

The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #21

Diamond Casting

Diamonds are made under extreme heat and pressure
over an extended period of time, not
by a mere and casual blowing
of an intermittent wind.

*We could never learn to be brave and patient
if there were only joy in the world.*

*Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet.
Only through experience of trial and suffering
can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired,
and success achieved.*

Helen Keller

*Out of suffering have emerged the
strongest souls. The most massive
characters are seared with scars.*

Kahlil Gibran

Let's be dead honest. If we're going to be good at anything in life, we must be willing to endure the heat, pressure, suffering, time, trials, tribulations and scars to cast us into the most precious of gems, a diamond. Simply hoping, wishing or praying to be excellent isn't going to cut it. We've simply got to do the work.

Once upon a time in America there was a work ethic, an understanding that to achieve anything substantive one had to work at it for a good amount of time. This is a logical point of view. If one wants to be a classical performing pianist, for example, one has to practice hours each day for years to achieve a standard of excellence sufficient enough to play before an audience and then keep on practicing during one's performance years to keep the skills honed and alive.

The famed Polish concert pianist, Ignacy Paderewski, said:

If I miss one day's practice, I notice it.

If I miss two days, the critics notice it.

If I miss three days, the audience notices it.

Underscoring this commentary on work ethic reality, the famous 19th/20th Century Indian Saint, Sawan Singh, astutely noted: *If a dog walks through a cotton field, he does not come out dressed in a suit.*

Yet, in today's world there exists the unnatural belief that excellence can be had with no work, no effort, no struggle. And this is exactly what it is, unnatural. The natural order of things, like the creation of a diamond . . . or a classical pianist . . . or a Black Belt, takes enormous time, dedication, determination, sweat, blood, tears and years of applied effort. Trying to circumvent the process is impossible. If anyone thinks he or she is going to be a top quality artisan in any art without working at it, such a person is operating in a world of delusion. Sadly, suffering from delusion is a common ailment. 17th/18th Century, Saint Dariya of Bihar noted: *The whole world is overpowered by delusion. The delusion is overpowered by none.* Certainly one great delusion is thinking we can be transformed from common old chunks of coal into a radiant diamond, the most precious of all gems, without being subjected to heat, pressure and time - enormous amounts of time, enormous amounts of heat, enormous amounts of pressure.

In relation to our character becoming diamond-like, the famous Helen Keller factually remarks:

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet.

*Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul
be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.*

If anyone knows what it's like to be a diamond, it's Helen Keller. Mark Twain once commented that of all the people in his life he would have liked to have met, one was Helen Keller. The other was Napoleon. This is the kind of stature this woman commanded. During her lifetime, she was a living legend on par with today's most noteworthy icons. She understood the depths of trial and long-suffering far beyond the common consciousness.

Khalil Gibran's statement is also profound:

Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls.

The most massive characters are seared with scars.

What these august souls are stating is the relationship between work and excellence. We may want to achieve great things but we have to be realistic as to the process. Being deluded or having an instant-gratification mentally is not going to get the job done. If we want to transform ourselves and our talent from a common chunk of coal to a resplendent diamond, we simply have to endure the heat, pressure, time, study, practice, trials, tribulations, scars and suffering to get there. There is simply no other way.

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