

Humility:

In simplest terms, humility is equated with being humble. It means having a modest view of oneself, recognising his own limitations, and a genuine acceptance of the capabilities of others. Humility is not self debasement or denying one's own merits. Its simply not keeping ourselves at a pedestal higher than others.

Socrates' famous statement "I know that I am intelligent because I know that I know nothing" is a testament on humility. Socrates and Plato ask us to recognise our own ignorance and pursue wisdom with a search for knowledge. Thus humility as opposed to pride, pushes us to become wiser.

Necessity of Humility:

Humility often serves as course correction for those who are in power. As Lord Acton famously opined that Power corrupts absolutely, humility becomes a necessity for those who hold powerful positions.

Whether it is financial power or political power or even minutest of responsibility like being leader of a small group, humbleness is a sign of a great leader. In absence of humility, leaders become complacent and addicted to flattery.

Not just for pursuit of knowledge or leadership, humility is necessary even for those aiming for personal excellence. An athlete, who keeps on striving for getting better and better eventually sees a long career. Michael Phelps, is an excellent example of how despite getting the highest of success as a professional swimmer, he kept striving for more and valued his competition.

Examples of Humility:

- Narayan Murthy and Sudha Murthy can often be seen traveling economy class, despite being the founders of Indian tech giants Infosys.
- In traditional martial arts, the opponent bow before each other, recognising the capabilities and talent of each other.
- During the war of Mahabharata, it was the absence of humility that got Duryodhana and his entire family killed.
- Lord Ram asks Laxman to show humility towards Ravana, even after he was defeated in the battle, as Ravana was the most knowledgeable person on the entire earth.
- Mark Twain, after reading Indian history extensively, called India to be the cradle of civilisation, as opposed to the prevalent Eurocentric view.

The Philosophy of Humility:

Pride and arrogance have been considered to be a vice in almost every religion. As opposed to them, humility has therefore been recognised as a virtue. Whether it is the teachings of Bhagavad Gita or the Bible, humility has been called an essential quality.

Gandhi's ideas of Ahimsa were partly inspired by the teachings of Leo Tolstoy, in whose stories the characters with humility often turn out to be the eventual winners. Jean-Paul Sartre viewed humility as an essential element in the search for authenticity and individual meaning.

The ancient Indian Gurukul system was highly revered as it brought down princes and kings from their palaces and imparted in them value based education, equating them to their subjects. The prince would eventually become a humble king. The modern world can help itself by imbibing the value of humility in our daily discourse.

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