You may know the story of a king of ancient times. He wanted to know how his people would react when faced with a challenge or obstacle. Therefore, the king placed a huge rock (boulder) on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none of them did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying on the road where the huge rock had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway.

Here in this story, the peasant noticed the obstacle or challenge (the huge rock), he did not walk simply around the obstacle, did not blame the king, did not run away from the obstacle but pushed the rock to the side of the road after so many efforts and finally got the gold coins. This story could be taken as a classical example of how a challenge can provide an opportunity to improve our working and living conditions.

*Challenges Turned into Opportunities by Young Workers*

Very often the people in the community speak of us positively. People say youth is a stage where young workers are not afraid, and young workers are ready to face challenges. It is true in a way. History proved it. Be it the French revolution, the Russian revolution, the Cultural
Every Challenge Provides an Opportunity

Revolution in China, the Cuban and Latin American revolutions, the Iranian revolution, the collapse of the Berlin wall and the changes in the Eastern European countries, or the uprising in the Arab streets now. Yes, all these major changes that took place in history were assisted by the actions of youth and young workers. In all these historic changes, the youth and young workers faced adverse challenges and obstacles such as oppressive regimes, military force, hunger, no jobs, continuous struggle, etc. However, the power of youth and the nature of youth to face challenges and obstacles have provided opportunities to obtain freedom, liberation, democracy, good life and better working conditions. In all these major events that brought about change, the youth behaved (acted) like the peasant in the story. They did not waste their time simply talking about the obstacles and challenges. They did not run away from the obstacles and challenges. They did not blame the system, the ruler, the king, etc. However, they realised that these obstacles needed to be removed and they took action.

The Way Some of Us Look at Obstacles Today

As youth and young workers today we have different attitudes and responses when we are faced with obstacles and challenges in our lives and workplaces. Firstly many of us are afraid of seeing and facing the challenges and obstacles. Secondly, many of us only talk and discuss about the obstacles and challenges and make do with that. Thirdly, many of us keep on blaming the structures, policies, rulers, etc. Finally, many of us want to run away from the obstacles and challenges. We very often fail to realise that every challenge or obstacle in our lives and workplaces provides an opportunity to improve our working and living conditions.

When we analyse our attitude, we realise that the greatest problem to overcome is our fear. This is the most destructive aspect in our lives. How to overcome this fear? This is only possible through facing the obstacle. We can explain this with an example. A person would like to learn to swim. He may know theoretically all aspects of swimming. But the greatest challenge is to
jump into the pool and learn how to swim. The first obstacle is fear. Fear leads to many negative
questions in our minds. If I jump, will I be safe? Won’t I drown? If the person is going on with
these questions, then he will never jump into the pool and will never learn how to swim. Fear
prevents us from facing a challenge and from seeing it as an opportunity. Only through action a
challenge or obstacle can be faced and end up being an opportunity.

Positive References

When we read the bible, we discover so many positive references to face challenges and
change them into opportunities. Very often we say “it is impossible”. The bible text says “all
things are possible
(Luke 18:27)”. We say “I can’t go on”. The bible text says
“my grace is sufficient
(II Corinthians 12:9 & Psalm 91:15)”. We say “I can’t do it”. The bible text says
“you can do all things
(Philippines 4:13)”. We say “I am not able”. The bible text says
“I am able
(II Corinthians 9:8)”. We say “I am not smart enough”. The bible text says
“I give you wisdom
(I Corinthians 1:30)”. When we are faced with obstacles and challenges, when we are faced with fear and worry,
when we begin to lose hope, then let’s think of the action of the peasant in the story. He never
gave up and managed to remove the huge rock. He believed he could push the huge rock out of
the way. When faced with adverse conditions, let’s think of the bible texts given above as
references; we will regain hope and motivation for our action.
“I believe that heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences”.

- Author unknown