

Beware the Ides of March!

As the sun starts its northerly hiatus and the sunlight stretches the day to almost 14 hours, warm winds herald the arrival of the summer. But more than the rise in mercury, the Mumbaikars have to contend with frayed tempers and in-house tensions due to the onset of examination fever all around. Be it school or college, nursery or a post graduate student, they all suffer from exam fever which affects not only the near and dear ones but across the society. In the present context, the shopping malls and multiplexes are viewing the examination mania as one more threat which will deepen the recessionary market conditions adversely affecting their sales.

The disturbed and tense home turf in most of the households in the city is undoubtedly a matter of concern. In the prevailing highly competitive academic scenario, every parent vigorously pursues the ward to ensure that the child is not left behind, but manages to lead the rest. Thus, everyone wants a high scoring performance not only at the secondary and graduate exams but also at the various entrance tests which have now become mandatory for everyone seeking an entry into quality education institutions. In fact, in the North at locations like Kota in Rajasthan, over a hundred thousand outstation students spend long months and years knocking at the JEE, the IIT entrance tests. Similar is the fate of MBA students aspiring to enter the IIMs – 350,000 last year – who knock at the doors of coaching classes to seek help to cross the hurdle of CAT, MAT, XAT.



As the drama in real life unfolds on the domestic theatre, the examination fervour has its element of tragedy and comedy. Since for every hundred students who apply for the entrance test, only one or two manage to cross the hurdle. Therefore, the first part of the drama, i.e. the preparation and intellectual muscle building exercise, have a great degree of positivity and bonding value in the family. There is great deal of caring and sharing and emotional safety net which ensures a smooth ride home into the exams. As the result date keeps approaching, there is heightening of expectations which further enhances the pressure both on the student and the family.

And finally when the results are out, there is an attempt on the part of society and media to glorify and project the successful candidates painting them as 'victors' and 'conquerors' of some past mythical battles. This paranoia may cause temporary euphoria and joy in some sections of the community but since the losers are often much larger in numbers, this directly rubs their loss or lack of performance at these tests. Sometimes, the failures drive the students to extremes. Some run away from their homes and some even take the ultimate step. Then the same press and media blow up these unfortunate events beyond proportion again to gain more TRP and mileage which unfortunately could have been triggered by their earlier antics. As the Bard says, 'tis true; 'tis pity; and pity 'tis 'tis true. ...'

Therefore, amidst all this feverish preparations and overambitious parents heightening expectations from the children, we must remember that ultimately, everyone is neither designed nor destined for success all the time. Each child has his or her own pace of learning and just because he has not been successful in getting admission to the glorified institutions; does not mean he is not worthy of doing great things in life.

Parents, instead of giving undue importance to children achieving high scores in academics, should focus more on their all-round development making them good citizens. Children who happen to be versatile and possess good qualities are more likely to be successful in life, whereas the contrary may not always be true. After all, let's not forget that every 'Slumdog' has the potential to become a 'Millionaire', and the role of a parent is to just show them the way... Jai Ho!

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