

Owner's pride, without neighbor's envy

Deep in the countryside, there was a farm with a reputation for producing the best quality corn in the state. Intriguingly, this farmland was not more fertile than the surrounding fields of corn. In fact, the farmer would even share his premium corn seeds with his neighbors right before each sowing season. Still each year, his crop fetched him a price higher than that of the other farmers. Everyone loved the rich farmer. Here was a farm that was the owner's pride, yet not the neighbor's envy!

It's a feel-good story. God helps those who help others. Is that so? Perhaps countryside. The urban landscape seems poles apart. Over here, 'competition' is the name of the game.

Sure, it's an in-thing to preach our kids and our workforce to not worry about standing taller than the rest. 'Just be your own best' is the mantra. Theoretically. The reality is different.

We live in times when it's near impossible to succeed without competing. Youngsters need to outshine their peers for premium college admissions and lucrative job placements. Employees need to outperform their colleagues for outstanding hikes and fast-track promotions.

Competition is inevitable in academic, professional, or any other walk of our existence. Life on a farm is no exception. It was not the selflessness that led to the farmer's success. The rich farmer did compete like everyone else. Why else did he take advantage of his premium produce by pricing it higher than his neighbors?

Do you know that wind picks up pollen from ripening corn and swirls it from field to field? If the farmer's neighbors' grew inferior corn, cross-pollination would steadily degrade the quality of his corn too. So if the farmer were to grow the best corn, he had to help his neighbors grow good corn.

If we wish to succeed, 'helping others succeed' is fast becoming a prerequisite in today's connected world. Why? Because most still don't practice collaboration. Therefore, the ones who practice stand noticeably taller and thus gain a competitive edge.

You see, sometimes, the best way to compete is to not compete. Sometimes, we get luck when we bring luck to others. Sometimes, the right thing to do is not about righteousness but about smartness. Sometimes, a good story is not about goodness, but about wisdom!