

Seneca's moral epistles

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Seneca brings out different ideas in his 124 letters found in his book, 'Moral Epistles'. The discussion is mainly focused on some selected four letters to his friend Lucilius. Through his letters, Seneca communicates ideas like, time saving, value of a man and the acquisition of relative fame.

The first letter of Seneca to his friend Lucilius talks about the virtue of saving one's time in his /her life. According to Seneca, time is one of the most precious assets and it is not reversible once wasted. Seneca argues his friend to grab the remaining time since most of it has been wasted by her careless mistakes. Time wasted in careless dealings in life is equivalent to the time spend in death. According to Seneca, a greater part of life is wasted while doing what is ill, a goodly part doing nothing, and whole of it doing what is not of purpose.

Man would not judge another by material wealth like big house, big farm or large land. According to Seneca, all these things are outside one natural life. Seneca says that it is very hard for someone to understand the character of another man during his first appearance. There is no perfect man in the world according to Seneca. He tells his friend that the man she is boasting of is very far from reaching the land he seems to prophesy. He calls this man 'second grade man' meaning that his friend is just interested with the wealth this man holds and that he never took time to understand him. Seneca questions the little time Lucilius has stayed with the man she now calls 'best man'. "And yet it is impossible in so short a time for one either to become good or be known as such. Do you know what kind of man I now mean when I speak of "a good man"? I mean one of the second grade, like your friend. For one of the first class, perhaps springs into existence, like the phoenix,

only once in five hundred years''. The letter speaks much about the moral values of a man. The value of a man is all about his character.

When an individual attains success and fame, his name becomes a local symbol of success and his popularity might beguile the person into thinking of attaining the highest possible achievement for man. Praises beguile man into attaining a proud statute that boils down the potential of attaining the desired full potential and success. People speak a lot about the character of an important person. Seneca says '' Men are asking what you do, how you dine, and how you sleep, and they find out, too; hence there is all the more reason for your living circumspectly. Do not, however, deem yourself truly happy until you find that you can live before men's eyes''. The relative fame of a man comes from the way the man relates with the world. What others say should not upset man. The last letter talks of how men should relate with slaves. Seneca says that men are just like the other people and they as well deserve dignified treatment. Seneca advocated for restraint from appeasing the public for the sake of private development instead of pleasing the crowd at the expense of personal development.

In conclusion, the letters have addressed the main moral aspects a man should possess in order to live meaningful life. The aspect of understanding man's nature and not judging their material wealth is core in building up relative fame.