

Intro:

This is a book that helped me in one of the most difficult times in my life. It's a book that has, over the years, moved from being a book, to a text I study regularly. A permanent bedside read, if you will.

The origin story:

Marcus Aurelius was one of the last Roman Emperors at the height of their empire, the Pax Romana. This book is a new, easier translation of *Meditations* — A collection of his writings, based majorly in stoic philosophy. What fascinated me about the book was its simple language. His deep, clear thinking about life, duty, emotions, people, leadership and character is very powerful.

How it crossed my path:

I was gifted this book by a friend from IITB. The first time I picked it up was when I was feeling extremely lonely. I was working on a long project in Schlumberger, sequestered in a land rig, in a region far far away, circa 2018. At a time when I felt people close to me didn't understand me at all. Felt like no one could help me in life. Felt that if I dug any lower (figuratively), I'd never see the sun again. Probably that's why it had a higher impact on my life than I would have expected.

Feeling the feels:

The way I'd describe this book is, every time I read a page from it, it gives me strength - To do the right things, to be myself and creates a resolve to keep going. What enticed me about the book was how the initial pages were relatable. In the first chapter, I saw that he lays out precisely how so many people had a great impact on him, how closely he had observed them and remembered each person's teachings. He described his family, his friends, his tutors and what he learnt from every single one of them. I'd always thought that every single human being has taught me extremely important things in my life. Every single day. I'm a big believer in people.

Which is why reading this book gives me comfort. That somebody who lived centuries past thinks and understands people and things deeply. Who looks at the world in a way that resonates with me. When I think about how some of my difficult thoughts are calmed by a Roman Emperor ages past, it shows me the true power and permanence of books. When I am reading it, I realise so many things that I still think wrongly or so many things that I still don't know. Many emotions that I am yet to master. It gives me motivation to do better, to learn more, to control my thoughts. Think of the world in a different way. To learn from my mistakes and to keep doing better.

Few excerpts that helped change direction in my life:

1. "I hear you say, "How unlucky that this should happen to me! Not at all! Say instead, "How lucky that I am not broken by what has happened and am not afraid of what is about to happen. The same blow might have struck anyone, but not many would have absorbed it without capitulation or complaint."

After all, why do we speak of good luck and bad luck anyway? Would you call something that is not contrary to a man's nature a piece of bad luck? And can something be contrary to a man's nature that nature wills? Well, you know perfectly well what nature wills. Do the waves that crash upon you prevent you in any way from being just, forgiving, moderate, discerning, truthful, loyal, free-spirited, and in possession of all the other noble qualities that nature wills for man's well-being? The next time you are tempted to complain of your bad luck, remember to apply this maxim: "Bad luck borne nobly is good luck."

[This has helped me reframe my mindset towards luck, also my composure towards things](#)

2. "You cannot be harmed by the law of another man's being, nor can any change or alteration in your circumstance hurt you. Where is the injury then? It is in your sense of injury — in the part of you that forms a judgement about such things. Form no judgement, and the injury disappears. Even if what is closest to you, your body, is mutilated and burned, festers and rots, force the part of you that forms an opinion about such things to remain calm and refuse to judge as either good or bad what can as easily happen to a good man as to a bad. For whether a man lives in harmony with nature or not isn't the sole determinant of whether something is for nature or against it"

[My judgement being more important than the circumstances around me is a gem of a realisation](#)

3. "My tutor taught me not to take sides in Circus contests (Green or blue, light-shield or heavy) to love hard work, to limit my desires, to rely on myself, to keep my nose out of other people's affairs and to turn a deaf ear to gossip."

[Having done all these things in life, *big sigh* reading this simple sentence makes me feel like a mole in whack-a-mole, chagrined to change my direction in life. Coming back to it reminds me to let go of my old habits and do better](#)

Parting thoughts:

I feel fortunate that despite being born in the 90's and living in this century, all the thoughts, centuries past are accessible to me. That my access to such books opens up my mind to such amazing personalities and their ways of thinking.