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Difficulties and Calamities

In the roaring sea of life there are storms as well as mountain high waves. The high-rise waves of incidents and accidents try to block the paths of great people. Success comes only those who pave their way by tearing the oceans of difficulties riding on the ship of wisdom and planning, and plough through the seas of hardships with the help of the oars of knowledge and intelligence. All this requires firmness as described before.

The remarkable point is that the existence of difficulties is one of the causes of success. Some people do not realize this easily, but if they think over it they would realize that just as the heat of fire strengthens steel, difficulties and hardships make the imagination and thinking of man more sharp and teach him the lesson of living.

Strong and powerful people are those who were brought up amidst difficulties and hardships because they alone knew how to cope up with adversities, but those who are nourished in comfort and ease are like delicate and tender flowers, which fall down even by a cold whiff of breeze.

The Master of the Pious, Ali (a.s), who was exemplarily strong physically, extraordinarily high spiritually and unparalleled in steadfast when in difficulties, in his letter to his governor in Basra, Usman bin Hamid, after describing a little about his own simple food, in a part of that communication, writes: I understand, some of you will say that when Ali bin Abu Talib takes so little food, he must have become extremely weak physically and too feeble to stand before the enemy. But, remember that the wood of a forest tree is hard, whereas, the skin of fresh and green tree is thin and delicate and that the forest tinder flares up sooner and keeps on burning longer.

The trees growing on riverbanks live at ease and are not habituated to storms. But the jungle trees are nourished in tough weather. They grow up in hardships and are fed by the scorching sun, hot winds and scant water.

The communities living in hills and vales are stronger than those who pass their lives in cities and towns. People living in mountains, though deprived of many comforts of life, are able to bear and tolerate more heat and cold as compared to the city-dwellers.

When calamity befalls one he uses his intelligence to find out ways of removing it. Really speaking hardships raise the capability of finding solutions of problems and treatments of ailments. Thus difficulties provide steps to climb the ladder to success.

Those who have earned name and fame in the field of science and industry have tolerated difficulties almost throughout their lives.

Therefore, Napoleon used to say, "Hardships sharpen man's intelligence, which result in a better gain. Goethe says, "The storms of incidents strengthen the soul and morale of man."

Parents who always want to save their children from every kind of hardship make them tender. They are suffering from a serious misunderstanding. Such tender children tremble like thin leaves in times of stormy weather and fear every breeze. The burdens of life break them down pitiably. But those who have suffered hazards and tough times keep standing like mountains. Stormy winds cannot harm them at all. Similarly floods always digs up soft ground but hard soil remains intact amidst floods.

The deluge of difficulties proves ineffective in front of tough and sturdy men. Feeble persons cannot stand straight even on their own legs.

The calamities of life provide man with a treasure of experiences and become a ladder to climb up to success and progress. Man gains experience only through hardships. In the light of those experiences he does only those deeds continuously that give him advantage. He marches forward crushing the mountains of hardships under his feet. No calamity can ever come in the path of his advancement. When the arrows of distress hit his chest he tolerates the pain with a smiling face.

Nietzsche says: I love you so much; I wish you should see pains and sorrows. I show no mercy to you in this matter because I really love you. You already know, why? It is so because I wish that your hidden abilities should blossom and that you should combat hard times with an armed soul.

In the words of Nasir Khusro: Man never becomes perfect until he sees sorrow and difficulties. Can a flower spread fragrance without suffering the onslaught of winds and rains?

It would not be wrong to say that the success our children is hidden in hardships. If we say that steel becomes harder after entering fire, a knife becomes sharper only after being grinded on hard rock, it is the same truth.

A brave Persian named Nadir Shah was a great warrior. His wisdom, acquaintance with his job and his zeal are all recorded in books of history. He had undertaken his task in the most difficult condition. In those days a few Afghans had subdued the ancient Persians. Ottoman Turks had occupied the north—western part of Iran, England and Holland were holding southern Iran and the Persian Gulf was in their hands and they intended to make south Iran a second India.

Nadir Shah was finding it difficult to manage law and order due to the luxurious life of his predecessors. But then a brave man like Nadir Shah arose, who was brought up in scorching heat and on burning sandy lands and which had made him accustomed to face and combat all kinds of hazards and wars. The difficulties of life and the disgraceful condition of Iran had turned his body and soul as strong as the collective bodies of the Persian masses.

Employing his enraged soul and his rock-like determination, he cleared Iran of the enemies and thus his name began to be listed as the world's most outstanding warriors.

Torments and tribulations polish man's personality, because he uses his mental faculties for removing difficulties. Hence wise people say that games and sports raise the mental abilities of a child because in the course of games and sports he faces some sort of difficulties and uses his intelligence to remove them.

From this viewpoint, unless there are storms of difficulties many capabilities cannot grow. Hardships and calamities are like a strict teacher whose class scores the best marks.

Objection raised by Materialists

They say if God is Merciful then why has He engulfed man in calamities? What is the philosophy behind all these problems?

How are these hardships in conformity with God's justice and Mercy as theists claim?

But these worshippers of the material world have ignored one point and it is that these difficulties and hardships too have an aspect of psychological advantage. It is a fact that man does not realize the importance of ease and health until he comes across calamities. Moreover, it is essential to stem the hardships because man requires a warning signal in his life that he may defend himself. If there were no difficulties, man would become selfish and proud. From this angle, these troubles wash off the rust deposited on hearts and fill them with compassion and mercy.

We must never hope that we can achieve a great goal without facing difficulties. Many scientists have succeeded only because of hardships and dearth of means. For example:

Ferguson manufactured a wooden clock with the help of a little knife.

Newton analyzed light with the help of a binocular and a piece of paper and postulated the theory of seven colors.

When the laboratory of the physicist, Weston was visited, only a few bottles, some pieces of papers, a watch and a thermometer were found therein.

Ferguson used to walk out of the town during nights, lie on the open ground under the sky, gazing at the stars measuring the distance between them with the help of a rosary.

A famous space scientist Wittonhouse used to calculate details about solar and lunar eclipses with the help of a small farming implement.

Hardships adorn man with the virtues of manliness. All the high positions, be they material or spiritual, are the fruits of hardships. It is incumbent upon them to overcome the difficulties.

Saib Tabrizi says: Until polished, defects remain in a mirror. One who stubs his toes becomes an expert in his field.

This is really true. The possibility of victory is less for those who have enjoyed ease from the beginning of their lives and are afraid of difficulties. But the youth who has seen both hardship and comfort is more likely to lead his life successfully, because he has already learnt to face calamities right from his childhood.

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