

BATTLE OF IDENTITY

By Ambuj Dixit



Is it not ironic that while we love the blossoming life, we try to avoid the very process that leads to the blossoming - the process of challenges.

It seems to me that the purpose of human life is to grow. When I look back at the moments or the phases through which I have grown, I see them as times that tested me to transcend what I felt were my limitations; be it starting my own business venture with a bagful of doubts about my capabilities, or be it a moment of extreme anger in which I consciously decided not to identify with the anger. These phases had a common factor that we call 'challenges'. I feel that the universe has it made it so by design!

When I think of challenges, I am reminded of

Ramdhari Singh Dinkar's poetry. In his signature style, this celebrated laureate summarises *The Mahabharata* in a poetic rendition comprising 7 chapters in a work titled *Rashmi Rathi*. In his third chapter he describes how the 12 years of exile, filled with difficult trials, strengthened the Pandavas and prepared them for the battle to come. In a humble attempt to share my inspiration, I have translated a few verses below, knowing that my English will not do justice to the poetry and subtle innuendoes of the original. Therefore I apologize in advance to the reader.

Dinkarji invokes virtues like courage, determination, and self-belief, to say that it is only because of challenges that we get the opportunity to harness and sharpen our virtues and rise to our potential.

There is first a need to identify the right battles and recognise the vulnerabilities that become hurdles in becoming a better self. Then there is the need to accept and commit to improve.





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*पावक में कनक-सदृश तप कर,
वीरत्व लिए कुछ और प्रखर*

*Well tested and purified like gold in fire,
With more valour and shine.*

Here, the years of exile are described as fierce tests leading to discovery and the strengthening of virtuous qualities, of which the Pandavas were not aware earlier. What if I say that these tests are not limited to the Pandavas alone? Don't we all go through them on an everyday basis? For some it starts with their disagreement with the alarm clock, for others in their inability to resist that pastry that they know they should avoid. Our battles take place in our moments of fear, discomfort, dislike, irritation, insecurity, including the Monday morning blues that many of us experience. And, every time we struggle and fight the fear, we are in that moment, it seems, facing the greatest battle of our lives.

At such times, there is first a need to identify the

right battles and recognise the vulnerabilities that become hurdles in becoming a better self. Then there is the need to accept and commit to improve. When failing to keep up with our New Year resolutions, for example, the challenge lies not just in failing, but also in falling into the trap of guilt.

Dinkarji goes a step further saying that the brave do not let the trials bring them down.

*शूरमा नहीं विचलित होते,
क्षण एक नहीं धीरज खोते,
विघ्नों को गले लगाते हैं,
काँटों में राह बनाते हैं।*

*The brave are affected not,
Not for a moment do they lose patience,
In embracing obstacles,
They carve out a path from among thorns.*

Once these battles are recognised, there comes the time to be brave and courageous, to charge forward, and choose to fight the

battle no matter how many times one might fail, because the real victory is the steadfast ability to persevere in the fight against weakness, to assert the identity of a warrior. Hence there is a need to value the process, rather than the result. With perseverance and patience, sooner or later we will overcome our weaknesses and destroy the enemy.

*जो आ पड़ता सब सहते हैं,
उद्योग-निरत नित रहते हैं,
शूलों का मूल नसाने को,
बढ़ खुद विपत्ति पर छाने को।*

*They brave whatever comes their way,
Persistent in their endeavours,
To eradicate the cause of trouble,
To overcome the root of misery.*

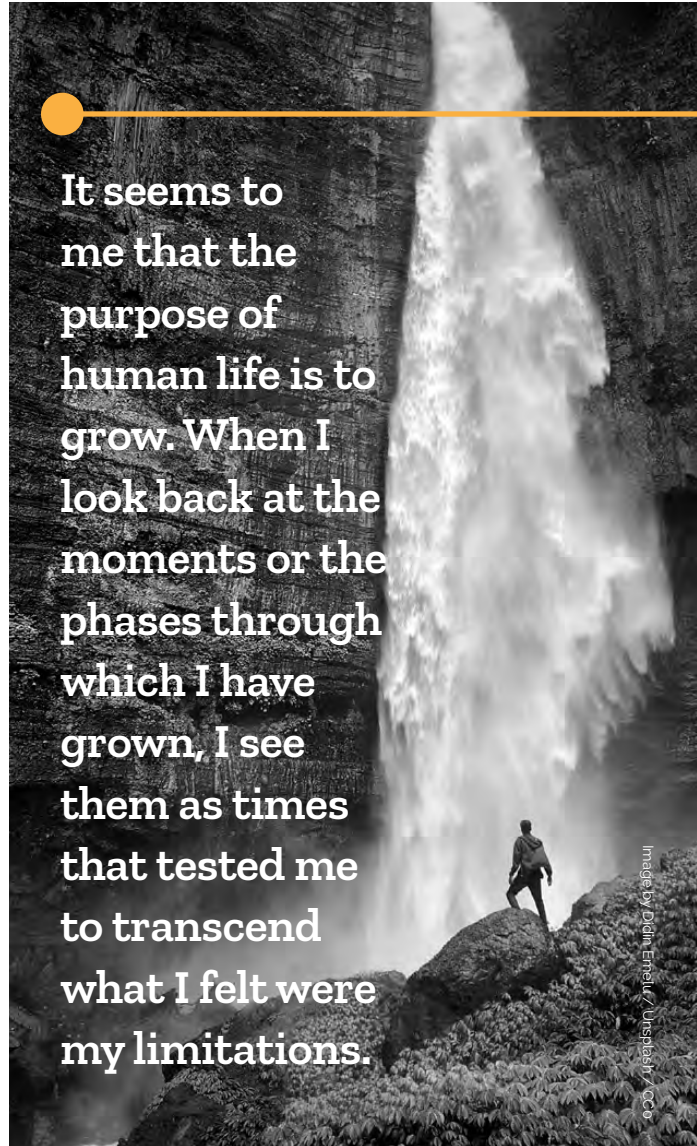
But who is the enemy? Siding with weakness is the enemy. When all the inner voices are shouting for comfort, convenience, familiarity, ambition, and security, it is difficult to discern between what is really good for us, and what is just another hurdle. With observation and actualization time and again, we purify ourselves; the process through which we struggle and learn to conquer our fears, need for comfort, and our false limitations.

*वाटिका और वन एक नहीं,
आराम और रण एक नहीं।
वर्षा, अंधड़, आतप अखंड,
पौरुष के हैं साधन प्रचण्ड।*

*Gardens and forests are not the same
The time of Rest and War are not the same.
The Rain, a Hurricane and the scorching Sun
Are all but means to express valour.*

What exactly happens in the process? We might refer to what traditions have referred to as Alchemy. We reconfigure our identity and reveal our hidden strength and virtues that we may not have been aware of earlier and even insurmountable challenges, melt away.

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*मानव जब जोर लगाता है,
पत्थर पानी बन जाता है।*

*When Man applies his force
Even stone melts away like water*

In moments of doubt, the blanket of ignorance hides our virtues and strengths from our awareness. We freeze and feel as if we don't have any way to face the difficulties. The challenges look larger than life, diverting our focus towards our fears instead of the inner strengths.

*गुण बड़े एक से एक प्रखर,
हैं छिपे मानवों के भीतर,*

*Great and sharp qualities
Lie hidden within Man*

How tragic it is that we do not really know our own strengths! So, we shy away from challenges because of the fear that we might fail. Ultimately, however, to encounter our strengths, we must be willing to illuminate the candle within. Because:

*बत्ती जो नहीं जलाता है
रोशनी नहीं वह पाता है।*

*One who does not light a candle,
does not get light.*

As I understand, the symbolism of the candle here relates to the importance of investigation which is essential to surpass challenges and move forward. In its absence, we miss the opportunity to get to know ourselves better.

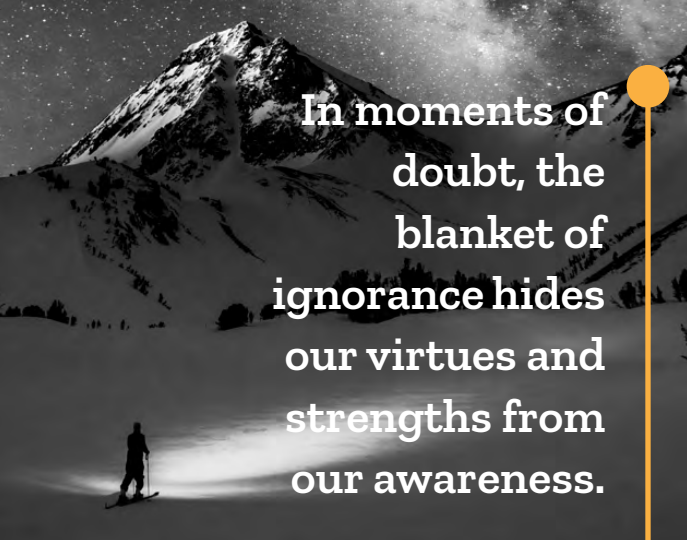
Moment to moment, day to day, as we try to shed light on the real causes behind our doubts and our fears, we strengthen the fire within, and grow in wisdom.

Spring is knocking on our door and soon summer will arrive. The days will get longer and the spirit will yearn to soar. If you wish to ride along nature, bloom as the flowers, and become part of the energy and life manifesting all around us; a result of cutting through the dangers of winter. In this way, we will always regard difficulties and challenges as opportunities.

I leave you with these lines as a call to action:

*वसुधा का नेता कौन हुआ?
भूखण्ड-विजेता कौन हुआ?
अतुलित यश क्रेता कौन हुआ?
नव-धर्म प्रणेता कौन हुआ?
जिसने न कभी आराम किया,
विघ्नों में रहकर नाम किया।*

*Who becomes Master of the Earth?
Who conquers kingdoms?
Who basks in unfathomed glory?
Who establishes the path of Truth?
One who rests not,
Earns fame facing challenges. ॐ*



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