

The Sandalwood Stench

Once there lived a great king in a big palace. One morning as he was standing in his palatial balcony admiring the morning rays falling on his beautifully landscaped gardens, his vision was marred by the sighting of an ugly dwelling protruding behind the walls of his eastern boundary walls. Immediately, he dispatched his minister with the instructions to get rid of the hideous structure.

The minister dutifully went to the unsightly hut and discovered that the place belonged to a sandalwood merchant who had come to the capital in search of business opportunities. The minister curiously queried him on the reasons for setting up the business so close to the palace. The merchant shared that a close proximity to the palace will do him good as he anticipated plenty of wars for the throne; soldiers would die, and sandalwood would be in demand for the funeral rituals.

Stunned by the merchant's negativity, the minister counseled him, "Why won't you wish for something positive? Instead of war, everyone in the kingdom prospers, resulting in many happy rituals all around, leading to a huge demand for sandalwood in all kinds of reverence ceremonies!" The merchant mulled over and then acknowledged his negativity on never having thought about it that way. He requested the minister two days of grace for relocation while he thought through his new business positioning.

Next morning, as the king stood in his balcony again, his minister informed him on the conveyance of his decree to the hut dweller. But to his surprise, the king replied that he had been doing some rethinking and had realized that it was not such a big deal after all if the ugly dwelling continued to remain in the horizon!

They say both negativity and positivity exhibit mirroring tendencies. When the merchant was thinking negative, so did the king. When the merchant changed his outlook, the king's thought process also realigned! Why so? Perhaps Paulo Coelho summarized it best as follows: "When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too."