

Chapter 9

SUCCESS STORIES

'In the last analysis, the last thing is the life of an individual. This alone makes history, here alone do great transformations take place and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately springs as a gigantic summation from these hidden sources in individuals'

—*Carl Gustav Jung*

Read the life stories of great men like Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln, and you will begin a journey of learning; you will see how keen these people were to learn good things and constantly reinvented themselves. Having learnt the things by experience or reading books etc., how they incorporated the same in their lives, ultimately turning the lessons into their new habits. Some men just do not want to learn things; their excuse is, 'I cannot do it', even without making an attempt. But if you think in this manner, you will never even make an effort to change. When you make an attempt to cultivate a good habit, there will be times when you may fail, but ultimately life is a series of such battles with yourself for its betterment and fulfillment, so at the end of your life you can proudly reflect on the way you have lived.

The lives of great men will kindle a fire within you, which will help you conquer doubts and struggles. It will act as a lantern in the face of darkness; it will stretch the limits of your horizon beyond the limits of mediocrity. It will take you to new glory and inspiration which will lead you to great heights.

Lessons from the greats

In every sport, players seek advice from the great players. They try to learn as much as possible from the senior players who have tasted success in the past. They learn from them the technicalities of the game and also receive some tips on how to improve their own game. So cultivate the

habit of observing the great people in your field; also learn from the people in other walks of life who have embarked on greatness. See how they emerge from the struggles, how they maintain consistency and how they manage to stay unaffected even by huge success. Observe them closely; once you do that, you will subconsciously pick up some of the traits which will help you to improve, in many spheres of your life. Great people from all walks of life, in varied settings and senses have some common qualities; try to learn from them how they do the following.

Mind management: How they manage to stay balanced and calm in pressure situations?

Growth: How they grow? Take a clue.

Application: How they apply what they learn?

Preparation: How they prepare and pick up finer points that others miss?

Focus: How they keep away distractions to reach towering heights?

Self-belief: How to have self-belief even when all others are against you?

Discipline: How about doing things when the mind says no?

Habits: How they inculcate positive habits and reach the pinnacle of success?

Sustaining success: How they manage to succeed and still focus on their work? How they fight complacency?

***‘Great people are not known by the possessions they had,
but are known by the legacy they leave for others’***

Some men who have made a significant impact on the world, in the lives of men, and continue doing so, are the personalities which are discussed here. You can learn a great deal from the lives of such men; their lives act as a torch to enlighten the paths of other men. They stand tall and strong as the epitome of success and achievement. Someone once asked Mahatma Gandhi to give his message for his followers, and his reply was, ‘My life is my message.’ That just sums up the way in which these great men have lived; it is a message, a lesson for all.

MOHAN DAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI (MAHATMA GANDHI)

Gandhi was no ordinary mortal; he was a leader of the leaders. Several of the greatest leaders that the world has seen got inspired by the saintly man, called Mahatma Gandhi. It is difficult to find a man who lived a life as remarkably as Gandhi lived. Martin Luther King’s life took shape after

attending a lecture about Gandhi. The Dalai Lama speaks of Gandhi as his mentor in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. Nelson Mandela, the great South African revolutionary, considers Mahatma Gandhi his source of inspiration. Gandhi is known as the Mahatma in India which is a synonym of great soul. He is also regarded as the Father of the Nation in India for his selfless striving for the nation. The Harvard School of Business Management has crowned him as the management guru of the 20th century.

The remarkable thing about Mahatma Gandhi is that as a child and even as a young man he was quite an ordinary person and showed no real signs of the person that he would become, one of the most towering personalities of the world history. His father was the Diwan (Prime Minister) of Porbandar. He went to England to study law. When he fought his first case in the court as a lawyer, he lost the case and was not even able to say anything in the trial; he was so nervous in front of the judge; out of a sense of guilt he paid the money back to his client after losing the case. He had trouble with the administration and working in conditions which were against his ideals; finally his brother asked him to go to South Africa when he received a call for a job there.

His visit to South Africa proved the turning point in his life; it was there that he started his fight against the injustice and wrong. He was always involved in doing work for the good of the Indian community in South Africa. He was once beaten and thrown out of the first class compartment of a train despite holding a valid ticket; this incidence made him all the more determined in his quest to fight the wrong and injustice. He involved himself in the service of the Indian people in South Africa and became popular with them; he started discovering his great potential as a human being through the service of mankind.

Gandhi assumed the leadership of the Congress party during India's freedom struggle and played a key role in gaining independence for India. After coming back from South Africa he rallied poor farmers and labourers, protesting against oppressive taxation and discrimination. Gandhi was several times arrested and had to go through sufferings but he was firm and never stepped back. He slowly gathered the support of the nation and led several movements against the British rule in India.

Gandhi's philosophy of life was based on the firm conviction in principles, ethics, selfless and detached outlook towards life. His autobiography is a great insight into how he was transformed from an ordinary person to an extraordinary person. It is about his practical experiences and struggles. It is about teaching oneself self-denial and developing a strong will power. It is about living a life which is lived beyond the

clutches of I, me and myself. It is about making sacrifices in life, sacrifices not just for his personal gains but mostly for the good of all. With every sacrifice his will power grew stronger the will power that was the source of his strength and the will power that was almost infallible.

Eaknath Easwaran, an author of more than 80 books, mentions in one of his books, *Daily Living of Bhagvad Gita*, Mahatma Gandhi's schedule when he was in his 60's. He writes that

Gandhi used to get up at three in the morning and answered correspondence; he then met with the Indian leaders through the day, gave press interviews, held his prayer meeting; subsequently he walked after taking his dinner, and after that at eight in the evening he went for a four-hour session with the British-Viceroy of India. These talks were crucial to the country, for they were instrumental in shaping the future. At midnight, he walked home, discussing about the meeting with his associates and colleagues; he went to sleep at one in the night and again got up at three in the morning. This was his daily schedule.

He lived like this for many months at the age when most of the people usually like to laze around. The remarkable man that he was lived and made full use of the faculties granted to a man. All his work was motivated by a noble cause, unselfish in nature. He said that a life without challenges, a life when you were not being stretched to the fullest was not worth living.

*'He who is free from selfish attachments,
who has mastered his senses and passions,
acts not, but is acted through by Lord'*

—Bhagvad Gita

When you are noble, your cause is pious, you can surprise yourself with the kind of things that you can do. All of us have tremendous capacity latent within us waiting to be unlocked. The key to unlock that is to lead a life which is unselfish. Self-centred approach is never useful in the ultimate analysis; love and serve others that is the least that you can do.

THOMAS EDISON

He had only three months of formal education. His schoolteacher called him a retarded child, too dumb to learn. After that his mother never sent Edison to school. Edison received education at home. His mother had been a schoolteacher in Canada and happily took up the job of teaching her son. She encouraged him and taught him to read and do experiments. Slowly his genius started to emerge and he rose to be one of the greatest scientists and inventors of all times. He recalled later, 'My mother was

the making of me. She was so true, so sure of me; and I felt I had something to live for, someone I must not disappoint.'

For most of his life, Edison suffered from seriously impaired hearing, but it did not stop him from inventing some incredible things in the field of science that changed the world.

His first invention was an electric vote recorder but it did not sell. His idea was far ahead of its time; even though it did exactly what it was supposed to do, the electric vote recorder was unsuccessful in terms of the market. Edison learned a lesson and since then he invented products which were readily marketable. His numerous inventions include phonograph and incandescent light bulb. He was a man of incredible patience and insight; that is the reason he was the owner of more than 1000 patents. It was Edison's bulb, together with the distribution system of electric power that he developed, which made electric lighting practical for ordinary domestic use.

Thomas Edison's last patent came at the age of 83, shortly before he died at the age of 84. He had a total of 1097 patents to his credit by then, a number which companies can be proud of, leave alone a human being. Even in his old age, Edison worked hard. Throughout his life he was a pioneer in many ways.

***'Just because something doesn't do what
you planned it to do doesn't mean it's useless'***
—Thomas Edison

Edison was a man known for his grit and determination; he was relentless and kept pegging away with great spirit and enthusiasm even when things were not going well. His method of experimentation was to never give up until he had fixed the problem. His most famous invention, that of an incandescent bulb, was a testimony to this fact. He continued to strive until he invented the bulb. In the process he had to meet numerous failures, but he moved again with renewed energy each time his team failed. On his numerous failures he remarked, ***'I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward'***

Edison's persistence for his inventions is an inspiration to one and all. The intensity and his determination to carry on the task till the end was quite remarkable. Once Edison was asked the reason for his brilliant inventions. He replied, ***'I don't know any other reason. Anything I have begun is always on my mind and I am not easy while away from it until it is finished.'***

Therein lies the secret formula of success: doing things to the finish. Thomas Edison remains one of the most influential personalities in the

world of science and technology, a man who revolutionised the field of science through his inventions. Edison was best known for his incandescent bulb which made electricity a popular phenomenon.

Swami Vivekananda

He was born in 1883 in Calcutta and was known as Narendra during his childhood. Narendra was an extremely intelligent and a bright child. He was always moved by the sufferings of the other people and had great compassion for all. He was a fearless and brave child. He was very inquisitive and used to ask everyone whether they had seen God. Nobody could satisfy him except Rama Krishna who said, 'Yes, I see God, just as I see you here; the one who seeks Him sincerely can see Him.' Narendra could feel the depth of truth in the voice of Rama Krishna; he started visiting him more frequently and later accepted him as his Guru. Thus began the journey of Narendra to Swami Vivekananda.

It is not often that you expect a saint to be a successful person, for success is often measured by the materialistic possessions. But great are the saints as they do not have materialistic possessions; they have something more noble, more sublime than all of the materialistic possessions put together; they have wisdom. They come in the world on a purpose; they come to make man think, for a man forgets to ask some of the most basic questions about his existence. They come to make him realise the potential that he has. They come to guide the people who seem to lose their way in the beaten tracks of life. They come to guide us and bridge the difference that we create with ourselves. Swami Vivekananda was one such great man whose sole aim was to make people realise the potential divinity within them.

He was a man of great conviction and strength. His teachings to mankind have an air of authority and supreme conviction. He professed, '**All power is within you. You can do anything and everything. Believe in that.**' He emphasised that there was divinity within a human being and tried to arouse the inner power of the human being.

Swami Vivekananda inspired Jamshedji Tata to start the Indian Institute of Science, one of the foremost centres of research and learning in India. His vision was that India should be able to regain its position of a world leader by the means of technology.

Swami Vivekananda's lectures and sermons were electrical and they inspired one and all. The great saint wandered about and lived a life of a monk; he went to the West, where he was widely acclaimed for his soul-stirring talks at the Parliament of Religions. His lectures have been

compiled in several volumes, known as the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

His books are still a source of inspiration to many and serve as the guiding force. He managed to establish several centres of learning and service whose aim is to uplift the poor and remove suffering. His noble mission, his remarkable vision, his moral excellence and his deep spirituality make him an icon for the young generations. The Government of India celebrates his birthday as the National Youth Day.

His message still continues to serve humanity, transcending the limits of caste and religion. He was a man who had in the power of service and experienced the deepest truth of existence. He once remarked, ‘ ***In this hell of a world if one can bring a little joy and peace even for a day into the heart of a single person, that much alone is truth; this I have learnt after suffering all my life, all else is mere moon-shine.***’

There are very few men whose existence can be cherished by mankind. There are very few men who live through their deeds even after they depart from the world; there are very few men who can influence the people and make them achieve and do things that they themselves never thought were possible. One such great hero was Swami Vivekananda; he continues to win the hearts and minds of people through his stunning speeches and writings.

Bill Gates

Every year the *Forbes* magazine releases the list of the richest persons in the world; there are many new entrants and many persons are omitted, but one man stands out at the top for more than a decade now. He is Bill Gates, currently the richest man in the world, according to the *Forbes* magazine’s list of billionaires in 2007. He has been the richest man since 1995 and also the first man in history to have amassed a wealth of 100 billion US dollars.

If there was one man who would be a universal hero today, he must be Bill Gates. Bill Gates is a genius, a man who has been instrumental in making one of the significant contributions in terms of technology, which has changed the world. Not many people in history have made such a big impact on the world as Bill Gates, the founder of the Microsoft, the largest software company in the world.

He took a brave decision to drop out of the college at the age of 19; he took a gamble and made his dream come true. With Paul Allen, his friend, he developed the BASIC language and revolutionised the

computer industry. Within a short span of time he along with his friend and partner, Allen, established, the biggest company in the world. He is one of the most recognised and popular entrepreneurs in the world today. His philosophy is that you have to surround yourself with the best people in the world and that gives you a chance to improve.

Ever since his schooldays computers were his passion; he played the role of a pioneer and started writing computer programs when people didn't know anything about them. He seized the challenges and together with Allen reached to the world stage within no time. Such is Bill Gates.

A remarkable thing about Bill Gates has been his considering himself as the best. This is the spirit which wins the world for a man who is willing to improve and is always keen to find a better way in which things can be done.

His philanthropy is known the world over. He has been playing a pivotal role in not only transforming the lives of others but also encouraging others to come forward and do the same thing. He is the source of inspiration. He is the man who has carved out a world which has created opportunities for others.

He is truly one of the most successful man to have ever lived. We salute this remarkable leader of the world.

Abdul Kalam

His journey from the sacred shores at Rameshwaram where he sometimes had to sell newspapers to the grandiose of Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House) of India is something that would make you believe in dreams.

He was born in a humble background to parents who had little education. His father was a boatowner in Rameshwaram. Even though his parents were not very rich and did not have many material comforts, yet they provided Kalam something much more valuable; they provided him spiritual insight and dreams, which acted as the trigger to lead him on his way to great success in life. His righteous upbringing coupled with his dedication to work built the platform for the foremost scientist, thinker and leader of the modern generation.

Kalam had a distinguished career as a defence scientist and played the key role in the satellite and missile program. Kalam as the chief of country's defence research and development programme led the research and development to an all-time height by his strenuous efforts and matchless enthusiasm; he changed the way the people worked in government offices, leading them by example. Working overtime and even on holidays,

Kalam's remarkable presence set the research establishments ablaze. At the end of his successful career he was awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna.

Abdul Kalam had a dream; he wanted to fly high. As a child he was very curious to know and learn things and he still shows the same enthusiasm to learn things. He played the role of a leader in India's space programme and a key role in the development of Indian missiles, etc. His ambition of becoming a pilot was more than fulfilled when he became the head of all the three defence forces of India by entering into the President's House. Kalam leads a simple life and has written many books, including his autobiography.

As a child, he had a keen interest in mathematics and was a diligent student. He always scored a centum in mathematics. His studies had to be almost discontinued for the lack of funds after he had received the Bachelor of Science degree from St. Joseph's and got admission into the Madras Institute of Technology, but for his sister's help who mortgaged her bangles for his education at that time one of the pioneering institutes of India. Later he managed to get a scholarship and never looked back, going from strength to strength.

Abdul Kalam is a man of strong character and a deeply spiritual person, following a work ethic that can be described as nothing short of extraordinary, working for around 18 hours in a day; he is an ideal leader; his detail-oriented approach together with his commitment to excellence make him a true role model.

Kalam loves children and frequently visits schools and colleges to interact with and ignite the young minds and with dreams. He is a visionary who believes in the power of dreams and says,

'Dreaming leads to thinking;
Thinking provides knowledge;
Knowledge leads you to work hard,
Which in turn makes you great.'

After becoming the President of India, someone asked him, 'What is the happiest thing in your life?' His reply was, 'The design of lightweight calipers.' It was for the physically challenged people that he and his team had developed the LWP; the weight of the caliper was exerting for the people who had disability in their legs and the LWP came as a welcome relief. Among so many achievements in his life he chose the design of LWP; the answer just describes the man rightly, a man who lives for others. That is Abdul Kalam for you.

Abraham Lincoln

Once Abraham Lincoln noticed a pig, which fell in a muddy pond, desperately trying to wriggle out of it but without success. He watched carefully for some time and finally out of sheer compassion went near the pond and helped the pig get out of the pond. That just epitomises the great man, Abraham Lincoln; his circle of compassion and humanity was as big as it can get. A man of principles, dedication and a firm resolve, he remains one of the most influential persons in history.

He was born to parents who were farmers. When Abraham Lincoln was young he had to face a lot of hardships and he struggled even to get proper schooling. He had only about 18 months of formal education and was a self-educated man. He had a passion for learning, and used to read every book that he could borrow. The reading developed so much ambition and drive in young Lincoln that he aspired to reach great heights against all odds. *'The Life of George Washington'*, was his favorite book. He once walked 20 miles to get this book, and once he got the book he would read it all along the way.

He also read the Bible, the works of Shakespeare and history with keen interest.

His political career started at the age of 23, with an unsuccessful campaign for election to the Illinois General Assembly. For a few months he even operated a small store in New Salem, selling tea, coffee, sugar, salt, blue calico, etc. After that he got the work of a village postmaster and surveyor. At the age of 25, he won the election to the state legislature. After that he studied law and was admitted to the Bar at 28. He started practising law the same year in which he was admitted to the Bar and soon made a name for himself as a formidable and respected lawyer. He also served four successive terms in the Illinois House of Representatives.

From the beginning of his life, he had to really work hard to get things and even when it came to his professional career, life was not very easy. Only a few things he could do successfully, but most of the time he was unsuccessful. Life was not easy for him. He had to work hard to make both ends meet. Just imagine what difficulties Lincoln had to face!

This was a man who failed in business at the age of 21;

Was defeated in a legislative race at the age of 23;

Failed again in business at the age of 24;

Overcame the death of his sweetheart at the age of 26;

Had a nervous breakdown at the age 27;

Lost a Congressional race at the age of 34;
Lost a Senatorial race at the age of 45;
Failed in an effort to become Vice-President at the age of 47;
Lost a Senatorial race at the age of 49;
And he was elected President of the United States at the age of 52.

Abraham Lincoln never lost hope in his dreams; he surely was a man who knew how to get the best out of failures and struggles. With every defeat grew his persistence and he became more determined to get success.

Finally his journey from a country boy to the President of the USA is a stuff dreams are made of. Abraham Lincoln remains one of the most able statesmen that the world has ever witnessed. His fight against slavery and uprooting it was one of his major achievements as the President. Lincoln is regarded highly and in various opinion polls he has been voted as the top most US President. His popularity has been due to his integrity, adherence to human values and ethics. He has been a pillar of strength and integrity amidst men. His remarkable life continues to inspire people to believe in dreams despite failures and tragedies.

You

Yes, you. Write about your own life. Write the things that you have done and accomplished. When you write about yourself, you will be inspired to do something which you will cherish if you have not already done so. Do it now, start writing as much as you can. Do not wait for even one moment; think that you can be a success story. Write your purpose followed by the goals that you have accomplished or want to accomplish. When you are writing about your story your mind will be triggered to create one.

The most important of all the success stories is YOURS. What others have done in their lives makes no difference to your life, unless you get inspired, and do something worth your life. Believe that you can do it and just start doing it. Anything is possible for the one whose conscience is clear, whose heart is big and mission is noble. You deserve all success; start scripting your success story.

'Your greatest invention lies in your hands, it is your future'

You belong here. Start doing things and fill in this page with the things that you would like to be remembered for. Ultimately, you will be known by the work that you have done in your lifetime, the kind of life that you have lived, the number of people whose lives you have touched

and the difference that you have made when you were present in the mortal form. So start embarking on a journey to a life which you want to cherish living. Nothing can stop you; you are the person who is in control of what you will do with your life. Make your existence a gift to the world.

The common characteristics

Living for something larger than themselves.

Service to people.

A dogged and a determined attitude, especially when they are down.

The ability to get more out of life than others.

Ability to make a difference, especially when the going is tough.

An indomitable will, tireless striving for worthy goals.

Keen desire to learn, to improve and grow throughout their lives.

Self-assessment, self-awareness and self-improvement.

See and appreciate things as they are without being biased or prejudiced in any way.

To rise up with more energy and more vigour every time they fall.

Innate strength which comes from solitude and silence. A sense of spirituality.

Taking both joy and sorrow in their stride, they do not let external situations control them.

Ability to transform lives, circumstances and events for the better.

Push the limits of human achievement and excellence. They are inspirational for others

Ability to unite people irrespective of the caste, creed or nation to which they belong.

Live beyond their mortal existence with their achievements and through the legacy they leave for others.

Many a time, life will test you, life will give you hard blows; seemingly nothing will be going well for you. When you are down, there is only one thing that you have to do, that is to get up. There is no other choice; you cannot stay down, for ever. Sooner or later you have to get up. The successful people are those who get up fast and with more intensity than ever before; they may be knocked down a few times, but that fuels them to rise with more intensity and with all the strength in the world. They

do not waste time cursing their luck; they prepare and move up, higher than ever before. They are really the successful people.

So the next time you are down, don't waste time, get right back, throw away everything that you have got and rise as never before.

Nobody can learn swimming just by reading books on swimming, or by talking about it. Ultimately, one has to go in water and practise in order to learn swimming. Going out there and doing it is the most important thing. Just talking about successful people, mind control, motivation, morals and ethics, etc, is of no use, if you yourself do not practise the same.