Born to Survive



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You can recognise them from a mile men and women of indomitable courage and strength who have returned from the jaws of death. It could be a severe illness, handicap or acute trauma. Many could go completely under but not these survivors.

When talking about these unique and driven people, I like to draw parallels with the Greek myth of the phoenix and how it rises from the ashes. According to the Wikepedia, the phoenix is a mythical sacred firebird with a rich plumage. Gifted with a 1,000-year life cycle, near the end of its life the phoenix builds a nest of cinnamon twigs that it then ignites. While both the nest and the bird are reduced to ashes, a new young phoenix emerges with an equal life span as its old self. The bird was also said to regenerate when hurt or wounded by a foe, thus being almost immortal and invincible. Interestingly, one story goes that it can heal a person with a tear from its eyes.

In real life, one comes across many people who have defied death and illness and lived to see the light at the end of a lonely tunnel. Take, for instance, Poonam Bagai, a survivor of colon cancer, who now runs an NGO, CanKids for child survivors of cancer. Today after intensive treatment, she lives a busy life running her organisation. She recalls how she sank into depression when she was diagnosed with cancer in the year 2000 while in Warsaw. What made it worse is that she had two small boys to tend between seven and three years of age. "It was grey, it was black..I just slept 18 hours a day." Fortunately her husband and family were constantly by her side throughout.



Survivors courtesy: Women Speak Out

Having emerged from the shadow of death, she has undergone a major transformation. As she says, "Survival is in the hands of God. One has to go through a period of introspection and come face to face with death. It changed me in many ways and made me revise and review my priorities. I now believe that everything happens for a reason. For me it was to establish CanKids.