

CHAPTER 10

PERSISTENCE

Persistence is an essential feature of the procedure of translating desire into success. ‘The basis of persistence is the power of will.’ This is what Hill wrote in his own chapter on Persistence, much of which I seek to explore here. Will is an intellectual tool that humans have, and in order for us to develop persistence, we have to develop the skill called will.

When I was young, whenever there was a setback at school or I was not able to get into a particular team or perform in a drama, Dad told me that I must have the will; if you want something you have got to keep going. ‘Willpower and desire, when properly combined, make an irresistible combination,’ Hill said, ‘and that is where humans accumulate great success.’

Sometimes, Dad used to say, people you meet will appear ruthless or unpleasant but instead they are probably just misunderstood. What they have is willpower, which they mix with persistence and desire

to ensure they attain what they want. Dad used Henry Ford as his example, as did Hill. Dad said that Ford had huge persistence because he had a desire – he wanted to replace horse-drawn carriages with a four-wheeled machine.

The majority of people are ready to throw their aim or purpose and give up at the first sign of misfortune. If you carry on despite all opposition, you will attain your goal, Hill wrote. But people who understand that are few and far between. Dad said if I really wanted to achieve what I wanted to achieve, from an incredibly young age, I would have to count my blessings. He said nobody achieves anything in their life if they have not temporarily failed. ‘If you give up, you are not going to get anywhere.’ He said this understanding is more important than your education.

During the war, as I have said before, doing my A-levels I enjoyed myself too much. Because of that, and the war, I did not do very well. Dad asked what I wanted to do and explained to me the importance of persistence. He said, ‘You really need to do what you want to do in your life, you need to plan and set your goals.’ That was a time when I actually struggled, because all my friends were going to university. That was hard and he really supported me during that time. He said, ‘Do what you really like to do and then you will achieve what you want to achieve.’ Then when I came to the UK, I continued to encounter problems, and he continued to speak to me about the value of persistence.

Just to build on this idea, any success generally involves the application of an understanding of the laws of nature. Those are the principles that Dad talked about.

Furthermore, the starting point of all achievement, as we have said before, is one of the Ds – desire. ‘Keep this constantly in mind,’ Dad said. And Hill wrote that weak desire brings weak results, just as a small amount of fire brings little heat. If you really want to achieve something and pump up the heat, then pump up the desire.

If you find yourself lacking in persistence, this weakness can be mended by building a stronger fire. You should have fire in your belly – and Dad had a reasonably big belly himself – he used to say, look at mine, I have a lot of fire!

Fortune gravitates towards humans that have the mindset to attract it, just as water gravitates to the ocean. This was a household story and Dad always talked about how things come to you. He said he had a remote control to get what he wanted to attract. I did not understand that, but it was true – throughout his life he attracted whatever he wanted. He always said that water goes back to the ocean, not the other way around. It always flows in one direction and likewise success flows to the one that accumulates it, as easily as water flows downhill.

Hill said that there exists a great unseen stream of power that may be compared to a river, except that one side flows in one direction carrying all who get into that side of the stream onward and upward to success. The other side flows in the opposite direction, carrying all who are unfortunate enough to get into it downward into misery, and sometimes, sadly, towards poverty.

Poverty is something that is not given to us, we create it. I think Bill Gates recently said that if you are born into poverty, without wealth, opulence, or success, that’s okay; that is not your mistake or problem.

But if you die in poverty, that is your problem, because you can choose to change it.

Every man or woman that has accumulated great success and fortune has recognised the existence of this truth. It is about one's thinking process. Dad said that you become what you think about. If you think that you are going to become something, you will.

But you have a choice. If you are on the side of the stream of power in Hill's analogy, you must make sure you continue to travel forward and do not fall into the other side. It can serve you only through application. Merely reading or passing judgement in one way or another will in no way benefit you. He said there are so many people that talk about these things but do not achieve them. Only a small percentage of the people that you look at in the world understand this concept intellectually and emotionally. Lots of people understand it intellectually and see that it makes sense, but when you look at their results, nothing is changing. When you understand this emotionally, after accepting it intellectually, then your life will start to change.

Hill talked about how poverty and riches often change places. When riches take the place of poverty, the changes were brought about through well-conceived and executed plans. These things do not come without planning, without thinking, without action. 'Poverty needs no plan,' Hill said, 'it needs no one to aid it because it is bold and ruthless.'

This is especially true in Sri Lanka, where it is accepted that only a small minority have been successful, and some have not achieved success using the natural laws for reasons that we all know. Riches are

shy and timid – they must be attracted. That can only be done through your thinking.

With persistence, no matter how slowly, you know that success will come. You are taking certain steps and doing certain things to achieve the goal. We define success as the progressive realisation of a worthy goal. When you are progressing, you will hit many roadblocks, but persistence is the way through.

‘Those who have cultivated the habit of persistence seem to enjoy insurance against failure,’ Hill said; that is a beautiful way to put it. We take insurance for our cars, for our lives, so when things go wrong, we look to our insurance policy. It is the same if we develop a habit of persistence. No matter how many times we are defeated, we finally arrive towards the top of the ladder. Sometimes it appears that there is a hidden guide, whose duty it is to test men through all sorts of discouraging experience. ‘Those who pick themselves up after defeat and keep on trying, arrive,’ Hill wrote.

These ideas are so valuable in our daily lives, we just need to develop them. The purpose of me talking about these ideas in the context of *The Power of Learning from DAD* is that these are lessons that all our parents share. If you take a moment to stop and reflect upon what your parents told you, they have said things that are so valuable. This is no longer science, but a story line I have experienced.

With every failure comes an advantage. I cannot disagree with that statement from Dad. In 1990, the biggest failure for me was not being able to enter university in Sri Lanka because of the war and my indulgence in fun. I lost everything and needed to come to

England with just £100, after having had a great life. I needed to start everything again in the UK, and I started out as a cleaner working in a psychiatric hospital. It was a depressing experience, but I drew on what I had learned about persistence.

People who persist, who do not accept defeat, who persistently apply their desires, are the ones who succeed. The key is persistence. Never give up in the face of discouragement. It is important to be persistent without violating the rights of others.

Dad talked about musicians and said there is not a single musician who has become successful without persistence. Sometimes the successful ones are not necessarily the best – there might be others who can perform or compose music better, but the reason they do not get there and maybe a mediocre person does is persistence. Countless others have come and gone because they lacked the courage to keep on keeping on it.

Persistence is a state of mind that is extremely important and very much like any other emotion we might have, therefore it can be cultivated. It is like building muscles. If you want to have physical muscles, you need regular exercise. Persistence is the same. So many things in life are driven by the mind – the conscious and the subconscious, as Hill taught us. We need to understand that.

Like all states of mind, persistence is based on definite causes. This is where cause and effect comes in. You must have the cause and then persistence will come – action, reaction. We are going back every time throughout this book to the laws of nature. These laws were the same a thousand years ago, and they will be the same for the next thousand

years. We do not have the ability to change them; we can ignore them, but they can never be amended.

This is where definiteness of purpose is important, knowing what one wants in the first place. A strong motive forces one to meet difficulties head on. Of course, you develop the state of mind without doing anything, because it is an effect, a state of mind. What you can do, is clearly work on the cause, the action part. How do you create the action? You go backwards, and that action is linked to your subconscious mind. If we refer back to the stick person, we have the subconscious mind, we have our paradigms and our habits, and we make those things work in our favour.

Hill said that desire is one cause that is comparatively easy to acquire. To maintain persistence means pursuing the object of intense desire. Self-reliance is another cause – believing in one’s ability to carry out the plan and to follow the plan through persistence. You have got to believe in certain plans, while knowing that not all plans are perfect, and you will need to take action.

He said knowledge is important: if you do not know, you will be guessing. Knowing that one’s plans are sound based on experience and observations encourages persistence. Guessing, instead of knowing, destroys persistence. Dad used to say, ‘Never guess, never assume. You can use your intuition, but do not guess.’ Guessing is shallow; successful people have developed the ability to use their intellectual faculties, such as intuition and reasoning. We have six intellectual factors, one of which is intuition – some people call it the sixth sense. You can call it any name, but what really matters is to understand what it does.

Intuition was given to humans when they were in the caves to make sure they could pick up on an animal about to attack. They cannot hear the animal, they cannot see the animal, but they can feel it is present. That is where intuition comes from. Then humans advanced, and intuition has continued to develop.

Hill also points to sympathy – the harmonious cooperation with others. Alongside willpower and the habit of concentrating one's thoughts on a plan, it is so important. Willpower is a beautiful thing. It relates to the Hindu tradition of meditation we are taught from a very young age. I have sat in meditation at a very deep level and participated in the Hindu rituals, which are great. What I did not understand at the time was that it was building my ability to concentrate and strengthening my will. Sitting looking at a dot on the wall is one way of building concentration, but there are many others. Dad talked about the value of concentrating on your breathing.

Persistence is a direct result of habit, which is why we call it a paradigm; it sits in your subconscious mind. The mind absorbs and becomes part of the daily experience upon which it feeds. Fear, the worst of all enemies, can be effectively cured by forced repetition of acts of courage.

Rollo May, the distinguished psychiatrist, puts this quite nicely, 'The opposite of courage in our society is not cowardice, it is conformity,' he says. We conform because we are programmed to do so by DNA from our ancestors, and by our environment. In the early stages, our subconscious mind is wide open, so everything around us is absorbed. By the time we become teenagers and adults, we just look to our environment. I grew up in an environment in Sri Lanka that is so

different to the one I am living in now. The war did not help, and when you compare it to the United Kingdom, one of the best places in the world to live, it was profoundly different.

The environment in many ways was different, and obviously immigration makes a difference. Dad always said people should integrate when they move to a new country. They can respect their heritage and culture, but they must integrate. This was something he was passionate about. ‘That was programmed into me,’ he said, ‘When you are in Rome, be a Roman.’

We respected our country and we respected our queen. He was so grateful that we as a family were able to come and live in this country, that we were accepted as refugees because of the civil war in Sri Lanka.

My parents had a British education and loved the British heritage and culture. My mum’s father had worked for the British when Sri Lanka was a colony. But in 1948, Sri Lanka became an independent country. It is sad that the communities did not always live in harmony together, and today Tharshiny and I have an initiative called Global Unity Forum, focused on bringing those two communities together. So far, our focus has been on committing to hosting joyful dinners of unity in London, but we plan to take these events all over the world; there is a long, long way to go.

‘The symptoms of a lack of persistence are many,’ Hill said, ‘and procrastination is one of them.’ Dad used to say that procrastination is often about giving to people, because that is often what is put off. He said when you have £100 you can give to charity, and when you have £1m you can give to charity. If you can do, you can give.

Dad always hated to see people blaming others for their mistakes. He never, ever blamed anybody and whenever I used to try and blame others, he would tell me to stop and look at myself. He said it is never somebody else's fault; it is your fault. I could not grasp that for a long time and, even now, there are times when I will say something was Tharshiny's fault, not mine. Tharshiny and I have a fantastic relationship, but there are ups and downs as there are in every relationship. It is never her fault, it is always mine, but that habit stays close.

The habit of neglecting to move on a great idea is key; just go and do it, rather than thinking about it. Various books have said what Dad said, which is stop using the words 'I wish X would happen'. Instead, say, 'That will happen'. I am shifting my vocabulary and my thinking, because if you really want something, you need to believe in it.

We all have the power to implement changes that may lead to opulence and riches. Dad believed in that and he told me as a child that I should always have the habit of living in opulence, which does not always mean money, but riches. People say you need to experience poverty; he never believed in that.

Dad said, 'Never fear criticism: if somebody says you have failed to create plans or something is not working, just do not listen to them.' As soon as people fear criticism, people give up, and that is another symptom of lack of persistence. Often, people refuse to take chances in business because they fear the criticism that may follow if they fail. The fear becomes bigger than the desire for success. People are scared.

As long as your doing is in line with your goal, as long as you are

respecting the laws of nature, as long as you are not berating somebody else's space, then it is okay, you can just go ahead and achieve your goals. Dad said people should always have a purpose, have a plan and not bring any negativity. Have the right group of people around you and, if people pull you down, just do not entertain them.

Dad used to borrow from Shakespeare when he used to say, 'To thine own self be true, and then it must follow as the night the day, thou cannot be beholden to any man.' That is a nice way to put it.