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"Wonder is the beginning of wisdom"

It was the period of WW2. In one of the labs, was working Dr. Alexander Fleming. He was doing research on bacterial cultures. As a result of which, there were many petri dishes with bacterial colonies. However, due to some reasons, he had to leave his lab. When he returned back, to his wonder, he discovered that all but one plate had grown bacterial cultures despite him being regular with cleaning them before leaving lab. He attributed it probably to some suspended bacterial mass in damp air of the laboratory. But, his greatest wonder was absence of growth in one petri dish.

This wonder led him to further study. The result was discovery of 'magic bullet' Penicillin, an antibiotic which saved millions of life during WW2.

In this essay, we shall further explore the given topic searching answers to questions like what is wisdom, why wonder is beginning of it, how can we develop 'wonder' in ourselves, does wonder always lead to wisdom etc.

WISDOM : THE ULTIMATE KNOWLEDGE

Wisdom should not be equated with information. Rather it is the

knowledge which helps us to navigate highs and lows of life.

It is not just sourced from schools or educational institutes. Even so called "uneducated", illiterate person can be wise. This wisdom

emanates from practical experiences, elders, texts, literature, nature

etc. You think of anything, you will find wisdom from it.

Hence, no one has any monopoly over it. But there is one

caveat. That, one has to extract it from the source. It is not just freely available.

Once obtained, it can be transmitted down through generations. In

other words, somebody has to "wonder".

WONDER: THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

Have you ever thought how man became settled cultivators from being hunter gatherers? Or how, for that matter, humans shifted from being once "nature fearers" to "nature shapers"? The ultimate answer to these lies in the "wonder" of man.

Wonder can be defined as 'awe' that any object or phenomenon produces in the mind of person which forces it to think about it.

It stimulates intellectual focus of a man which tries to find out answers to questions like what, why, how, when etc.

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It can be safely said that wonder was a crucial driving force for all knowledge production and still continues to be. I am of firm belief, it will be source for future generations too! We have to many instances to substantiate our point.

Consider for example the discipline of "philosophy". There happened so many philosophers who wondered purpose of life and gave various concepts. Whether it be utilitarianism or deontological perspective, it could only be obtained through thinking. Aristotle, Plato were nothing but great wonderers.

Even the six schools of Indian philosophy - Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, Vedanta are case in point.

Moving to realm of politics, we have a wonderful example of French Revolution. It was surely a wonder of 3rd estate which helped them recognise collectively, their exploitation and helped them usher in era of liberty, equality and fraternity. How a single person like 'Chanakya' fared with poor administration of 'Dhanananda', devised strategy which we read today in form of 'Asthashastra'.

'Wonder' was even responsible for emergence of concepts like "Sustainable Development". After industrial revolution by the western world, when its consequences on environment started coming to fore, it led to mindful churning of thoughts as to what should be our way forward. Can we continue to emit harmful gases like SO_2 , NO_2 or we need to transition for greener alternatives.

The result was various global organisations like UNFCCC and agreements like Paris Agreement (2015).

The reflective nature of human mind is also seen in sphere of technology. Emerging concepts

like Artificial intelligence, machine learning, quantum computers etc. show powers of human intelligence. Who knows what is considered impossible like "Time travel" may become a practicality in future?

Not travelling all around but just flipping through pages of our history, will help us realise that it was the middle class intelligentsia who through socio religious reform movements brought a new awakening for the whole nation. Evil practices like untouchability, sati, child marriage was criminalised to create a modern, liberal and

free society. Now, the question arises "who can wonder"?

WHO CAN WONDER? CAN IT BE CULTIVATED?

Through numerous examples cited before in the essay, one may think that it is only the elite, intelligent charismatic people who can wonder and guide the society. However, it is an absolute fallacy.

Every human being is gifted with ultimate potential of thinking. It just depends how we use it.

In spite of this truth, role of education, training, skills etc. cannot be downvalued. This is because these help in pruning

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our ability to analyse, guides it with directions, tells about right and wrong. In other words,

education makes a man conscious of his / her ability to wonder.

Cutting long story short, everyone can wonder but proper training helps in refining that ability.

Now let us try to find out whether wonder always leads to wisdom

IS WONDER SURE SHOT PATH TO WISDOM

Till now, in the essay, we have discussed how all wisdom was obtained through thinking of man. But can we say that, thinking always leads to wisdom?

In the epic of Ramayana, even Ravana wondered. He wondered how to take revenge of his sister's insult. His thinking led him to kidnap 'Mata Sita' in absence of 'Prabhu Ram' and 'Lakshman'.

Looking on to WW2, we find that even Hitler thought as to how to make Germany, a land for superior Aryans? His ingenuity led him to devise infamous "concentration camps".

We have innumerable examples to highlight that wondering can take man / group / society / nation either to "heaven" or "hell" (to put it in a mythological way)

So what is needed?

ETHICAL WONDERING: NEED OF THE HOUR

The ultimate solution lies in the morab of individual and ethics of society. The "wondering" is value neutral. It all depends the way, it is brought to practice. Nuclear energy (a product of man's curiosity) can be used to bomb and kill people (Japan, WW2) or used to light million of lives (electricity production). If we have strong moral foundation of principles like compassion, integrity, collective good, human thinking can be brought to welfare of entire (fe) mankind just like Alexander Fleming did, without patenting Penicillin, for greater good of the world.

- ② "Life contains but two tragedies. One is not to get your heart's desire; the other is to get it"

In these competitive times, there are many aspirants with ardent desire to secure a medical seat, to fulfill their childhood dream of becoming a doctor. Amongst 25 lakh such students, was a boy named Ramu. He was very hardworking, diligent chap who put 10-12 hours everyday in preparation of NEET. As was expected from him, he performed consistently well in periodic tests conducted by his coaching institute. His parents, teachers, peers were expecting him to land into the top medical institute of the country.

Even he didn't failed their expectations. He got the best. But after entering the college, he started doing drugs, bunking his classes, taking studies casually. He who never stood 2nd in his school, got compartment in almost every subject.

may be his fulfilling of heart's desire resulted in this tragedy.

In this essay, we shall look into various aspects like why fulfilling heart's desires and unfulfilled desires result in tragedy, their consequences, are these really tragedy etc.

Life is a precious gift given by God. A man's life is a story

of his desires and his efforts to fulfill them. Though these desires are endless, never ending, still these give some purpose to life of a man.

But what if he fails to fulfill his heart's desire?

TRAGEDY : UNFULFILLED DESIRES

There would be hardly anyone who says that he/she doesn't have any desire. Even ascetics have desire to get 'Moksha' / 'Nirvana'.

To accomplish these desires, a person put in efforts, hardwork sweat and blood. He meets many challenges on the way and try to navigate them through to reach his ultimate destiny.

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Also, these end points keeps on changing with time and maturity and based on their fulfilment.

A child may desire for new toys and games, a school kid desires for friends, good scholastic performance.

An adult thinks of good career prospects and salary. A married person aims for a good spouse and family. An elderly aspires for happy retirement with family support.

A deep thinking beyond an individual's perspective help us analyse how a community wants to preserve its social cohesiveness, society wants stability and peace. A.

nation wants respectable position at the global stage etc.

These desires sometimes become so strong that they overwhelm the individual or entity pursuing them.

The goal may be pious but means to achieve them, become unethical. Goals take precedence over the means. It results

into deceit, corruption, conflicts, instability, chaos, societal break down etc.

For example, an individual may give bribe to get favourable tender from department. A

political party may highlight

Societal fault lines to create a ridge

in society, for political mobilisation

Companies resort to "Greenwashing" to obtain maximum profits in garb of environmental sustainability.

A recent example of Pooja Kherkar who played with the system to become an IAS through fraudulent means, is an apt example in support.

Though, there are many who follow socially approved methods to achieve their goals, the ultimate point, I want to highlight is that 'desires' play a significant role and has an influence on our decision making, conduct actions and behaviour.

What if one still is unable to achieve the desires of heart?

It results in demotivation, frustration, remorse, a non-fulfilling longing, loss of trust in process and value of hardwork. These emotions

have a ripple effect on sur-
roundings. It impacts

mental health leading to anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies.

It impacts interpersonal relationships
breaks families etc. A person

may be pushed into substance
addiction like drinking, drugs

etc. Individual or any entity

with unfulfilled goals may resort

to legal and criminal ways. It

is thus truly a tragedy, not

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only for individual but for whole society.

But, is fulfilling one's desires antidote to tragedy. Let's find out.

TRAGEDY : FULFILLED HEART'S DESIRES

As alluded to story earlier, fulfilling one's goals can too result in a tragedy. This is because

one loses the purpose in life.

He/she becomes aimless and directionless. May be efforts

put in achievement of goals was

too great, one is devoid of

any energy to sustain it

afterwards.

When one is directionless, aimlessly wandering here and there, he/she

becomes vulnerable to evil things.
He/she becomes anomic, feels
alienation. It can have impact on society.

To substantiate my point, let
us revisit our great epics -
Ramayan and Mahabharat.

In Ramayan, Kaikeya had a desire
for throne for her son "Bharat".

She utilized that vow given to
her by Maharaja Dasarath, to
achieve her goals. Now since

she got what she wanted, she
should have been happy, content.

But what occurred following it, was
tragedy. Her husband died in
grief, her son travelled in search
of his elder brother and therefore
ruled in name of his brother.

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Everyone criticised her. Truly, had she known the consequences, she would n't have asked for fulfillment of her desires.

On other hand, in Mahabharat, Kaurvas in order to fulfill their desire to avenge their insult by Draupadi, led to 'Mahabharat' which led to end of their dynasty. Truly, it was a huge tragedy for them.

Through these examples, one might become confused as to how one should live in life. Whether one should aspire for fulfillment of desires or not and whether tragedy is the ultimate reality?

NOT ALWAYS A TRAGEDY

Contrary to viewpoint expressed in above paragraphs, not always a fulfilled or unfulfilled desire, result in a tragedy.

Sometimes such desires become source of inspiration and motivation.

They keep the "fire inside belly" burning. They constantly push

one to strive harder and stronger.

'Thomas Alva Edison' couldn't have built a bulb, had n't unfulfilled desire motivated him to try "one

more". 'Abraham Lincoln' couldn't have become President had he accepted defeats in earlier elections.

Even our ISRO could achieve success only after its failed attempt at Chandrayan 2.

MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

It is ultimately a matter of attitude and perspective with which we say our attempts as "success" + "failures".

One should have good moral character to judge right from wrong.

As our Bhagwat Gita also preaches, our focus should be on "Nishkama Karma" i.e. fulfilling our duties without fearing for results. Our goals and means should both be

ethical. Learning from mistakes

and making conscious efforts not to repeat them, is a step in right direction. Always believe

that no goal is the final destination.

"Every achievement sets a new

target". Ultimately, we should

not become like that medical aspirant!!