Japanese that they should either surrender unconditionally or prepare to be annihilated. Japan, being completely ignorant of America's acquisition of atomic power, paid no heed to this warning. On August 14, 1945, America therefore, dropped two atomic bombs on Japan, one on each of the two major cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Within a matter of moments, Japan's military power

was reduced to ashes. Japan could do little else but lay down its arms.

Soon afterwards, General Douglas MacArthur entered Japan, and placed the entire nation under American military control. Although from the purely military point of view, Japan had been defeated, the Japanese were still frenziedly preoccupied with the notion of military retaliation. At one time, they had been so fired with military zeal that, during the war, they would even go to the extent of tying bombs on to their bodies and jumping down the funnels of ships so that they could not fail to make a direct hit. Now, the problem facing MacArthur was how to direct such fanaticism towards some positive, peaceful goal. An American commentator, Author Lewis, wrote: "When Japan surrendered, 40 years ago, General Douglas MacArthur undertook not just to occupy, but to remake the country. If he had been asked then what his most extravagant hope was, I think he might have said: 'To channel the drive of this aggressive people away from militarism and into economic ambition.'"

One way for the Japanese to respond to American overtures would have been to engage in unending guerilla warfare. They could have, alternatively resorted to verbal protests in the press and from public rostrums. But Japan unreservedly accepted the proposals of its conqueror and immediately began diverting its energies away from war and towards progressive ends. It totally ceased its direct confrontation with America and concentrated all of its energies on scientific education and technical progress. Japan began to make

rapid economy advances which culminated in great commercial successes. In 1971, for example, it exported to America goods to the value of 6 billion dollars.

A book entitled, *Japan: The 40-year Miracle*, which elaborates at length upon the total destruction of Japan and its extraordinary progress in the space of 40 years, sums up the position in just one sentence: “The nation rose like the mythical phoenix from its own ashes.” (*Newsweek*, August 12, 1985)

Japan has been able to achieve such phenomenal progress as compared to its conqueror, that the latter has ultimately been forced to concede to Japan’s superiority.

The acceptance of reality is the greatest secret of success in this life. Yet, how many do we see around us who persist in seeking success through a denial of reality!

## An Economic Pearl Harbour



In December 1941, during the World War II, the U.S.A.’s top naval base, Pearl Harbour, on the Pacific island of Hawaii, was attacked without prior warning by the Japanese. So severe was the bombardment that, of the hundred odd naval vessels anchored there, only a handful survived. This had the immediate effect of bringing America into the war as one of the Allied Powers. Up till that point, the U.S.A. had no direct involvement in hostilities save as a supplier of armaments



to the enemies of Japan. The Japanese attack had been uncalled for and ill-considered, but they did not realize the magnitude of their error until 1945, when America finally took its revenge by dropping the first ever atom bombs on two of Japan's major industrial centres, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus annihilating Japan as a military power. The Americans then kept a tight military and political hold over Japan. But the latter country, astonishingly, recuperated from the horror of large-scale atomic devastation, and proceeded to adapt itself to an entirely new set of circumstances. Before the Second World War, it had relied on the power of weapons. But after witnessing the destruction they caused, it relinquished their use and set about reconstructing the country along entirely peaceful lines. Having once adopted this course, the Japanese showed great versatility, resilience and assiduity, and their success has been such that Japan is now considered the third greatest industrial power in the entire world today. Its industrial output in 2016 was \$ 1.368 billion.

In the field of industry, the victors have been defeated by the vanquished. Simply by accepting the fact that aggression could not pay dividends and then channelizing its potential into the field of industry, Japan has managed quite miraculously to supersede most of the other nations of the world.

The Americans are greatly upset at this state of affairs and refer to the present 'invasion' of Japanese goods as an Economic Pearl Harbour. A book recently published in America, entitled "Japan Number One", has become a best-seller. It clearly shows that Japan has far outrun

the U.S.A. in business and will soon supersede Britain. So far as foreign exchange is concerned, Japan is the wealthiest country in the world, its foreign exchange reserves totaling 74 billion dollars in 1984 (*The Times of India*, June 13-14, 1985)

How did Japan turn its military defeat into an economic victory? By encouraging patience and perseverance and avoiding provocation, it concentrated its energies on peaceful (and, of course. remunerative) fields, rather than indulge in retaliatory violence. It initially accepted the military and political supremacy of other nations, quickly adapting itself to new scales of values, then set about the economic rehabilitation of the country without wasting a single moment on bewailing lost opportunities, blaming others for its misfortunes or on pointless nostalgia. Rather than make further mistakes, Pearl Harbour having been the worst, it concentrated all of its attention on seizing existing opportunities. In short, Japan accepted the blame for its own destruction, and, once having done so, was able seriously to launch itself on its own economic uplift.

We must never lose sight of the fact that we are not lone travelers on this earth. There are always others who are trying to race ahead of us in this world of competition. The resulting situation can be approached in two entirely different ways. One is to collide with anything which obstructs our path. The other is to circumvent obstacles and then to go on our way. Clearly, the first is self-destructive, while the second, in avoiding confrontations, is much more likely to prove advantageous. A ship which sails straight at a rock or

an iceberg is doomed to disaster. It is the ship which veers temporarily off its course to avoid the reefs which will eventually sail safely into harbour. Similarly, Japan, by giving up ideas of military supremacy, has reached a much more worthwhile objective—economic supremacy.

It is worth remembering that Hiroshima and Nagasaki, once symbols of Japan's total annihilation as a military power, are now, more than seventy years later, symbols of Japan's stunning economic success.

## Education: The Science of Life



**E**ducation is in no way a mere employment certificate. Its true purpose is to bring intellectual awareness to the human mind. Ensuring that all individuals have an education is the first step towards the construction of a nation. Whenever the journey of a nation begins, it must certainly be from here; there is no other point from which to start.

What does making people intellectually aware mean? It means enabling people to link the past and the present, to draw proper conclusions, to be able to put life's issues in the context of eternal planning. It helps them to learn to judge their weaknesses as well as their strengths. They must also learn to know how to make their will correspond to the will of God, this being the only way they can ever hope to achieve success in this world of God. Only a person of understanding is fit to

be called a human being, in the real sense of the word. Such an individual alone is able to judge himself and others properly, by arriving at correct conclusions. It is only after learning which of his opinions are objective and which are not, that he is able to recognize which of his actions have simply been negative reactions and which have actually been positive actions. He can then separate the evil from the good and the false from the true. All of us possess eyes, but it is education which gives one the intellectual eye, the eye of discernment. Uneducated eyes enable one to see only appearances; education makes it possible for one to go deeper into the realities of life.

Just as a farmer plants a seed and tends it so that it may grow into a tree, so do educational institutions aid in bringing one's intellectual journey to fruition. Education does, of course, help one to find employment, but that is a matter of secondary importance. The real virtue of education is that it reveals to a person the science of life, thus making him a discerning human being.

## Negligence: A Moral Deficiency



It is hard to believe that any animal could be more dangerous or terrifying than the man-eating tiger. But it is not the tiger or the bear who is the most dangerous enemy of man. In reality, the most dangerous of our

enemies are the bacteria which are so tiny that they remain invisible to the naked eye. Small they may be, but these bacteria breed at such a furious rate that, given favourable conditions, one of their number can reproduce itself 10,000 times over within a mere matter of ten hours. While a bear or a lion only occasionally eats a man alive, man is the constant focus of deadly bacteria.

Their species run into thousands. We are fortunate, however, in that 99 percent of them are either beneficial or harmless. Though only one percent is harmful, its deadliness is such that it can claim the life of a man within a matter of seconds. All fatal diseases, according to medical science, are produced by such micro-organisms. Their very lack of bulk makes it possible for them to enter the human system in ways against which man has no natural system of defence.

People are usually aware of big and obvious dangers, and imagine that they must be responsible for all their misfortunes. But, if the truth were told, the harm done to us by these tiny living organisms far surpasses any havoc our bigger enemies can wreak on us. Yet, when we come to think of it, the greatest damage of all is done by those seemingly insignificant and often short-lived moments of neglect—moments when timely action was our duty, when approval needed to be given or withheld, when advice or help or self-appraisal was needed, and we let the occasion slip by, heedless of the consequences. Easy-going negligence can creep into our souls, like bacteria into the body, and, if not pulled up short, can become an ingrained attitude, leading to moral corrosion.

A negligent attitude permits people to fritter away their time, day after day, with no thought for the future. Similarly, they squander substantial portions of their income. This wasted time and pointless expenditure may seem trivial matters, if it is just a question of one day—a few hours and a few rupees don't seem to add up to much. But if one were to calculate the time and money thus wasted in one year and then in a whole lifetime, it would become clear that fully fifty percent of one's life and earnings had been squandered in vain pursuits. Take the total wastage of a whole nation and the loss assumes such enormous proportions that it goes quite beyond the imagination.

## A Nation's Stability



**M**an is in constant need of guidance, and God's ways of guiding him are manifold. Everywhere in the world of nature around us, He has set up His signs for us to read.

There is the creeper which, in a matter of mere months, grows, spreads, bears its flowers and its fruits and then dies. It is a thing of beauty, a source of nourishment and, as such, is a joy to the beholder. But it does not last forever and when it dies, it so withers away that it might never have existed. There is no sign of it even underfoot.

One cannot help comparing it with the tall fruit tree,

slow of growth, slow to blossom and bear fruit but living on for many years, sometimes even centuries, and never failing to provide people with its shade, its flowers, its luscious fruits. These two examples in nature are God's silent messages to us; they are His way of guiding us towards the right course of action in life, and steering us away from what will ultimately lead us to failure.

When it comes to the building of a whole nation, we should not attempt to spread fast like the creeper in the hopes of quick results, but should instead emulate the tree which may take years of anxious waiting to grow to maturity, but which sends down its roots deep into the soil (there is as much of the tree below as above the ground) and which endures the ravages of the seasons and the passage of the years.

Even before it is fully grown, it is of a rock-like stability, causing no harm to anyone, creating no problems, and bringing only benefits to mankind. A nation, therefore, should grow with this same steadfastness and stability, for expansion without these qualities is like building a house without foundations.

What applies to the tree applies equally to individual human lives. If their structure is to be solid and long lasting, the course of patience and hard work must be adhered to.

Building one's life is not just like building a child's play house, which can be put up in a matter of hours, and which can also collapse in a matter of minutes. It is a matter of putting down roots, and toiling patiently ever upwards.

## Ethics and Technology



Soon after the completion of a multistoried building called Akashdeep in Bombay, the whole construction collapsed. The engineers said that the reason for its collapse was that less cement had been used than specified by safety regulations.

In another statement the director of a technical institute said, “RCC construction is a scientific process which is excellent in the hands of qualified and experienced people, but dangerous if managed by incompetent engineers and contractors.” (*The Times of India*, September 4, 1983)

This appears to be correct and a proper explanation of the matter, but if we really think about the word ‘incompetent’ as applied to the engineers and contractors concerned, we realize that it needs to be replaced by the more appropriate word ‘corrupt’. The truth is that such problems in this country are traceable to excessive greed and corruption, and not to a lack of technical expertise.

For the building of the Bhakra Dam, a major government project, top engineers were engaged. But, no sooner was it ready than its walls began to crack, costing the government crores of rupees to rebuild.

Such events are frequent in this country. Despite all such ventures being supervised by technical experts, one hears of roads falling into disrepair the moment they are



constructed, of buildings needing to be repaired almost immediately after being built, and of plans remaining incomplete even after projects are completed. All this is the result of corruption and has nothing to do with a lack of technical expertise.

Corruption is a psychological evil, while lack of skill is a technical shortcoming. A psychological evil cannot be removed by technical improvement. If we are genuinely interested in making a better society in our country, we shall have to work for the psychological or moral reform of the individuals who comprise the nation. Merely bringing about an increase in the number of technical courses available will not make them turn over a new leaf.

## Dealing with the Young



A few months ago, George Menezes was asked to preside over the inauguration of a College Summer Camp. In the course of his address, he recounted how a teacher had dropped in at his house in Colaba to inform his father that his brother had failed in the maths paper of his matriculation examination by just a few marks. “The moderator is expecting a telephone call from you, Sir,” he said “and the rest will be taken care of.” It so happened that in that particular year Mr. Menezes Senior was Under-Secretary for Education; the boards, colleges and schools all came under his jurisdiction.

But the father was blunt with the teacher. “If my son deserves to fail, let him fail. It will teach him a valuable lesson.”

Having finished this salutary tale, he looked expectantly into the faces of his young audience. But instead of appreciative murmurs he was greeted with sniggering which began to reach embarrassing proportions. Then a young man jumped up and shouted, “Your father must have been a fool! If he had done that to me, I would have killed him!”

Such blatant irreverence has become no uncommon thing among the younger generation of today. But where does the fault lie? The blame for this attitude must be placed fairly and squarely at the door of those leaders who act as rabble-rousers, who inculcate hatred and foster enmity in students purely to serve their own private ambitions. The students are there, en masse, on the university campuses and, being easily approachable, can be swayed and exploited.

As a result, time-honoured traditions of courtesy and respect are broken with. In fact, all reasonable norms are flouted. Friends and foes alike become engulfed when matters get out of hand, and it is high time we halted in our tracks and made a thorough reappraisal of what our social commitments ought in all sincerity to be, so that a pernicious leadership cannot set the feet of the young people of today on what can only be described as a collision course for the future.

## Working One's Way Up



A man entered a certain recruiting office and said, "I want to join up as a soldier."

But how old are you?" the sergeant asked.

"Sixty," was the man's reply.

"You know quite well that sixty is too old for you to become a soldier."

"All right, if 60 is too old for a soldier, don't you need any generals?"

If one wants to start one's career as a general, one will be hard put to it to do so. It's just like a race where one can't leap straight from the starting point to the finishing line. To succeed in anything, we have to be like the tree, starting from the seed, growing slowly and putting out branches, twigs, leaves and flowers when the appropriate times come around. Similarly, business starts with investing money, not with earning profits. The construction of a house starts with the foundations and not with the roof. Eating begins with the sowing of seeds, not with the laying of the table. The factory begins with the acquisition of machinery and not with the sale of the end products.

Congregational matters are very much on a parallel. They begin from the inculcation in individuals a sense of purpose and an understanding of the importance of hard work, honesty, endurance and unity.

Not until the individuals of a nation are imbued with these important ideals to a very high degree can measures be taken for the advancement of any cause. If we ignore the importance of preconditioning, our ventures are bound to end in failure. Any attempt to launch a movement without a solid, national infrastructure would be like trying to roof a house without raising its walls. A roof put up in this way is eventually bound to collapse on one's head. In much the same way, any steps taken before individuals have been properly prepared for them will lead inevitably to failure and chaos—even death and destruction. They will be found to lead one further and further away from the true objectives.

## Perseverance and Will Power



**A** thinker once observed that people are not so much lacking in power as they are lacking in will power. It is a fact that usually people possess capabilities, but are unable to utilize them just because they are not capable of unflagging perseverance. And for any achievement, long-term struggle is indispensable. If you want to see a solid result for your efforts, you must first of all be prepared to exert yourself over long periods of time. If you do not have the ability to do this, you should not hope for any long lasting success. The secret of a successful life is simply this: “The more time you invest the more you progress.”

The establishment of a national life is sometimes possible within a short time, but sometimes it also requires a longer time period. It depends on which type of national establishment you want. If your aim is to arouse a temporary passion in people, and if you think of simply gathering a crowd by shouting slogans such as will appeal to mass psychology, that is all very well. But this, in reality, is establishment of leadership rather than the establishment of a nation.

There are leaders who, by engaging in clamorous activities, can definitely gain a temporary advantage. But if we really want to build a nation, we should understand that it is like planting a chestnut tree rather than a cucumber plant. Such an initiative surely requires long-term planning. It cannot be achieved in a short period of time. If any leader puts his faith in sloganeering, this may be attributable either to his naivety or his wish to exploit public sentiments. And if there are individuals who wish to see the success of their nation without a long-term period of travail, they should realize that this can be achieved only in the mind and not in reality.

## How to Win a Nobel Prize



**N**obel Laureate Professor Abdus Salam toured several Indian cities in 1986, and in one of the speeches he made (*The Times of India*, January 16, 1986), he cited South Korea as an example of extraordinarily rapid

national development. He said that about 15 years ago, the gross national product per capita there was equal to that of India, but that thanks to the efforts the Koreans had made, it was now many times more. Giving the example of the team who had come from South Korea to Trieste, in Italy, where he resides, to find out from him how Nobel Prizes were won, he said that a similar spirit needed to be inculcated in the people of the Third World. He felt that it was this questing spirit which was the basis for all progress, be it of an individual or of a nation, and that this was true of progress both in this world and in the world Hereafter.

All too often a process of stagnation sets in in the affairs of a nation and it would appear that an impasse had been reached in developmental matters. Instead of progress, there is decay. Instead of effort, there is inertia. When this stage is reached, a nation begins to tumble in disarray down the ladder of progress towards the lowermost rung and it is only the seekers, the strivers, who can pull it upwards from such an ignominious position and set it back on the path of progress. It is only the questing spirit which can put it right up on the topmost rung of the ladder of progress.

## Impartiality: The Secret of Success



**T**he 10th Asian Games were held in Seoul, South Korea, in September 1986. In this 16-day competition,

South Korea bagged the highest tally of medals. The details are given below:

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
China	94	82	46	222
S. Korea	93	55	76	224
Japan	58	76	77	211
Iran	6	6	10	22
India	5	9	23	37
Philippines	4	5	9	18
Thailand	3	10	13	26
Pakistan	2	3	4	9

So between them China, Korea and Japan bagged the lion's share of the total medals. India is a far bigger and a more populous country than South Korea, yet this chart shows that India lagged very far behind Korea. Commenting on this, *The Indian Express* of October 6, 1986, writes:

'The Koreans used a computer to select their athletes and spent one million dollars to train them for each discipline for two years. India used familiar hit-or-miss methods in which the old malady of parochialism and nepotism may not have been at a total discount.'

To cut a long story short, the Koreans selected their competitors on the basis of talent whereas India selected people who were well-connected. How different the final outcome could have been if India had done as Korea did, and had simply fed the necessary data about the potential participants into a computer and allowed the selection to be made with the total disinterestedness

and mechanical impartiality that only a computer is capable of.

## Working in Unison



U.S. shipbuilders take sixteen months to complete a 50 thousand ton tanker. The Spaniards take even longer to produce a ship of similar tonnage—24 months. But Japanese shipbuilders do the job in just eight months.

What is the secret of this Japanese miracle? A survey conducted by western experts shows that the deciding factor is teamwork. Japanese workers and management function together in complete unison. At no stage during the work processes is this bond disrupted. The result is the production of high quality goods within an amazingly short time.

Group harmony is something which is part of the whole fabric of Japanese culture and work methods. Whether in the home or in the factory, in large institutions or small, the will to be cooperative manifests itself as the truly distinctive feature of the Japanese character. William Ouchi, an expert in Japanology writes: “Every activity in Japan is group activity and not a springboard to individual glory and personal advertisement.” (*Hindustan Times*, February 1986)

It is to this specialty that Japan’s greatest secret of national progress can be traced. The willingness of large numbers of people to work together with good grace is



a prerequisite for success in any venture. The only flaw in this system of joint effort is that the personality of the individual has little opportunity to flourish. But it is only a nation which is made up of individuals who are prepared to make this personal sacrifice which can ever aspire to success. Where individuals keep pulling in opposite directions, no substantial progress can ever be made at the national level.

When work is cooperative in spirit, well coordinated in organization and an atmosphere of harmony prevails, the sky is the limit in quality and quantity of production. It is unity then which is the true key to success.

## In Giving We Receive



According to *Time* of October 17, 1986, “Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth had long voiced a desire to visit the People’s Republic of China. But as long as Britain ruled a piece of Chinese territory, the crown colony of Hong Kong, such a journey was impossible. The 1984 Sino-British agreement returning Hong Kong to China in 1997 provided the price of admission.”

Returning Hong Kong to the mainland was no easy task, for it amounted to losing a jewel from the British Crown, but it was clear that the British monarch’s desire to visit China was not unconnected with Britain’s avidity for trade with that country and, obviously, the ensuing gains would be immense. Relations between

Britain and China had been uneasy over the previous hundred years, but with the Queen's historic visit—the first ever made to China by a member of a British Royal family—the gates to trade were thrown open. A successful piece of diplomacy, it paved the way to an annual trade agreement of over one and a half billion dollars.

A jewel may have been lost from the crown, but the subsequent benefits were enormous. Clearly, we have to give in order to take. That is the way of the world.

## The Creative Impulse



**A**rnold Joseph Toynbee (1889-1975), a renowned historian and philosopher of history, published his famous work, *A Study of History*, between the years 1934 and 1961. This book, running to twelve volumes, is a philosophic study of twenty-three civilizations.

Toynbee has shown in this book that “the rise of a civilization was not the result of such factors as superior racial qualities or geographical environment but was rather a people's response to a challenge in a situation of special difficulty that roused them to make an unprecedented effort. Difficult rather than easy conditions prompted men to cultural achievement.” (vol. 4, p. 659)

According to Toynbee, civilization is always born out of a creative impulse towards betterment. It is, in fact, a

challenge-response mechanism which can develop in any nation and make it the leader of the world. Moreover, deprivation in this world is not something valueless; deprivation gives rise to the passion for enterprise. And in this way, it makes groups more active and produces the possibility for greater success. If a nation in difficult circumstances suffers from a psychology of reaction, it will inevitably fall into the error of lamentation and protests. But, if it rises above circumstances and thinks positively, it will be able to see that its difficult situations were providing it with the ladder to ultimate success.

## Flexibility of Approach



Once when a passenger reached the railway station, he was told by a porter that the train he wanted to board had already departed. “Sir, don’t worry,” the porter said. “In two hours times you can board another train on this same platform. Till then you can rest here.” The passenger accepted his advice and two hours later he boarded another train and left for his destination.

Every traveler knows that if he misses a train, he can very soon board another train. This is the lesson of the platform. But usually people forget this well-known lesson at the time when in the rush of things, an opportunity slips away from them. After facing failure for the first time, they either become disappointed or they fall to lamenting and protesting. The right way to

deal with this would be to re-plan some other course of action in order to reach their destination, that is, by boarding another train.

When you clash with an opponent, and that has brought no good results, you should change your approach and try to solve the problem by a gentle method. It is quite possible that one who became your enemy because of earlier aggressive tactics might become your esteemed friend with a soft approach. Similarly, if you lose a job, don't go on lamenting, but rather strive to find some new source of income in another field.

It is possible that the new work may prove to be more profitable. If someone takes away your rights and a dispute begins, and even after several years you fail to have your rights restored, then change your strategy. Put your trust in hard work. It is entirely possible that by working hard you will achieve what you failed to achieve by asking for help from others.

Many problems in life arise due to narrow-mindedness. If one is broad-minded then one will know that to "travel" here, many vehicles are available. What one could not achieve by making demands could have been achieved by establishing good relations. Where one had failed to establish one's rights through demands and protests, one could have reached one's goal by treading the path of assiduity.

Where one could not control others by displaying anger and becoming provoked one could have won hearts with patience.

## Sacrificing Oneself for Humanity



It was the fourth of November, 1847, when a servant entered the room of his master, a Scottish doctor, to find him lying face-down on the floor alongside two of his colleagues. They appeared to have rolled down from their chairs. The servant thought that perhaps they had drunk too heavily, so he covered them up and quietly went away. But the facts were quite different. The men lying unconscious on the floor were Sir James Simpson (1811-1870) and his two assistants who had inhaled chloroform for the first time ever in order to experience its effects on the human body.

Simpson was the youngest son of a poor baker. At the age of four, he began his education at a village school. As time went on he became so greatly interested in his studies that his father and six brothers agreed that sacrifices must be made for him, so they cut down on their expenses and sent the boy to the city for higher education. So he came to Edinburgh University, where he acquired an M.D. Degree, the highest degree in medicine in those days, thus making himself worthy of his family's self-denial.

During his studies Dr. Simpson had learnt that chloroform possessed certain properties which temporarily benumbed the senses, so he began to conduct research into it, finally coming to the conclusion

that if patients were rendered unconscious by means of chloroform, they could be relieved of severe pain in the course of operations. He continued his research and, by experimenting upon himself, he proved that chloroform could successfully induce harmless anesthesia. This son of a poor baker was thus able to give to humanity, in the words of Dr. Brown, “one of God’s best gifts to his suffering children”.

The secret of the western nations’ leadership of the world can be explained by the existence of such people who have the courage to risk their own lives so that others may be saved from risk—who have the courage, in other words, to sacrifice themselves for humanity.

## A Nation's Progress



**H**ow does so miraculous a thing as a tree come into being? It is by a tiny seed giving itself up to the task, sacrificing itself so that a lush, verdant tree can grow out of the ground. And how is a house built? Ask the bricks from which it is built, and they will tell you that it is through some of them having buried themselves. That is how a structure comes to stand erect.

And that is the way that man should construct his own life as well—through sacrifice. It is only if some of the individuals making up a society are ready to sacrifice their own futures that the future of humanity will take a constructive turn. And no community will prosper if a

certain number of its members are not willing to accept adversity—even ruin—as their lot in life. Construction stands upon the bedrock of sacrifice. That is one of the immutable laws of nature. It applies in every walk of life—in the human world, just as in nature.

Every construction has a top, which we can all see. But we sometimes forget about the base, for it lies buried, deep in the ground. Yet, it is upon this invisible base that the whole building rests. There has to be this foundation and, in order to lay it, there have to be individuals who are prepared, figuratively speaking, to bury themselves in the ground. That is what is meant by sacrifice.

An individual might, in a fit of emotion, give his very life for some cause, but that is not what sacrifice is all about. Real sacrifice means taking a part so small and so inconspicuous in constructive work that it is almost invisible, and this, no matter how prolonged the period or how far off ultimate success appears to be. It entails a struggle which offers neither fame nor wealth; it is to 'bury' oneself in order to build, to forge a future by giving up the present.

The progress of the entire nation is dependent upon there being some elements of society who are ready to make such sacrifices. They are the seeds which, buried in the ground, give life to humanity; they are bricks on whose foundation mankind builds anew.

## Dedication to a Noble Cause



Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) had undertaken long journeys in search of truth before he reached the shores of Kanyakumari. Spotting a small island one furlong off the coast, he swam out to it, and there engaged himself in meditation. After some time, he returned to the shore and devoted himself to the propagation of Hinduism.

A large centre has now been established on this island at a cost of 2 crore rupees. The construction, begun after Independence, was completed in 1970. The main aim of the centre is “man-making”. When it made an appeal for the recruitment of workers, dozens of highly educated men and women, as well as hundreds of young volunteers, responded to the call and dedicated their lives to continuing Vivekananda’s mission. They became life workers for this cause.

Dr. H.R. Nigendar is one of these dedicated volunteers. Previously, he held a high position in the Space Flight Centre in America, but is now content with the modest life that the centre has to offer him. He does not feel out of place there. “A scientist’s job,” he said, “is to search for truth, and my search is continuing. Earlier it was in mechanical engineering, now it is in human engineering.”

At present, the Vivekananda Centre is concentrating



its work in four particular fields—education, rural development, Yoga research and the publication of literature. Hundreds of people have abandoned comfortable lives and high positions to engage in the quiet, constructive work that the Centre is conducting in various states around the country. In the words of Dr. Nigendar, “It is a rich life indeed—rich in job satisfaction.”

A living nation alone can produce highly-talented individuals, whose intellectual prowess makes them alive to lofty ideals and who are ready to dedicate their lives to a noble cause. If people of high intelligence are not ready to dedicate their lives to high ideals, but engage instead in base pursuits, then all one can say is that such a nation has lost all vision and vitality.

## Taking Account of Unforeseen Circumstances



A woman belonging to Lima in South America, having failed to find a satisfactory job, made up her mind to try her luck in North America, an affluent country. Too poor to afford an air fare, she conceived the notion of shutting herself inside a suitcase and having herself dispatched as a piece of luggage. The plan was carried out.

The plane which carried her landed at the Los Angeles

International airport. All the bags of the passengers were unloaded from the aeroplane for collection. All but one suitcase was uncollected. The police, therefore, intervened to open this abandoned suitcase and take into custody the goods inside so that it could be handed over to the claimant whenever he turned up. Much to their horror, they unlocked it to find the corpse of a woman. Detectives were called in to investigate the case. They said: "The woman may have been crushed by the weight of other luggage." (UPI)

This incident serves to illustrate one of life's truths: taking whatever steps we feel are necessary does not, in itself, ensure our success. This is because there are so many external and unforeseen factors involved which impinge upon the course of our actions. We must take them into account whenever we are deciding upon a course of action. It is only when these factors are in consonance with the step taken, that we can hope to reach our destination.

This state of affairs takes a more critical turn when the person in question is a leader and he goes wrong in framing a policy which involves the whole nation. This is bound to cause widespread misery, if not total ruin. It is, therefore, imperative that a leader be as discreet and careful as possible in his decision-making. He should consider all of the possible pros and cons. He should look before he leaps. His failing to do so would amount to an unpardonable offence. It would be far better for him to take no action at all than to plunge the whole nation into strife and torment.

## The Awakening of the Conscience



The Imam of the mosque woke up some time before the dawn prayer. He went out of the mosque for some purpose and saw a man opening his shop. As it was still dark and to open a shop so early in the morning was quite unusual, he stopped and looked at him. He suddenly thought, “What will this man do first after entering this dark shop?” After thinking for a second he decided that the man would first switch on the light, because he would not be able to do anything while it was still dark inside the shop. Now he stood there looking at the shopkeeper to see if his guess was right. His guess was right. After opening the door of the shop, the shopkeeper reached first for the light switch. Now there was light inside the shop. Now the shopkeeper went inside and started doing his work.

By this example we can also understand the concerns of religion and the community or nation. A light has first to be switched on before doing religious or communal work. That means creating awareness of the conscience. To brighten a dark house or shop it requires light. In the same way, to carry out any real and profitable good work in the community or nation, the first requirement is to make the individuals of the community conscientious. The ability to think and understand has to be fostered. Without the light of conscience in the individual, no work of any value can be done.

## Planting the Tree of the Nation



The former U.S President, John F. Kennedy, referring to Lyautey, once remarked:

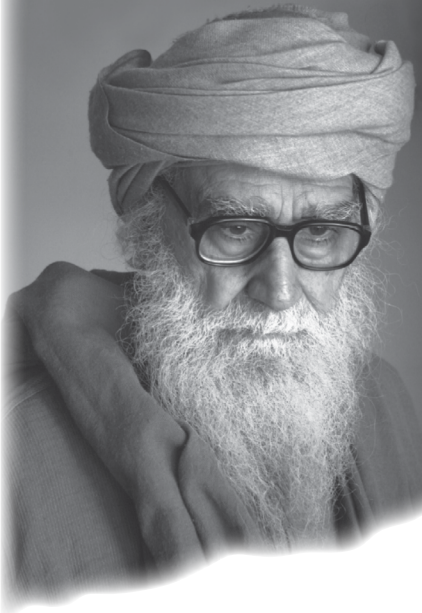
“I once asked my gardener to plant a tree. The gardener objected that the tree was slow growing and would not reach maturity for a hundred years. I replied, ‘In that case there is no time to lose, plant it in the afternoon.’” (Chartered Accountant Supplement, New Delhi, 1979)

The growth and development of a nation is likewise a lengthy affair, and there has to be a tremendous input at both the individual and national levels before it finally bursts into bloom and finds the position of honour and glory that it merits in world affairs. But whenever any such proposition is put to the people, they are quick to point out that no one can wait for a national policy to mature if it is going to take a hundred years. The only answer to this is: “In that case, we cannot afford to lose even a single moment. We must plant our ‘tree’ this very minute.”

If it takes a mighty tree one hundred years to reach its full stature, whoever wishes to possess such a tree has no option but to tend it for that period. If, instead of nurturing it with care and skill, people come out on to the streets and launch a strike campaign in the name of trees, or gather in some open place or march through

the streets shouting slogans about it, they will never possess a single tree, far less own an orchard.

Similarly, you cannot own a house by making eloquent speeches about the need for one. It would be the crassest stupidity to do so. Neither can a nation fortify itself by working miracles only in the field of politics. In the rarefied world of poetry, revolutions can occur as a result of a mere play on words. A demagogue can make impassioned speeches and attract great crowds. But real results can be achieved only by long-term planning and unflagging, dedicated effort. Needless to say, the two great virtues which are indispensable in the struggle are patience and fortitude.



**Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021)** was an Islamic spiritual scholar who adopted peace as the mission of his life. Known for his Gandhian views, he considered non-violence as the only method to achieve success. Keeping this ideal consistently before him, he had written over 200 books on Islam and a commentary on the Quran. His most recent publication is *The Prophet of Peace: The Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad* (Penguin Books). Internationally recognized for his contributions to world peace, he had received, among others, the Demiurgus Peace International Award, the Padma Bhushan, and the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavna Award.

CPS International, the Centre for Peace and Spirituality is an organization, which aims to promote and reinforce the culture of peace through mind-based spirituality. Non-profit-making and non-political in nature, it is engaged in promoting peace and spirituality through inter-faith efforts. Drawing inspiration from the Quran, the preserved word of God, and the Sunnah, the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, the Centre seeks to share the spiritual principles of Islam with the world and to reveal its true face, based as it is on peace, tolerance and co-existence.

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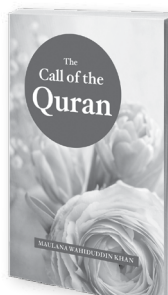
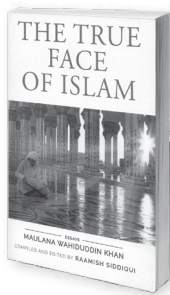
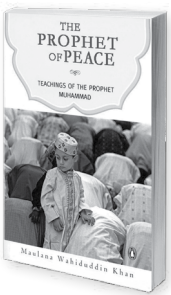
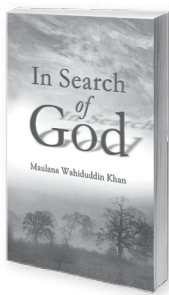
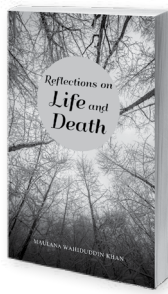
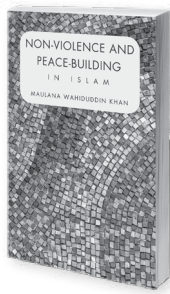
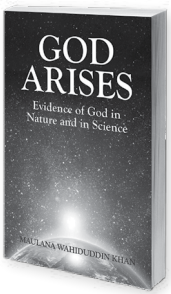
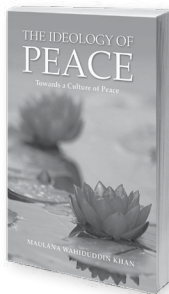
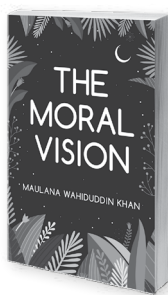
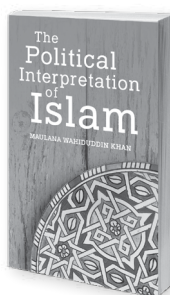
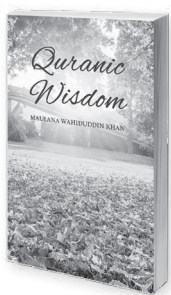
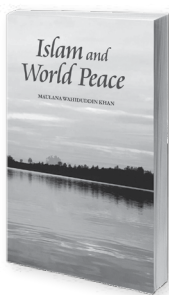
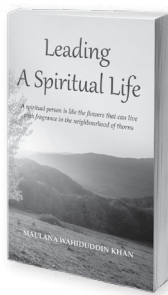
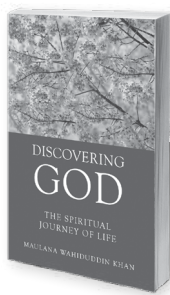
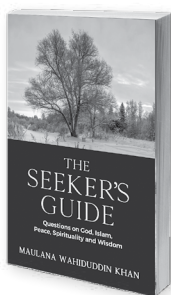
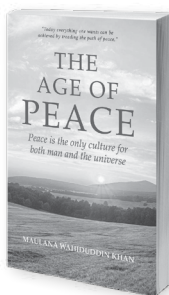
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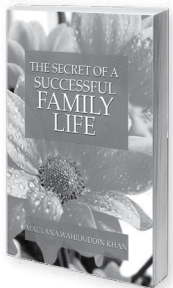
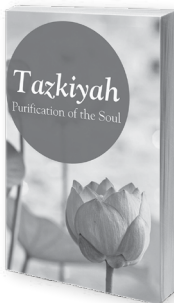
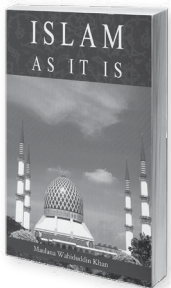
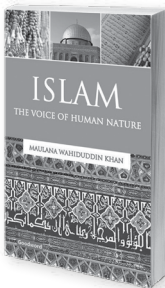
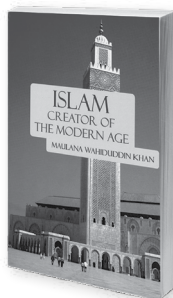
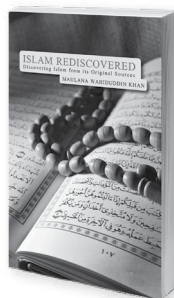
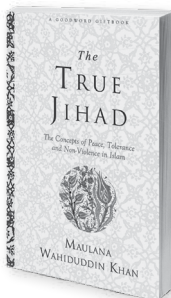
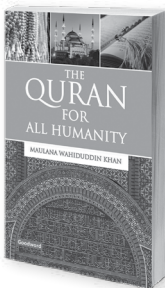
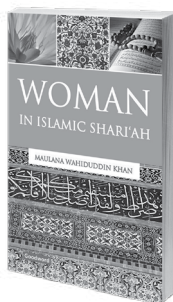
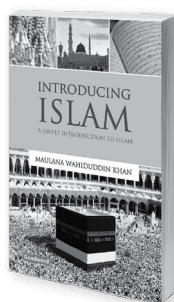
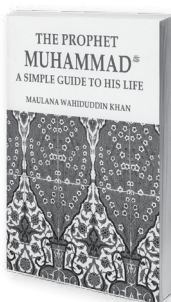
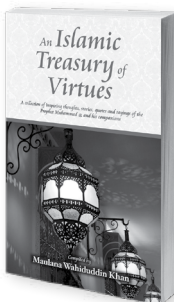
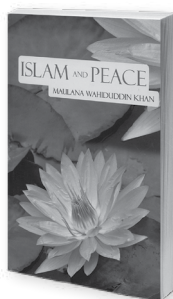
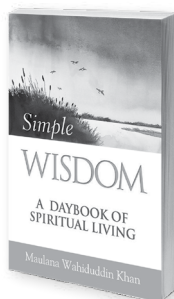
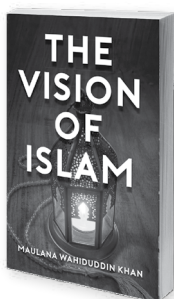
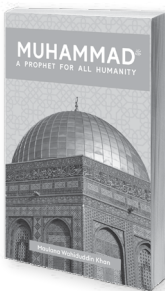
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# Books on Peace and Spirituality by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan











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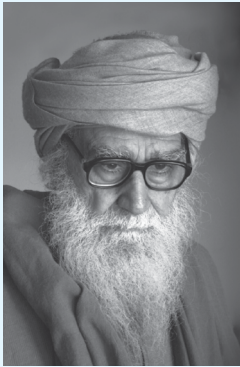
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The various examples offered by the author in this book help enlighten and reveal the latent potentialities and inner reserves of a human being. In usual, ordinary circumstances one's energies are in a dormant state, but the moment a person experiences a situation of challenge or a shock, the mind brainstorms in remarkable ways, channelizing itself in directions and surmounting hurdles one had never imagined one could go past. The book, through practical experiences, provides illumination to an individual about the tremendous power and capacity that one encloses within oneself. Instead of becoming dejected and dispirited, one should reflect and seek creative ways in which one can put to use one's inner reserves.



**Maulana Wahiduddin Khan** (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual leader and peace activist. His work has received international recognition for his seminal contributions toward world peace. The Maulana authored over 200 books dealing with Islam's spiritual wisdom, the Prophet's non-violent approach, Islam's relation with modernity and other contemporary issues. His English translation of the Quran is widely appreciated as simple, clear and easily understandable. He founded *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International* in 2001 to popularize the culture of peace and share the spiritual message of Islam with people.

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