

Perils Of Overconfidence

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Why does a person become overconfident? The reason lies in over-assessment of his capabilities. Sometimes people over-assess their competence and jump into situations that are beyond their control.

Napoleon Bonaparte who became emperor of France, would say that the word 'impossible' was current only amongst fools. The overconfident Napoleon invaded Russia in the winter of 1812. Although the Russian army at that time was not very strong, the severe cold proved to be fatal for Napoleon's army – it was caught in a hailstorm and because of this most of his army personnel perished even before entering Moscow.

Overconfidence generally leads people into misadventures, jeopardising their prospects. According to the divine scheme of life, any achievement is a result of two factors – one's personal planning and support from the external world. The share of personal planning is less than 50 per cent while the share of outside factors is more than 50 per cent. It is this fact which makes overconfidence untenable in this world. People, thanks to their obsessions, take into account only their planning, generally ignoring external factors. They become unable to foresee future developments. Hence the great risk of failure.

I know an educated person who was in a government job then. But because of his political ambitions, he resigned from service and threw himself into the arena of politics. This political adventure proved to be beyond his grasp and he was defeated in the elections. He lost both his job in the government as well as the assembly seat he was

contesting for.

Then there is the question: how one can manage overconfidence. The formula is very simple. Before taking a decision, discuss the matter with other informed people with an objective mind and when it is proved that you are about to go off the path, accept reality and say without delay: "I was wrong."

Overconfidence is a flaw characterising such people as lack the virtue of modesty. Modesty makes you a realist; you become a person who is cut to size. People of this kind become very cautious; before taking an action they assess the whole situation. They adopt a realistic approach. They are able to discover their own shortcomings. This psyche serves as a self-controlling element in their lives, enabling them to save themselves from untoward happenings.

Overconfident people live within their own thoughts. They know themselves but they are unaware of others. Living inside their own cell, they are unable to make use of the experiences of others. This kind of habit is highly damaging to all concerned, disastrous for all men and women.

There is a saying that the young man sees the rule and the old man sees the exception. With a slight change, I would like to say that the overconfident person sees the rule and the confident person sees the exception. Overconfident people always live in risks. It is said that taking risks is good. They say: no risk, no gain. But risk must be a well-calculated risk otherwise risk becomes very dangerous.



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