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Lighting our candle without blowing out another's

Celebrate yourself, but not at the cost of insulting someone else

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At the recent launch of a product, the presenter, while extolling the virtues of the product being offered, did so by constantly referring to a competitor's product, and in so doing, decrying the other product. As I left the launch function, I felt a little dissatisfied at the manner in which the launched product was being celebrated, by being dismissive of the compared product.

What struck me was not the merit in the product on offer, but the 'putting down' of the competitor's product. Celebrating my virtues I believe is important, yet do I have to do it by showing up someone else in poor light?

An uncle of mine used to do this with his two sons. While he would speak well of his younger son, he would unfailingly decry his elder son. The elder boy lived through years of being compared poorly with his brother and grew into being a diffident and depressed adult. He was a talented sportsperson, and with encouragement, could have gone on to play the sport he was naturally good at, possibly at the highest level.

Yet, having been constantly put down in his growing years, and made to feel less than his brother, his talent withered away and he grew into adulthood an unhappy human being.

My teacher Joe Currie once told me, "Speak well about yourself, yet never do it at the cost of another. Celebrate yourself, but do not do it by decrying another. Light your candle but do not do it by blowing out another's."

I wish my uncle had been kinder to his elder son; we might have had a National-level sportsperson in our family.

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