

Perspective

Turning Seventy-two

By Musafir

When growing up, I wanted to be important and famous. Many a time I'd fantasize becoming the prime minister of India with millions of followers admiring me. I fancied to be like other important people with great prowess. In my late youth and middle age, when the reality set in, I regretted and brooded over not being famous and important.

I didn't realize that those who become famous in any field work towards their goals with exceptional resilience; face rejections and disappointments but never quit. Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Outlier* mentions that it needs at least 10,000 hours of practice to master any skill. The athletes, musicians, politicians and all famous people do that. I realized very late that I neither had a clear goal nor the dedication and concentration to do what famous people do. I felt that I was a failure because I was not famous and, thus, considered myself irrelevant.

I studied lives of some of the greatest icons of our time and was amazed at their goal setting, dedication and training that made them excel in their chosen fields. We only look at the glamor, wealth and fame that comes with the territory. We also need to

know about the grueling routine and rigid discipline they maintain.



Mohammad Ali was the greatest boxer of our time. We know him as someone who was famous; was a champion and a showman. Casual observers of boxing might not realize this, but fights aren't always won in the ring. More often, they are won in the gym, where creaking bag stands, rhythmic taps of the jump-rope and crashes of leather on skin are requirements long before the final bell on fight night. Muhammad Ali knew this and acted

on it. "I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit.' Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion," said Mohammad Ali. Any successful person can tell you, talent gets you nowhere fast unless you're prepared to put in the work to nurture it.

Beethoven rose at daybreak, no matter what season, and went at once to his work-table. There he worked until two or three o'clock, when he took his midday meal. In the interim he usually ran out into the open two or three times, where he also "worked while walking". They never varied with the seasons and neither cold nor heat were noticed.

Beethoven was a sick kid to his dying day. Throughout his life he would suffer from deafness, colitis, rheumatism, rheumatic fever, typhus, skin disorders, abscesses, and a variety of infections, inflammatory degeneration of the arteries, jaundice, chronic hepatitis, and cirrhosis of the liver. Despite his limitations, Beethoven always worked hard to ensure a comfortable living by giving piano lessons, writing work commissioned by wealthy Viennese residents, and, of course, working on his own music.

The name Walt Disney is now synonymous with iconic film characters and the world-famous theme parks that bear his name, but in the early days, he was just a man with an artistic itch. He wanted to show the world what happens when you mix elements of fantasy with reality. His goal was always to mold the impossible in with the possible, and he defined his progress more by how each individual felt and reacted to his creations than by general perception. Between 1931 and 1968, Disney was nominated for 59 Academy Awards, winning 22 of them. That's the second most nominations out of anybody else and the most wins ever.

According to him, "the only reward of going through the process of work is more work. While there is a notion in our culture that sees work as something to be done until you don't need to do it anymore, the truth is that, if you truly respect and value whatever your work is, the real benefit of working is actually the ability to continue to do more of it."

Narendra Modi was the most effective chief minister of Gujrat and is the prime minister of India. He worked towards this goal relentlessly from his youth. He was drawn to politics in his early teens. During the 1960's India-Pakistan war, even though he was only a young boy, he volunteered to serve soldiers traveling through railway stations. As a youth, he became a member of student body involved in anti-corruption. After working in trenches, he was nominated as a representative in the BJP

(the present ruling party of India). Narendra Modi has come from a humble background. He has a reputation of being a workaholic and introvert.

As I turn 72, I feel that the notion of irrelevance or unimportance is actually a state of mind that stops us from appreciating ourselves. We should learn from the lives of important and famous people without envying them. At the same time we should occasionally take an account of successes we have achieved in our own lives. It is very vital for us to create a permanent source of importance for ourselves. Such permanent importance can come only by continual investment in our relationships and in the development of uplifting qualities in our personality which eventually lead us to the growth of our eternal consciousness.

Recently I have mended many broken relationships. This is something that I am proud of. In fact, the real sense of importance and relevance comes from helping the helpless and earning their admiration and gratitude. Heartfelt appreciation and admiration from the people around us is the real intoxicant or aphrodisiac. However, helping others with a selfish motive is said to be spiritually degrading. Lord Krishna in the Gita says that we should indulge in duties without any expectation, but I am not perfect yet. That gives me something to look forward to.

I have achieved the greatest gift of life by shedding old grudges and forgiving others. I enjoy spending more time with my relatives and friends, learning new things, upgrading my skills and enjoying others despite their imperfectness. Instead of crying over spilt milk I spend quality time in rediscovering myself to enjoy the present moment in the divine company of my friends, colleagues and family members. This uplifts me spiritually to the next world or dimension when I finally expire. As John Milton said in his sonnet, On His Blindness, "They also serve who only stand and wait."