The Silver Lining

There is always a brighter side.

By DP Sabharwal

It was December 7, 1941, and Admiral Chester Nimitz was attending a concert when he received a pager message that read: Important call, please attend. The caller was President Franklin Roosevelt who said, "You have been appointed Commander of the Pacific Fleet with immediate effect." The Japanese had launched the massive attack on Pearl Harbour just that morning, thus drawing the US into the World War II.



Admiral Nimitz landed at Pearl Harbour on Christmas Eve, 1941 and noticed a spirit of despair, dejection, and defeat as if the Japanese had already won the war. He went on a boat tour to see the destruction wrought on Pearl Harbour by the Japanese. Big sunken battleships and navy vessels cluttered the waters everywhere he looked. On his return, the young helmsman of the boat asked, "Well, Admiral, what do you think after seeing all this destruction?"

Admiral Nimitz's reply shocked everyone on the boat as he said, "The Japanese made three of the biggest mistakes an attack force could ever make, or perhaps God was taking care of America! Which do you think it was?" There was stunned silence that was broken by a feeble voice that asked, "and what were those mistakes, Sir?"

He responded:

First Mistake: The Japanese attacked on Sunday morning. Nine out of ten crewmen from each of the ships were ashore on leave. If the same ships had been lured to sea and then sunk, we would have lost 38,000 men, instead of 3,800.

Second Mistake: The Japanese sank our battleships but never bombed our dry docks opposite those ships. If they had destroyed our dry docks, we would have had to tow every one of those ships to America to be repaired. You see, the sunken ships are in shallow water and can be raised. One tug can pull them over to the dry docks, and each one would be repaired and shall be at sea by the time we could have towed them to America.

Third Mistake: Every drop of fuel in the Pacific theater of war is stored in the ground storage tanks five miles away over that hill. One attack plane could have strafed those tanks and destroyed our fuel supply. They failed to do so. That's why I say the Japanese made three of the biggest mistakes an attack force could make, or God was taking care of America.



Admiral Chester Nimitz

ADMIRAL NIMITZ WAS ABLE TO SEE THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF THE SITUATION WHERE EVERYONE ELSE SAW ONLY DESPAIR AND DEFEAT AFTER THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON THE AMERICAN FLEET IN PEARL HARBOUR. EVERY COIN HAS TWO SIDES.

Do you realise that Admiral Nimitz was able to see the brighter side of the situation where everyone else saw only despair and defeat after the Japanese attack on the American fleet in Pearl Harbour?

Every coin has two sides. Though the sides are quite the same in shape and size, the designs, and inscriptions on the two sides are quite different. Same is the case with life. It too has two distinct sides; black and white, but there is a bit of difference too. There is nothing absolute black or white. There are shades of black and white in everything. It is how one looks at it. In any given specified frame or an image, one person is likely to see tinges of white, while the other would see more of black.

Few decades back, two salesmen were sent by a British shoe manufacturer to Africa on a two-week all-expenses paid tour to investigate and report back on market potential. The first salesman reported back, "There is no potential here because nobody wears shoes." The second salesman reported back, "There is massive potential here because nobody wears shoes."

In day to day life, we go through many situations where things do not happen to our liking. At times, the happenings are rather disturbing and sad. It is common to fret and fume on such occasions. One becomes disheartened and starts blaming others for being unkind. At such times, one just can't think of any brighter side existing at all. But it is not so.

One can indeed see a brighter side if one starts thinking that events could have been even more disturbing, for example, having lost a leg in an accident, the thought that both legs could have been lost amounts to looking at the brighter side.

As grown-ups, we should be more adept to looking at the brighter side of the picture. Alas, this is hardly the case. The elders tend to look at the uglier and the darker sides more often than not. In addition, the elders also worry a lot imagining the worst outcome about things over which one has no control. Such a habit is keenly observed by children who, by the time they grow-up, forget how to look on the bright side.

A small boy was auditioning with his classmates for a school play. His mother knew that he'd set his heart on being in the play, just like all the other children of his class. However, knowing his child too well, she knew that chances of his being selected were rather thin, thus she wondered how he would react if he was not chosen. On the day the roles were awarded, the little boy's mother went to the school gate to pick-up her son. The little lad rushed up to her, eyes shining with pride and excitement.

"Guess what Mom," he shouted, and then said the words that provide a lesson to us all, "I have been chosen to clap and cheer."