

The Importance of Hope



By Shraddha Shetty

The story of Pandora is an ancient Greek myth of which many different versions exist. The one written by Hesiod in the 7th century BCE, tells of Zeus, angered by the Titan Prometheus, who gave the gift of fire to humankind, was determined to exact retribution not only from Prometheus, but from all of humanity. Zeus forges a beautiful maiden Pandora, and sends her into the world with a closed box, telling her not to open it. Overcome by curiosity and naivety, Pandora does so, releasing all manner of evil and strife into the world... Envy, Avarice, Poverty, Ignorance etc. Appalled, Pandora quickly shuts the box, but the only thing that remains inside is Hope. Another version suggests, that inside the box were all the virtues that could have blessed humanity, and all that flew back to the heavens, except Hope, that remained on earth.

The myth can be interpreted in many ways: as a cautionary tale of the curiosity and desire for knowledge, which can have both positive and negative consequences. But perhaps the Greeks also wanted to remind us that when darkness sets in, it is still possible to build whatever is lost, if only we do not lose Hope.

Why is hope so important? It comes from the Latin verb '*sperare*' which has multiple meanings: to hope, to prosper, to thrive; implying that if a person is hopeful, there is a possibility of living and thriving and moving towards abundance.

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a bad supper."
-Francis Bacon**



The rainbow is an enduring symbol of hope in many cultures; the Bible tells us that God sent one to Noah after the flood to signify the end of the flood, as a promise of new beginnings; the idea that this perfect arc in the sky begins in one place but ends in another is symbolic of a bridge between this world, and the celestial realm, the present and the future, a promise of better things to come. Yet hope is not just optimism or the fantasy of wishful thinking; it is when you actually see, or imagine the light at the end of a tunnel and actively begin to move towards it. One cannot sit at one end of a dark tunnel and wait for the light to come to you. You must make a choice, and begin the work needed, here and now, towards a new and better future.

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One of the most striking examples of this is Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, who was interned for three years in four different concentration camps during World War II. The degradation and inhumanity he witnessed and suffered, deeply affected his understanding of the meaning of human life. He found that those who did not lose their sense of purpose were able to survive better than those who had completely lost hope. At the end of the war, he returned to Vienna, became head of neurology at a Vienna hospital and founded a school of psychotherapy that posits search for life's meaning as a central human motivational force.

In his famous book *Man's Search for Meaning*, he says, ***"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."*** This implies that a critical human choice we all have, in any circumstance no matter how dire, is our response: and whether we respond with an attitude of hope or despair, will determine how successfully we emerge from the trial.

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Another inspiring example of how hope can fuel determination and perseverance, is that of Nelson Mandela: imprisoned for 27 years on Robben Island, he faced inhuman conditions and hard labour, meant to break his resolve. Yet he refused to give up hope for the future and continued fighting to achieve equality for all people in South Africa. After his release he negotiated an end to apartheid, became South Africa's first democratically elected president, and the personification of rising above adversity.

These are living examples of how the power of hope combined with resilience, and inner strength, can contribute to the victory of the spirit over the physical. No matter how severe and brutal the circumstances, yet both Frankl and Mandela were able prevail, fulfil their purpose, and ultimately thrive.

How can we apply hope in our everyday challenges? By never losing sight of where we want to reach; by using our circumstances to strengthen our will in order to find our way towards the light; by unrelenting inner work towards what we consider as right, regardless of when we may reach the goal; and by borrowing the seeds of happiness from the future, to sow them today.

"Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." - Václav Havel ✨