

## LIFE LESSONS

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# Everything happens for one's own good!

In the April, May and July issues, I shared three of my commandments with you: 1) Be happy always, no matter what, 2) Have 0 expectations from every other person in the world and 100% from yourself, and 3) Never compare with those around you. Today, as I wait for my connecting flight at Munich airport with an eagerness to reach Gangtok, I begin typing my thoughts about my fourth commandment: **“Everything happens for one's own good! We get what is best for us.”**

As with other commandments, it is important to specify here that this commandment is only to be applied to oneself, not to be preached to the other. If someone is going through a tough phase or has lost a near or dear one, don't say, 'Good that it happened'. Give the person a hug, show understanding and if possible, try to do whatever you can to address the situation.

In one of the short stories in a Tinkle comic issue published years ago, a king once happens to cut his finger. On seeing this, his minister remarks, 'Everything happens for one's own good!' The king is furious and

orders that the minister be imprisoned. A few weeks later, the king goes to the jungle to hunt. He is captured by members of a jungle tribe who want to sacrifice him to their deity. Upon discovering the scar left by the cut, the tribesmen decide that the king is unfit for sacrifice and release him. The king remembers the words of his minister and is very thankful. On reaching his kingdom, he immediately orders the release of the minister and asks him, 'I can understand how my finger getting cut was good for me but how was getting imprisoned good for you?' The minister says, 'Your majesty, if you had not put me in jail, I would most certainly have accompanied you to the hunt and may have been captured along with you. The tribesmen would have left you, but sacrificed me instead.'

While the tale brings out the danger of preaching this commandment to others, it does highlight its value. The most important factor here is *time*. In the short term, we might not be able to fully appreciate the things that are happening to us or around us. However, in the longer run, we will be able to see the good that resulted from it.

In the last sixteen years of my being outside India, there are a number of incidents where things were difficult or didn't make sense in the short term, but worked out for the better in the long term. During my time in the industry, I worked for a year in a bioinformatics company. While the work was good and I learnt a lot, the company was small and was going through a difficult financial period. For a few months, the salaries did not come in and the company finally folded up. I couldn't really understand what good happened as a result of that difficult time. Six years down the line, when I was finishing my Ph.D. and looking for a faculty position in the U.S., I interviewed during a number of conferences and was looking to teach/research in the field of Information Science. The school I eventually joined was also looking for someone with experience in Health Informatics as it planned to work towards launching a new college-wide program in the area. That's when my earlier work experience proved very useful. Thus, things might take moments or months or years to make sense, but it does all eventually fall together.

Some people like to say, 'Everything happens for a reason'. Whatever the terminology, the idea is the same. A difficult period helps shake us out of our comfort zones and enables us to make decisions that take our lives in the direction that it needs to go.

My wife had a medical degree from Kolkata (then, Calcutta). In the 3½ years that she was in Singapore, she couldn't find a job as a physician, as Indian medical degrees were then not recognized in Singapore. She

eventually sat for U.S. medical licensing examinations, which came in 4 steps. The first two steps required 6 months each of preparation and 8-hours of examination each. The third step required flying to a U.S. city for a practical examination. The last step had two exam days of 8 or 9 hours each. Apart from these, she flew to the U.S. territory of Guam to gain U.S. medical experience, took 26 flights for job interviews and eventually completed a three-year medical residency from New York City. As an Attending Physician at Carney hospital, Boston, she's extremely grateful today that Singapore didn't easily offer her a job. If not for the difficult period, she couldn't have gotten one of the best medical trainings in the world.

Thus, when horrible things happen and dark clouds hover around, remember that there's always a silver lining and that, as a poster in a hospital said, 'This too shall pass!'

As we find it written in *Gita Saar* or *Essence of the Gita*, 'Whatever happened is good. Whatever is happening is good. Whatever will happen will be good.'

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