

Dear All

This week we lost a football genius – Diego Maradona.

I remember watching the England Argentina 1986 match live and saw the second goal he scored.

I have seen many football goals after that but none is remotely close to that genius goal.

Maradona was a genius at football but led a troubled life with substance abuse and many other challenges.

Reading about Maradona and seeing the news coverage made me think of the concept of troubled genius.

I studied a few of the past geniuses to see how they behaved, here's my learning's:

1. Abraham Lincoln went through multiple bouts of depression. His friends called him the most depressed person they had known.
2. Beethoven , the master musician, tried to self -medicate himself for his alcohol issues. He wrote some of his best music in his down moments.
3. Michelangelo had a single minded focus, but was consumed by his own reality of the world.
4. Charles Dickens was mentally down many times and wrote some of his best books in those down phases.
5. Charles Darwin who taught the world that the most adaptable survive went through long spells of silence and isolation where he would not speak even to his children.
6. Winston Churchill, the wartime Prime Minister was psyched many times. He would never stand at the edge of a railway platform, and always ensured there was a pillar between him and the train coming onto the platform. He never stood on the balcony of any ship. He feared that he might fall over. He wrote 43 books, most of them when he was in a down state.
7. Leo Tolstoy was fine till he hot middle age. He then questioned everything and lost interest in most things. He went around saying “art is useless”
8. Isaac Newton could not connect with people, and was a recluse most of the time.
9. Bobby Fischer is widely regarded as the Mozart of Chess. He vanished after beating Boris Spassky in 1972. He was obsessed with Chess and carried a mini chess board in his pocket all the time.
10. Alan Turing , famous for being the person who broke the German code in world war 2 was a computer genius and regarded as the father of computer science. His habits and attitude got him into trouble with the authorities.

In the current era, we have seen Bjorn Borg retire at 25, lose all his wealth and all his five Wimbledon medals were bought by Jimmy Connors! We saw Michael Jackson, easily one of the best rock stars we have seen, go through all types of challenges. Boris Becker is another one on the comeback trail after losing everything. George Best a great footballer, the Belfast city airport is named after him went astray with alcohol. Paul Gascoigne is another troubled genius. Vinod Kambli in India is an example.

The modern day sports stars are better at handling it .. Roger Federer, Messi, Sachin Tendulkar , Gopichand etc. are real gems for the sport and society.

Reading about troubled geniuses points to a single minded obsession with their work and themselves, the inability to seek help or support, the inability to see the world from another lens, the inability to handle the fame and adulation. Each of these troubled geniuses went onto substance abuse or went the alcohol way or became reclusive.

Reading about them just shows the need to have strong emotional anchors around you all the time whether you are successful or not.

Feedback welcome

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