

Failures Are the Pillars of Success

That failures are the pillars of success is amply proved if we follow the life profile of the celebrated US President Abraham Lincoln who never gave up in spite of a steady stream of failures and defeats chasing him one after another before his ultimate elevation as the President of the United States of America.

Abraham Lincoln is probably the greatest example of dogged persistence. If we want to learn about somebody who didn't quit despite repeated failures only to savour the fruit of success eventually, we should look no further. Seeing the trajectory of his life, one can easily say that no defeat is final until we stop trying. Born into poverty, Lincoln was faced with defeat through an extended period of his life. He lost eight elections, twice failed in business and suffered a nervous breakdown. He could have quit many times, but he didn't and because he didn't quit, he became one of the greatest Presidents in the history of the United States of America.

With the above illustration, one can easily say that failure is not about getting knocked down. It is actually about not trying to get up after being knocked down. If we decide to grovel in the dust after we fall down, the chances are we shall continue there till we decide to lift ourselves up. Getting onto the success chariot is completely optional and depends a great deal on our own attitude. When we are desirous of success, we should also be ready for failures and mistakes on our way. We should never be afraid of failures or mistakes.

When life gives us 100 reasons to cry, we should come out with 1000 reasons to smile. We should face our past without regret, handle our present with confidence and prepare for the future without fear. We should keep the faith and drop the fear. While it is always better that one starts early and decides on one's life goal or ambition right in the morning of one's life, but as they say, it is never too late for anything good and positive. What one needs are planning, strong determination, devotion, dedication and hard work.

One should plan one's work and then right away put one's shoulder to the wheel to work one's plan. Remember, the late starters always have to put in more efforts than others, as they have a lot of 'catching up' to do. And, therefore, should be accordingly ready to put in the

required effort. But once we have decided to start an enterprise, then we should take care not to postpone any further decision to a future date, at least, for those which could be taken today itself. Who knows we can still be that proverbial early bird, which could still fancy its chances at catching the worm. What one means to say is that it is never too late to be whoever you want to be. We ought to live a life we are proud of and if we find that we are not, we should have the strength to start all over again.

The only thing that comes to us without any effort is our old age and the only place where success comes before work is a dictionary. So, there is no alternative to hard work and there is never a short-cut to success. We should, therefore, always keep one thing in mind. It is not because things are difficult that we don't dare. It is because we don't dare that things become difficult. There are many opportunities awaiting us all around, but we should have an eye to identify the same. Many people don't recognise the best of opportunities because they are always disguised as hard work and a gruelling spell of struggle.

William Arthur said, 'opportunities are like sunrises. If you wait too long, you can miss them'. So, we should wake up early to be in time to glimpse and enjoy the sunrise of success. Therefore, one should have all those qualities in oneself that go into the making of a person worthy of an exalted position. Only then one can be worthy of glimpsing heavenly sunrises of continual success in one's life.

Always remember, the bottom of any profession may be crowded, but there shall always be room at the top, the place we should fancy to occupy. As Margaret Thatcher said, 'People think that at the top, there is not much room. They tend to think of it as an Everest. My message is that there is tons of room at the top'. There may actually be many people around, but the supply of capable people never meets the demand. So, we should make ourselves worthy or capable enough that people or the jobs need us more than we need them. If hard work and success have often been found to be married, it is because fortune has always favoured the brave. But we can't think of reaching the top position right in the beginning. One has to patiently work hard for the same. Always remember, the only job that starts at the top is when we dig a grave.

There would always be hurdles and they would be legion, but always remember that pearl of wisdom that 'when the going gets tough, the tough gets going'. After all, something as elusive as success never goes through a short-cut. Be sure that if the going gets very easy, that simply means we are going downhill. Swami Vivekananda rightly said, 'In a day when you don't come across any problems, you can be sure that you are travelling in a wrong path'.

In keeping with the Protestant Ethic that the celebrated social scientist Max Weber talked about, we should always try to find our deliverance in our success, to proclaim through our success that we are the 'chosen ones'. So even though we should be content and frugal in our personal comforts and convenience, we should not be satisfied with our success and should keep shifting the goal-posts to attain yet another height of success. If we keep sitting on our laurels for long, it may go flat soon. All of us should, therefore, always keep working hard as much as possible to stay the best because, today it is 'survival of the fittest'.

Hence, we should not rest on our oars. If we rest on our oars for long, the fierce cyclone of competition may soon sink our boat. As said above, once we have achieved one particular

goal, then we should shift the goal-post, set a new target for ourselves, and goad ourselves with a renewed vigour and determination to realise the same. As they rightly say, success is not a destination. It is a journey. Remember, the water, which stays logged at a particular place for a long time, soon starts stinking, but flowing water remains fresh and clean, something always of use to anyone and everyone. The river water is sweeter than the sea water because a river is always flowing while the sea water is stagnant forever.

There are two kinds of failures, one who think and never do and those who do and never think. Finding sometime every day for reflecting on our recent action is always good. Just think of the outcome of the action we took recently and whether they could have been better had we done the same differently. Whether the action we took was the best available option or whether we were just swayed by the circumstances or our emotions to do what we actually did. Such reflections are very helpful for our individual growth. So, it is good to sit alone for some time every day. But when we sit, we need not sit with our past alone. We should sit alone to dream about our future. And future is not what we plan for tomorrow. It is the result of what we do today. So we should do the best in present and enjoy the future.

Hence, once we think and decide about something, we should do it. And after we have done it, we should not forget to do a post-facto analysis of what we did to take our learnings and lessons to pre-empt future mistakes to do the same work with more finesse. As they say, failures are never about getting knocked down, but it is about not making enough efforts to get up after we are knocked down. The ocean waves are our inspiration here. Not because they rise and fall but because each time they fall, they never fail to rise again.

We should always have the determination of a mirror, which never loses its ability to reflect in spite of it being broken into pieces. So, we ought to find time at the end of the each day or at the end of our each action to do a dispassionate analysis of the same. This habit shall help us take better decisions in future. Once we embrace negative news or feedback, not as a negative but as evidence of a need for a positive change, we are not defeated by it. We are actually learning from it.

We should always remember that another chance may come up, another friend, a new love, a renewed strength. We should be persistent and look for happiness in every day. The sure path to failure is to give up. It is often through failure that future success comes. So next time we lose, ensure that we don't lose the lesson. When we fall in any way, we should not see the place where we fell. We should see the place where we slipped. Life is all about correcting our mistakes. As Thomas Alva Edison said, "I will not say I failed 1000 times. I will say that I discovered there are 1000 ways that can cause failure".

Salient Points

- Failure is not about getting knocked down. It is actually about not trying to get up after being knocked down.
- When life gives us 100 reasons to cry, we should come out with 1000 reasons to smile.
- The only thing that comes without any effort is old age and the only place where success comes before work is a dictionary.

- It is not because things are difficult that we don't dare. It is because we don't dare that things become difficult.
- Opportunities are always disguised as hard work.
- When the going gets tough, the tough gets going.
- In a day when you don't come across any problems, you can be sure that you are travelling in a wrong path.
- If we keep sitting on our laurels for long, they may go flat soon.
- The river water is sweeter than the sea water because a river is always flowing while the sea water is stagnant forever.
- Sea waves are inspiring not because they rise and fall but because each time they fall, they never fail to rise again.
- A mirror never loses its ability to reflect in spite of it being broken into pieces.

Glossary

Steady: not shaking or moving

Trajectory: the path followed by a projectile flying

Dogged: having tenacity and persistence

Savour: to enjoy

Illustration: example

Exalted: at a high or powerful level

Legion: a vast number of people or things

Elusive: difficult to catch or achieve

Frugal: economical

Celebrated: famous

Laurel: honour

Vigour: strength