

Value Insight

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RIGHT ACTION

Why do Ethical
People Become
Unethical?

Is Dharma Rigid?

SPECIAL!

Why did a King
beg at a Cobbler's
Door?



A monthly magazine of
Foundation for Restoration of National Values (FRNV)
Website www.valuefoundation.in

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- **Vikas Kumar**, Managing Director, DMRC

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Greetings from Value Insights!

In April we celebrated the birthday of Lord Rama as Ramanavami. One of the thoughts that struck us was that the story of Ramayana is well known, but it continues to provoke interest, generation after generation, retelling after retelling. Why?

The answer we arrived at is that Ramayana is not about the story of Rama having destroyed evil in Ravana, it is more about Rama's conduct. The struggle or story of a human being, well endowed with power and riches, good looks and all that matters, to rise above

material impulses and live a life of dharma. What is dharma? We carry articles in this issue touching on what dharma is and how our actions need to have integrity. What defines integrity, particularly in the context of a nation?

We bring to you an interesting look at right action from different perspectives; governance, the medical profession and a touching story about the Kuno National Park which will resonate in your mind long after reading it.

Happy summer!

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Prof Ashok Vohra is a philosopher who has enjoyed an illustrious career as a favourite teacher in the Delhi University's prestigious St Stephen's College and later in the Delhi University, Jindal and many other Universities in India and abroad. He had held several positions in institutions and forums upholding peace and Gandhian studies. Himself an authority on Wittgenstein, he is a prolific writer on matters of the mind and has authored several significant books in philosophy.



Dr Arun Kumar Rath

Dr Arun K Rath, M.Sc in Physics and PhD in Business Administration, studied in the Utkal University, University of Delhi, University of Birmingham and University of Bradford in UK.

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Preeti Shree Venkatram is an independent researcher, currently based in Bengaluru. She is passionate about the environment and has been involved with studying a range of issues such as coastal regulation, Smart Cities, climate change and wildlife conservation, to name a few.



Dr Shakuntala Daveswar

Dr. Shakuntala Daveswar qualified from The Armed Forces Medical College in Pune and trained at Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi. She has been in the practice of Family Medicine and Counseling for the over four decades. She wrote a weekly column for the Hindustan Times entitled "Help Mate" and later "Talk it over" in which she addressed the medical, emotional and social queries of the readers.

Values Indispensable for Human Life



Poojya Swami Bhoomanada Tirtha

Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha, a well-known exponent of spiritual treasures like Bhagavad Gita, is the head of Narayanashrama Tapovanam, Trichur, Kerala. He has provided inspiration to people across the globe including corporate leaders on ethical practices

Harih Om Tat Sat. It is heartening to note that FRNV is launching the print version of the 'Values Insight' journal.

As the human mind and intelligence, values relating to them are also eternal and ever fresh. Fortunately, our country has very good values, all of which are time-tested and wholesome to enrich and empower individual, societal, national and global life. These have been well documented in the form of illustrious narrations, especially by sagely authors, for whom purity of the mind and heart, as well as the wisdom of the intelligence, constituted the most invaluable treasure. I wonder whether there is any other country in the world, which has evolved and preserved National values with so much of fondness, inspiration and dedication. What more?

These evolved right from prehistoric times. Initially, they were transmitted from tongue to ear. Later they were inscribed in

palm leaves by cutting their fibers with a sharp steel pen. In as much as they were clearly documented and the treasure is available even now, none can doubt or question their relevance and applicability.

Any individual, family, society or nation will not be able to survive without ample values to cherish and pursue throughout. Like education, wealth and fulfilment of desires, values also are indispensable for anyone to live effectively and gloriously, be it an individual, family, societal segment, an agriculturist, industrialist, an administrator or a king. In the absence of sustaining and enduring values, any individual, family, society or institution is bound to perish sooner or later. This is the one message of our National values, which have been in vogue in this holy land right from immemorial to prehistoric times.

I do not expect any resistance or denial when our national values are presented properly to individuals,

families as well as educational, industrial and other institutions. This is because our values are always related to the emotional mind and rational intelligence. Whenever a value is rightly presented, it is bound to evoke an emotional persuasion and a rational compulsion from the listener or reader. For this reason, it is important that FRNV has a regular written medium to communicate with its members and associates. This will help spread FRNV's activities to as many cities and towns as possible. Much depends upon the joint efforts of the earnest members of FRNV to ensure the quality as well as the outreach of the publication.

I hope and bless that our team will do well in this regard.

I do exhort readers of 'Values Insight' to take up the cause of reaching the message to more and more people by enlisting them as subscribers and persuading them to be active members of FRNV's activities and programs. That will undoubtedly be a service they undertake, which will benefit them as well as the Nation as a whole. Remember the Nation consists of individuals born and reared in families by the parents and elders.

The birth and growth of children nursed by values at home as well as

in educational institutions are the backbone of any society as well as the Nation.

Individuals make homes, homes make societal segments, societal segments make the nation, and nations make the globe. Thus, every born child and growing individual is a consenter, from which are drawn all the circles called family, societal segment, the nation and globe. Hence the right growth of the individuals results in the desired growth of the Nation.

May FRNV through its 'Value Insight' journal, strengthen and broaden its efforts to inculcate National Values as effectively and widely as possible. I wish it widespread readership and a cherished place in the hearts and minds of our citizens.

Love and ashirvaad to all of you.

Swami Bhoomanada Tirtha

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Striding Towards an Ethical Tomorrow



E. Sreedharan

The famous 'Metro Man of India', was Managing Director of Delhi Metro from 1997 to 2011. He is a recipient of the Padma Shri Award in 2001 and the Padma Vibhushan Award in 2008. He has also been honored with the Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur (the highest French order for military and civil merits) in 2005 and the 'Order of Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star' –The second highest civilian award conferred by Emperor of Japan on 06th November 2013

India, that is Bharat, had a glorious past, leading the rest of the world in civilized living, knowledge on all subjects, tolerance and human values. Till a few hundred years ago, our country was very peaceful and prosperous, contributing 28 per cent to the GDP of the world, justifying the common saying, “milk and honey” used to flow freely in our land. Frequent foreign invasions and occupations as well as plundering made this country impoverished not only materially but also led to irreparable loss in terms of values, tradition and culture in general. Even after 74 years of independence, we haven't recovered completely. A large section of our population is still below the poverty line. Basic needs of housing, healthcare, good education, clean drinking water, electricity, etc. are still out of reach for many. As per the Global Human Developmental Index (2020), we are 131st in a list of 189 countries.

It is a matter of regret that on the corruption index, as judged by Transparency International, we were down to the 80th position in 2021. The reason why we have not emerged as a modern and model nation is mainly due to the steep decline in values, ethical principles and social discipline in the country.

As a contrast, Norway occupies the fourth place in the Global Human Development Index. People there hardly have any religious practice. Less than 14 per cent of the population has a stated religious belief. How then the people of Norway have such high principles, integrity and human values? From where did they inherit strengths in character and behavioural integrity? Most certainly from their parents and elders at home, teachers and professors in schools and colleges. This is exactly what is missing in our country.

Seeing the steep decline in ethics and values in our country, a few disciples of Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Thirthaji, an enlightened sage from Kerala, came forward under his inspiration and guidance and registered a Society under the name, Foundation for Restoration of National Values (FRNV) on 9th June, 2008. The main objective of the organization is to restore the age-old values of the nation to all strata so that people, both individually and collectively, rediscover an abiding inner persuasion to be truthful, ethical and patriotic in their actions and aspirations.

FRNV organized a national seminar in Delhi in November 2008 that was inaugurated by the then Chief Justice of Supreme Court, Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, and boasted of the presence of Sri L.K. Advani, Sri Somnath Chatterjee and several other luminaries. The deliberations at the seminar led FRNV to shortlist four key areas that needed immediate attention:

1. Value-based education in all schools and colleges
2. Electoral reforms to cleanse the poll process
3. Police reforms to make the police force more effective and accountable.
4. Administrative reforms for improving governance across all levels

Later, Swachh Bharat was added to this list.

FRNV's aim is not to work at grassroots levels but to bring about changes and transformation by influencing decision makers and working with the central and state governments. Apart from a corporate office in Delhi, regional chapters were established at Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru and Kochi.

Values haven't disappeared entirely; we still find islands of excellences here and there. Look at the heroism and sense of duty displayed by employees of the Taj Hotel, Mumbai, during the terror attack on 26th November 2008. Not even one employee abandoned his or her place of duty but stayed right through the attack, helping guests escape the assault. In the process, many employees lost their lives. Harvard University did a case study on the exemplary behavior of the hotel's employees and concluded that the unusual valour and sense of duty displayed by them were due to:-

1. Employees were recruited not from big cities but mostly from villages where traditional virtues and values still prevail.
2. Employees invariably hail from families and educational institutions where basic values and principles were automatically instilled in them.

3. The unique value and work culture of the Tata Group strengthens the character of the employees.

The above is a classic example where embedded values and right work culture saved the country's image. This is exactly the message and work culture FRNV is trying to spread.

FRNV has decided to bring out a print version of journal in English under the title "Value Insight". The contents of the journal will delve into values and be devoid of religious, communal and political overtones.

We believe this journal will carry a powerful 'value' message to every home and institution and gradually awaken an inner persuasion in every individual to have excellence in character, behavioural majesty and interactional elegance. We also take this opportunity to request our esteemed readers to send their valued suggestions to improve the quality and contents of this journal.

Dr. E Sreedharan
Life President, FRNV

From President's Desk

Today, as we look around, different parts of the world, are ridden with different types of tension and all seem to be going through difficult times. In some parts there have been political upheavals, elsewhere we find economic turmoil and worse, some places are facing or have faced, war.

The suffering of the people is one obvious aspect common to all these situations. Additionally, all these problems are also questioning the usefulness of some of the international organizations which had been set up to guide and provide stability to the world. The old order which has been effective in the past, giving some degree of stability and continuity, is now on shaky ground. We are thus unclear as to what the outcome will be. Will they survive or be forced to change in their role?

It is true that we are constantly redefining ourselves, as individuals, as people, as institutions, as nations. The process is so subtle and ongoing that often, we are not aware of it. But when such sudden or dramatic shifts occur, we notice, forced transformations taking place starkly.

It has been borne out by experience that any organization or nation which is founded on strong values survives turmoil, elegantly; either by redefining itself from within or returning stronger than before. Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha has



said that when there is decline in the value system, individuals perish, communities disappear and the nation is disintegrated.

Therefore, it is that it becomes all the more necessary to strengthen our value system.

It is very heartening to see that there are many who think similarly. This is borne out by the fact that our organization is slowly but steadily growing. More regional centres have come up and a few more are in the pipeline. There has been a slight increase in the enrolment of membership. Effort is being made to contact more individuals through social networks at different levels. We hope to be welcoming more members into FRNV soon.

However, the responsibility cannot be on the organization or any individual alone. We all have to work to increase the membership enrolment as well as in strengthening the organization. A few years ago when the National Literacy Programme was launched there was a slogan which said 'Each One, Teach Ten'. Modifying this slogan, may I request each one enrol ten members?

With best wishes.

S. Regunathan
President/FRNV

Subhashitam

**धर्मस्य दुर्लभो ज्ञाता सम्यक्
वक्ता ततोऽपि च ।
श्रोता ततोऽपि श्रद्धावान् कर्ता
कोऽपि ततः सुधीः ॥**

धर्म को जाननेवाला दुर्लभ होता है, उसे श्रेष्ठ तरीके से बतानेवाला उससे भी दुर्लभ, श्रद्धा से सुननेवाला उससे दुर्लभ, और धर्म का आचरण करनेवाला सुबुद्धिमान सबसे दुर्लभ है ।

Rare is one who knows what is righteousness, rarer is one who expounds it well, even rarer is the assiduous listener. But the rarest is the intelligent one who acts righteously.



Why Do Ethical People Become Unethical?

Dr Arun Kumar Rath

Arun K Rath talks of how we, as a nation, are rated poorly for conducting business ethically. He suggests some steps to emerge out of this dark rating.



The growing incidence of corruption in India is a matter of serious concern. India's image is suffering as a safe investment destination. Ease of doing business presupposes an honest and transparent environment conducive for entrepreneurship and growth. However, India's ranking in the global corruption perception index (Transparency International, 2022) has slipped down from 78 in 2019 to 85 in 2022.

According to KPMG India Fraud Survey 2012, law enforcement in India is not swift enough. As much

as 25 percent of annual revenues are lost in India due to frauds. Deloitte India Corporate Fraud Perception Survey 2018 reported significant rise in incidents of unethical conduct by employees in India including frauds. It concluded that the junior and middle management employees were most likely to commit frauds. It is alarming that such trends in corrupt practices, among corporate executives, are on rise.

Ethics and Integrity

Ethics refers to moral principles of behavior and conduct. Integrity is the quality of being honest. The

word integrity evolved from the Latin word integer, meaning whole or complete. Integrity is "wholeness" in honesty and consistency of character. Integrity is honesty and truthfulness.

Why is integrity important? A person of integrity will be free of corruption and hypocrisy. Having integrity means you are trustworthy and reliable. Your word is your commitment. People count on your professionalism. Integrity builds trust in relationships. A person with integrity does the right thing, even behind closed doors. Workplace integrity is vital to decision-making, serving customers, and managing employees. It is also crucial to reducing costly errors, avoiding illegal activity, and keeping the organization's core values top of mind.

Advantages & Disadvantages

Consultancy firm Interbrand has calculated the damage that unethical behavior can do to a company's reputation and brand value. It can be up to 25% of world's financial health. (Ruston, K., "Cracking the Code" IOD Director's Guide: Sustainable Development, May 2001). Unethical practices may lead to expensive court cases for unethical conduct, bad publicity, damage to reputation, loss of brand value and fall in share price of companies.

Advantages of an ethical organization are many. It attracts talented people; the employees feel happy and are free of stress. Honesty builds trust among shareholders and other stakeholders and attracts and retains customers as well as suppliers. It boosts brand value and avoids activists.

Unethical practices

Organizations often provoke good people to make unethical choices in 5 ways

- Unsafe to speak up (express one's opinions frankly and publicly)
- Pressure to reach unrealistic targets
- Conflicting Goals
- Ethical behavior not being part of routine talk
- Positive example not being set

Causes of unethical conduct include pressure, fear, greed, convenience, personal benefits, boss's directives, aggressive business objectives and pressures to achieve unrealistic targets. Cost of corruption has become low due to weak law enforcement

Strategy to combat corruption

Organizations should develop code of ethics and lead by example. They must provide guidance to employees to face ethical dilemmas

at workplace. Communicate regularly to employees, publicly criticize violators, organize ethics trainings and cultivate ethical culture. Reward honesty and punish dishonest employees. Protection to whistleblowers, support to employees with ethical dilemmas, developing a code of ethics and communicating it publically will help. Foster open conversations between managers and their teams on ethical practices.

Socratic model

Socrates emphasized a virtue-based system of ethics 2,500 years ago in his Academy. Ethics is learnt in questions and conversations. Character is the result of daily actions. Boardrooms that do not function in the Socrates way are fertile grounds for the Enron's and World.Com's of this world. Socrates believed that virtues were best encouraged through questions and discussions rather than through statements. Ethics is learnt better in open conversation in the organization. These conversations should develop a common language to promote ethical values.

Organizations often provoke good people to make unethical choices due to excessive organizational pressure. Employees follow boss's directives of meeting unrealistic targets. Some employees are driven by personal greed. Many are obsessed with advancing their

own career. Risk of getting caught for corruption is low in India, due to poor anti-corruption laws and ineffective enforcement. As the likelihood of punishment is low, employees find perverse logic to justify corruption. There should be zero tolerance of ethical violations. "The simple step of a simple courageous man is to not take part in the lie, not to support deceit. Let the lie come into the world, even dominate the world, but not through me." (Alexander Solzhenitsyn)

Ethical behavior is not encouraged as part of routine talk in the office. It is unsafe to speak up and express one's ethical views frankly and openly. Observance of vigilance weeks are only compliance programmes. Ethical talk should not be only one time affair, but a continuous process.

Litmus test

Action plan to combat corruption should include developing a code of ethics, communicating it publically and building ethical culture top-down. Organizations must hire individuals with high ethical standards. There should be guidance and support available to employees to face ethical dilemmas at workplace. Providing reward to honest employees, criticizing and punishing the violators as well as protection to whistleblowers will help in building ethical atmosphere. Instead of focusing always on the

negative side of employees' conduct, organizations need to focus on the positive virtues of the workforce also.

Warren Buffet gave a litmus test to his employees on corruption:

"I want employees to ask themselves (when in doubt) whether they are willing to have any contemplated act appear the next day on the front page of their local paper – to be read by their spouses, children and friends-with the reporting done by an informed and critical reporter." (Berkshire Hathway's Code of Ethics)

Positive examples

Corruption often begins at the top. Fish rots from the head, Kenneth Lay, the notorious Chairman of Enron Corporation of US had announced that, "We will be the most respected corporation in the eyes of all stakeholders". Shortly after such pledge, the mighty Enron Corporation collapsed exposing massive corruption in Enron by the top brass of the company including the fraudulent Chairman. Positive examples of honesty and integrity can be shown by top leaders of the organization, which is followed by the employees. Narayan Murthy build up the mighty Infosys Corporation on principles of ethics, and honesty in business Infosys

became an icon of transparency, disclosures and corporate values. He had announced the guiding principle of corporate decision "When in doubt, disclose without any hesitation: "The softest pillow is a clear conscience." "Sustainable profitable businesses can only be built on a foundation of values." Positive examples should be set by the top managers. Corporate leaders should foster conversations between managers and their teams.

Road ahead

Organizations must draw a strategy to ensure ethical conduct by employees. The strategy should include following ten point action plan:

- Lead by Example
- Set clear policy on ethics
- Zero tolerance to unethical conduct
- Discussion on ethical code
- Speak up culture
- Help colleagues to face ethical dilemmas
- Pride in organizational ethics
- Encourage individual ethics
- Integrity at all times
- Protect the honest employees and the whistle blowers



As A Doctor, How Do You Decide Right Action.

Dr. Shakuntala Daveswar

Dr. Shakuntala Daveswar looks behind the doctor's action to peer at the intent, to help us understand Right Action in the medical world and comes up with a yardstick that could be applied to any field of work/study.



The principles of Science are clear cut and definitive. Medicine is an applied Science, and hence, the line between fact and perception, can, sometimes, be very thin and subjective. To understand Right Action, there must be clear definitions in one's mind about the concepts of Right and Wrong. The Bhagavad Gita, our ancient text emphasizes the need to be always Righteous.

For a treating physician, Right Action is determined by what is seen as the consequence of treatment. Will it be in the best interests of the patient? Will it be cost effective? Will the decision in any way be affected by personal gain for the doctor? In the majority of cases, the choice of taking the Right Action is a matter of habit for the doctor and the only factor which influences the treatment is

in the benefit to the patient. If the doctor is qualified, competent and compassionate and has no other motive or vested interest then there is no scope for taking anything other than the Right Action.

The human body is complex and the state of health and resilience in each individual differs. The extent to which an individual reacts to a specific treatment may also differ. Two people with the same disorder and apparent state of health may show differing responses to the same medication. These are the factors that have to be taken into account while monitoring therapies in different individuals.

Certain situations demand hospitalization and intensive therapies which necessitate the use of sophisticated machines and gadgets like Ventilators, Dialysis Machines and Oxygen Cylinders. These are always in limited supply which is adequate under normal circumstances, but in eventualities such as the recent Covid 19 pandemic, the facilities are far short of the demand. During times of such crisis, the medical and para medical staff works under a great deal of internal stress and external pressure. Some doctors have confided in me, about the frustration they felt as the shortage of drugs and facilities created a situation where Right Action was not necessarily taken as the position and power of the person needing it outweighed the merits of

the case. This would indeed qualify as a failure to take Right Action. I did not have to experience this frustration as I was not expected to work in a hospital due to my age. However, I do remember as a junior resident doctor (over four decades ago) while taking my training, we had only two ventilators in the hospital and while on emergency duty an elderly man presented with breathing difficulty and was put on a ventilator. Soon after a young accident victim was brought in who needed to be put on the ventilator. The second ventilator did not work and the senior doctor on duty instructed me to switch the ventilator to the accident victim as he was much younger. I had no option but to follow the command but I hesitated and felt guilty till the senior doctor explained that he had no selfish motive in mind, merely the thought that the young man had a better chance of a productive life if he could be saved NOW. The incident made me think of the complexity of the situation and the need for dispassionate decisions at times of crisis. It also made me think about the relativity of the extent of Right Action. Yes, the lines can be blurred at times. It is not always Black or White. Grey areas do exist and challenge our thoughts and conscience constantly.

For every professional, a thorough knowledge of one's subject is an essential prerequisite for taking the correct decision which is the Right Action. Continual up gradation of

the knowledge is equally important in order to be well informed of the latest developments in that area of study.

Doctors deal with the human body and indirectly with human life so this basic requirement of full knowledge and competence in the subject of specialization is fundamental to taking the Right Action. It is the lack of competence that results in unwanted consequences, further testing the doctor's ability to deal with the increasing seriousness of the situation.

An error of judgment could lead to a deteriorating condition of a patient. Could this be taken to be a failure of Right Action, on the part of the attending doctor? To my mind, if a judgement had been based on facts and in case of doubt, it has been discussed with colleagues / seniors and a conscious decision arrived at, then an error of judgement (often seen in retrospect) cannot be termed as a failure of Right Action.

For a doctor, the Right Action is determined by legal, ethical and moral considerations. These may, at time, be at variance with each other, thus blurring the line between Right and Wrong.

Let me illustrate with an example. An 85 year old patient had been bed ridden due to several medical problems and had bed sores. She was drowsy and needed full time care for

feeding, bedside sponging, cleaning after passing stools and urine in addition to turning her position in bed. The sixty year old daughter who took care of her wept and said she could bear it no longer. Would I put her mother to sleep? I was appalled at the suggestion and explained that I was duty bound to preserve life at all costs and that what she asked was illegal and even criminal. She was an only child and no inheritance issues were at stake. She was also a very loving and caring daughter. Two days later, she rang up to tell me her mother was no more. She also told me she had asked another medical professional who gave an injection and the mother died peacefully in her sleep. The doctor was a compassionate and good person and told her he would never feel guilty as he had done what was in the best interest of the patient and the family. So here, faced with a common situation, two doctors chose two diametrically different options and yet, each felt the Action was the Right one. This example justifies the actions of both the doctors in its own way. One followed the legal and ethical path in making a decision while the other chose the human approach. The Bhagwad Gita teaches us that no action is intrinsically Right or wrong, it is the intent that makes it so. In this case both demonstrated a righteous intent.



Lions? No, cheetahs? Both? What about the people?

The goal was lofty: to develop an alternative home for lions and thus safeguard the nation's population of lions. But, asks Preeti Shree Venkatram can there be a "right action", in line with principles of environmental justice, that does not pit animals against each other, or animals and people against each other?



The Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary and its surrounding area in Gujarat host the last free ranging population of the Asiatic lion. Wildlife biologists caution against the danger of a situation such as this, wherein all eggs are in one basket. Any disaster, natural or human-made, or disease outbreak that strikes the area could potentially wipe-out or create a significant

dent in the numbers. A case in point is the threat posed by the canine distemper virus, an outbreak of which in the early 1990s in Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, caused three-fourths of the lion population to get infected and one-third to die, in a matter of weeks. To safeguard against such eventualities, in 1995, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) recommended the Asiatic Lion

Reintroduction Project. The site recommended as a second home for the Asiatic lion was the Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary, notified in 1981. It is situated in the Sheopur district in north-west Madhya Pradesh.

To create an inviolate space for the lions, over 5,000 people from 24 villages were relocated between 1998 and 2003 from within the Sanctuary to lands outside of it. The majority of these people belonged to the Sahariya tribe, people who historically were almost entirely dependent on the forest for their sustenance and livelihood needs. The banks of the river Kuno that flows through the Sanctuary provided for fertile land which the Sahariyas used to cultivate. Poor quality of land provided post the relocation made for unprofitable agriculture and predominantly wage based livelihoods and power differentials they had to now contend with left them impoverished. Their food security declined and also made them vulnerable to diseases. Conflicts for resources arose with villagers already living in the areas into which they were resettled. Forest areas that the “host villages” were initially dependent on, were cut down to accommodate those resettled. Their previous access to wood, fodder, tree resin, etc. suffered. On the whole, as per studies and interviews, post relocation, not only has the plight of those resettled deteriorated, but those in

“host villages” have also had to bear a share of the brunt. To add salt to these wounds, there is a proposed irrigation dam in the area that threatens to again displace some of the already displaced villages. All of this was corroborated during interactions with those displaced during visits to the Sanctuary and its surrounding areas in 2011 and 2012. Moreover, there was a sense of indignation at the fact that though many years had passed since their ousting from the sanctuary, the lions for whom they apparently made way, and suffered for till date, were still nowhere in sight. This was due to the fact that the Gujarat Government was unwilling to part with any lions. Some of its reasons were an alleged lack of prey density at Kuno, an unsuitable climate and incidents of poaching. The emotional attachment of the people of Gujarat to the lion was also cited as a reason.

A parallel in this narrative is the plan to introduce the African cheetah in the Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary. The Asiatic cheetah was last seen in India in 1967. Since the 1950s, people have debated the idea of its reintroduction. While initial plans involved getting Asiatic cheetahs from Iran (the only country where they are currently found), and at one point even cloning them, eventually the idea to source them from Iran was abandoned because the population there was precariously

low. Given the genetic similarity between the Asiatic and the African cheetah, it was then decided to go ahead with introducing the latter instead. In 2010, WII along with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) released a report recommending the Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary as being best suited for the cheetah introduction plan. The Government of Gujarat proclaimed that lions would pose a threat to cheetahs and cited it as another reason to not part with any lions. In the counter to this, the Ministry of Environment and Forests stated that if and when the lions did come to Kuno-Palpur, there would be no threat to them by way of the cheetahs, provided there was an established population of cheetahs by that time. The example of cheetahs and lions coexisting in parts of Africa was cited in this regard. In 2013, the Supreme Court stayed the plans of introducing cheetahs, claiming that introducing cheetahs and then lions was an arbitrary and illegal decision and that Kuno must get lions within a prescribed time period.

Along the way, in 2018, the status of the Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary was raised to a National Park. The size of the conservation area was doubled and with that loomed the possibility of further displacement of Adivasi settlements. That same year, an outbreak of the feared canine distemper virus was seen amongst lions in Gir, and the

advice of shifting lions to different sanctuaries to ensure protection of the species was yet again highlighted.

However, till date, neither the Gujarat Government nor the Central Government has acted upon plans to translocate the lions. In 2020, in response to an affidavit filed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Supreme Court went back on the previous order of 2013 that stayed the plans for introduction of cheetahs, now permitting the same.

In his message dated November 27, 2021 in the report on the Action Plan for the Introduction of the Cheetah in India, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav, writes:

“The tiger has served as a flagship and umbrella species of forest systems, the cheetah will fill this void for open forests, savanna and grassland habitats. The project cheetah will bring in resources to restore these neglected habitats that in turn will conserve their biodiversity, harness their ecosystem services and their ability to sequester carbon to their maximum potential. The opportunities for ecotourism will enhance local community livelihood options. The action plan based on sound science will steer this globally important conservation project to success.”

It has been advised in the case of tiger reintroduction initiatives, as an important precondition, that it is imperative to not only have a sound understanding of the factors that contributed to the extirpation of the previous population, but also that they ought to first be adequately dealt with. This begs the question— is there any assurance that the cheetah introduction project is going to succeed? The predicament of existing endangered animals in India such as the snow leopard, sangai, Great Indian Bustard and hangul, amongst others, unfortunately, does not offer much hope. What will be done differently in the case of conserving the cheetahs in Kuno-Palpur?

A few years ago, approximately INR 34 crores was sanctioned for a five-year period for the conservation of the Great Indian Bustard, also a resident of Indian grasslands. A recent news report states that there has been a delay in releasing the amount sanctioned for its conservation. Such an occurrence is not an isolated event. As espoused by Bhupender Yadav, supporters of the cheetah introduction believe that a charismatic animal could champion the much-needed cause of grassland conservation. In the 2021 Action Plan, a budget of INR 39 crores has been allocated for the introduction of cheetahs in India for the period of the first five years.

For the prey base, as per the Action Plan, the numbers of chital, sambar, chowsingha, nilgai, wild pig, langur, peafowl and feral cattle have been studied and declared as sufficient. However, it has been pointed out that back when cheetahs did exist in India, blackbuck and chinkara formed a significant part of the prey base, which is no longer the case. The Plan specifies that at present, the Kuno-Palpur National Park and its surrounding area have a carrying capacity of 21 cheetahs, and should things go as planned, it is estimated that in 30-40 years, this number could go up to 36. Proponents for lion reintroduction question the scientific basis of this entire initiative and state that they cannot help but wonder whether this is an “expensive vanity project “that is only going to further postpone translocation of the endangered lions.

Many decades have passed grappling with unresolved competing causes. No animals have gained, and in fact, displaced humans and others also affected by resettlement attempts have only suffered. When it comes to matters of meeting environmental needs, can there be a “right action”, in line with principles of environmental justice, that does not pit animals against each other, or animals and people against each other?

Benediction

King's Temple and Cobbler's Cottage

By Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha tells us a story that first appeared in Rajatarangini by the famous kashmiri poet Kalhana. A gentle reminder of the core of Right Action.

In the 12th Century, Kashmir was ruled by King Chandrapida who was a noble, impartial and just king.

King Chandrapida had a wish to build a Tribhuvanaswami (Lord of the three worlds) temple.

The King and his advisors discussed what would be the most suitable place to build the temple. After sufficient discussions, they started looking for it and finally found an ideal place for the temple. In this land, there was a small hut belonging to a cobbler. The cobbler did not consent to the removal of his hut despite the orders of the king's officials. It was his land and his cottage and he was not prepared to leave the land.

Forceful acquisition is not right by any standard of judgment. The officials could not proceed with the work because he was not willing to leave his land. When he was unwilling to spare his land, negotiations started. But the negotiations also proved futile. The cobbler was not convinced and he would not give away his rights to his land. All the preparations for construction were at a standstill.

When this news was communicated to the king, he declared that his ministers were wrong. He said, "When someone's property is there, you should not have tried to convince him to leave." The king did not speak a word against the cobbler.

He told his officials, "What you have done is blameworthy. You should have understood his needs. Before attempting to do anything, you should have taken his consent. I don't approve of it."

This is not mere history. It is an epic. It tells us why something is done very clearly.

The King said, "Either you stop preparations for construction or build the temple in another place. People have given me the status of a king. I owe everything to my subjects. If the land belongs to the cobbler, we have no right to the land. It is like robbing him. You have brought disrepute to my kingdom."

What is the duty of a king? He has to make sure that everyone behaves righteously. Those who have to uphold Dharma, suppose they disregard it, what will people do?

Which path will they walk in?

This is India. This is our heredity and legacy. We have always stood for propriety, ethics, and righteousness. We cannot behave in any manner we like. There should be dignity and elegance in whatever we do.

Hearing the king's words, the ministers were embarrassed.

Then, a messenger came from the cobbler wishing to have an audience with the king.

When he was brought to the king, he said, "My lord (the cobbler) wants to have an interview with the king. If he can be entertained in court, he can come here. If not, he is ready to meet outside the court."

Instantly the interview was sanctioned. The king welcomed the cobbler with all honor and respect.

The King said, "A temple is going to be built by which the society will be benefitted. Why are you hindering it? If you have any difficulty, tell me. I am prepared to give as much wealth or money as you want. We can build another house for you in another location according to your needs."

After saying this, the king kept quiet. The king was waiting to know what the cobbler would say. He looked at him intently.

The Cobbler said, "O Lord, I am not

a literate person. Whatever comes to my mouth and tongue, I will say. I will use my own language. As innocently as I am speaking, you must also listen innocently. Do not stand by conceit or pride."

He was speaking to the king in this manner. This is democracy. A good king has to listen to his people's thoughts and opinions.

How great the king was! He was majestic, noble and tolerant. He wanted everyone to express openly their thoughts and feelings before him. He had love for his people.

When the king and the cobbler were speaking, all the officials were getting restless.

The Cobbler continued, "I am not lower than a dog. You are not greater than Lord Rama. Your people are very restless. Why? Am I not your subject? Are you not my king?"

"Anybody who is born, has a body. It is like a dress. It is perishable. It is just like a shirt hung from two poles. Our body is hanging on two poles—ego and possessiveness."

King listened patiently because the cobbler was talking sense.

"Both our bodies have only Panchabhutas. Your body is decorated by bangles, anklets and other gold ornaments. I have nothing. But the ego and possessiveness I have for my own body, is the same as you have for yours."

“Yours is a royal palace made of marble. Sun Rays are entering through windows and are brightening up the rooms. My cottage is made of grass walls. For windows, we use necks of mud pots. The sunlight enters my hut through the necks of mud pots. So, there is no difference.”

“Your people have asked me to give away my land. Right from my birth, this little cottage has been hosting me like a mother. It has hosted me through all Sukha-duhkhas. I am not able to tolerate the thought of the cottage being demolished.”

“When one’s house is being forcefully taken away, when a king loses his kingdom, no one will be able to explain the pain and torment.”

“This is my problem. You have your requirement. I also have mine. How to resolve the problem? I am not able to leave my cottage. The temple is also required.”

In conclusion, the cobbler said, **“I will tell you what is in my mind. If you come to my cottage and beg for it, I shall give.”**

This is our dear India. When someone begs, you cannot refuse. When a hungry man needs food, you have to feed him. You are the possessor and he is the seeker and you cannot say ‘No’. You are bound by sadachara.

The conversation stopped and the

cobbler left.

The next day, the king went to the cobbler’s cottage and begged for the piece of land and was given.

Whenever you are out to do something great, you cannot stand by prestige. You have to be humble.

The Cobbler said folding his hands, “This readiness that you have shown, speaks of your dharmic adherence. I adore it and bless you.”

This is characteral elegance and dignity of the heart.

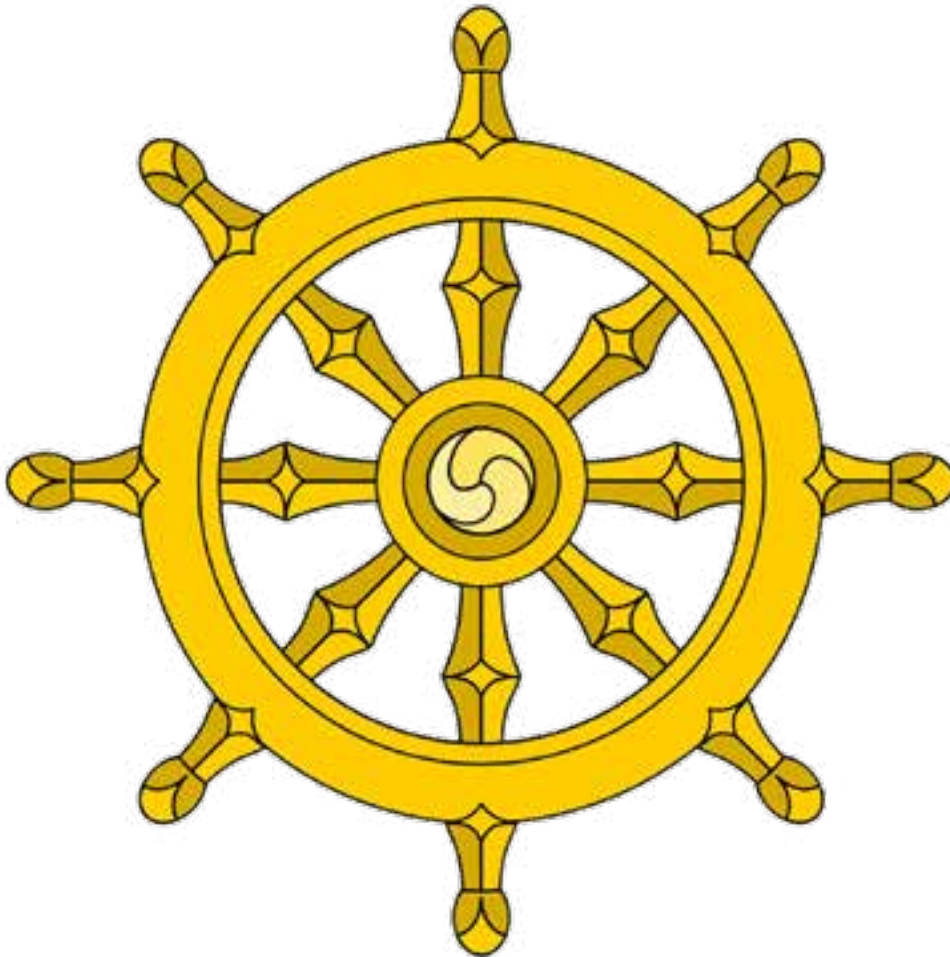
The cobbler said, “I have heard that Yudhishtira was very righteous. I have heard that when they were ascending to heaven, all other Pandavas fell. Only Yudhishtira was climbing because of his righteousness. There was a dog with him. When they asked Yudhishtira to climb into the Vimana (a heavenly chariot), he said he would not go without the dog.

The cobbler said, “We have heard this story. But today, I have seen you being so Dharmic. I have seen how righteous you are.”

“My dear king, live long and gloriously showing many other instances of dharma. There are a set of people who are interested in embodying this kind of characteral elegance and behavioral majesty. Give them more and more of such examples for them to follow”.

Dharma is not Rigid; It is Ever Changing by Nature

Ashok Vohra



Though dharma is regarded as the highest virtue in our polity and Indic thought, its precise meaning continues to be an enigma for scholars. That's because 'dharma' is a comprehensive term used in different senses. According to KV Ramaswami Iyengar, "Dharma is used in so many senses that it eludes definition. It stands for nature, intrinsic quality, civil and moral

laws, justice, virtue, merit, duty and morality."

Besides referring to the Rig Vedic notion of Rita, cosmic order, as PT Raju has pointed out, dharma also has such varied and diverse meanings as "law, nature, rule, ideal, norm, quality, entity, truth, element, and category". After a survey of Rig Ved and Upanishads,

PV Kane shows how the usage of 'dharma' has passed through 'several transitions of meaning' and how its meaning finally has settled down to signifying "the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of Aryan community, as a member of one of the castes, as a person at a particular stage of life".

In defining the notion of dharma is further compounded by its different kinds. A tentative list may include: vyakti dharma, kutumbha dharma, samajik dharma, rashtra dharma, varna dharma, ashram dharma, guna dharma, sadharna dharma, svadharma and apad dharma. Each one of them describes a rule of action that may at times conflict with other rules.

Since there are different sources of dharma, it cannot be explained in terms of its source. According to Sage Yajnavalka, sources of dharma include the Veds, Smritis, practices of noblemen, and also what helps one in the pursuit of virtuous goals. The last one makes dharma a dynamic concept, the meaning of which changes from yug to yug, time to time, society to society and from context to context.

The Mahabharat explicitly states the ever-changing character of dharma in the following words: "In Sat Yug, dharmas are different from the ones in Dwapar Yug, and dharmas prescribed for Dwapar are different

from the ones in Kali Yug." Dharmas change as per the needs, aspirations and capabilities of individuals living in the specific era.

That is why Smriti-granthas and Puranas agree that ways of dharma are indeed hard to comprehend. Due to the basic, non-static and evolutionary nature of 'dharma', Donald Brown concludes, "Dharma is more than laws, for it underlies a law and is responsible for the creation of laws in the universe. Basic to dharma is the view of order or law pervasive in the universe." Dharma, therefore, is that which makes us aware of our duties, and that of the others. However, it must be noted that dharmas are not rigid and static. Dharmas are persistently evolving and adapting to the needs of the lived society; they help society resolve stresses, strains, conflicts and confusions it faces over time.

Making a distinction between eternal and ephemeral, S Radhakrishnan says, "While the truths of spirit are permanent, rules change from age to age." Ramakrishna Paramhans summarizes the essentially changing character of dharmas thus: "The Mughal coins have no currency under the Company's rule." Binding dharma in the past may be insupportable, even objectionable, today.

(First published in the Speaking Tree, Times of India, March 21, 2022)

Swami Vivekananda

The Universal Man

Shri S Regunathan

It came to me as a great consolation to find everyone who has sought to describe Vivekananda has been at a loss, for it is not easy to describe a genius. An intense thinker, a dramatic disciple of Ramakrishna, an adventurer who travelled to the US with his confidence alone as his guide, a evocative orator, a courageous man who spoke his mind, a well read man who could quote extempore, man's whose power of concentration was phenomenal, who looked so majestic, who was full of love that was not afraid to tell the truth...so much more and a short life which lasted only 33 years. So many dimensions are difficult to capture for an ordinary writer like me.

Let me quote Roman Rolland's description of Vivekananda when he appeared in Chicago at the inaugural meeting of the Parliament of Religions:

"When this quite unknown young man of thirty appeared in Chicago at the inaugural meeting of the Parliament of Religions, opened in September 1893 by Cardinal Gibbons, all his fellow members were forgotten in his commanding

presence. His strength and beauty, the grace and dignity of his bearing, the light of his eyes, his imposing appearance, and from the moment he began to speak, the splendid music of his rich deep voice enthralled the vast audience of American Anglo Saxons, previously prejudiced against him on account of his colour."¹

Every aspect of his life from his accidental discovery of his guru Sri Ramakrishna, his love for literature, his father's untimely demise, loss of property due to the cunning of friends and relatives, his brave and courageous mother, demand a full dissertation. I am going to leave you with just one thought.

Though Vivekananda introduced the Hindu way of life in Chicago in the Parliament of Religions, he was of firm conviction that if one religion is true, all religions are true. He never believed that one religion alone is superior to other religions. This conviction had come from his guru Sri Ramakrishna's teachings.

Sri Ramakrishna had lived as a true devotee of other religions. He had lived like a Muslim and like

a Christian, to understand what moves the devotees, what makes the religion charming. His finding was that all religions lead to the same source

Therefore, Vivekananda was of the same belief. He was very intolerant of people who criticize other religions because he believed all religions contain some truth. That is why he said once that he would like to wash the feet of the man of Nazareth with his heart's blood for he admired Christ's love and compassion for humankind. In the same way he praised Prophet Mohammad who taught equality among human beings.

But at the same time, he was not a blind admirer of all religions as they were being practiced. Even though he was a great admirer of Hinduism,

he said that today Hinduism lives in the kitchen (orthodoxy) and "don't-touchism". Christ's love and compassion has been forgotten by the self and power of the Church. Islam's equality is ignored by his followers and peace is thus not maintained.

The solution to all this, he said, is to love all human beings and see yourself in all living and non living beings. Also see them in yourself. Then the strife and differences will disappear and unity will prevail. So it is wrong on anyone's part to appropriate Vivekananda to himself or his sect of following. There is a Vivekananda in all of us. Using his own words, we have to Arise and Awaken him and discover the beauty of the oneness in the world.

...to be continued

Childrens Corner

Making Friends



Remember the story you read in the last issue in these pages? It was about the dove king Chitragriva who escaped from a hunter by flying away with the other pigeons carrying the net along with. They had landed on a hilltop and a mouse had bitten through their net to free them. That mouse was called Hiranyaka. Chitragriva thanked Hiranyaka for having saved them.

“Friends can help in any situation,” said Hiranyaka, “and I am your friend.”

A crow was watching all this and hearing their conversation. He flew close to where Hiranyaka was sitting and said he wanted to be Hiranyaka’s friend. “You?” asked Hiranyaka in surprise. “I am your

food and you feed on me. How can we ever be friends? Do you not know the story of the deer and the jackal?” And he proceeded to tell the crow that story.

Once upon a time there was a jackal in a certain dense forest. The jackal was roaming about feeling hungry when he spied a deer; a beautiful, plump and healthy deer. He wanted to eat it, but he decided that he needed a strategy or else the deer would make him run for his food. So with drooping shoulders and a sad look he walked to where the deer was and asked, “Dear friend, hope you are well.”

The deer was surprised. “Who are you?” he asked.

“My name is Kshudrabuddhi. People also call me Little-wit. I live in this forest but am a sad jackal because all my family is dead. On seeing you I felt happy...will you be my friend? I will serve you and look after you. Your goodness makes me feel happy.”

The deer was partly amused, partly disbelieving and partly sad for the jackal. He said, “Okay so be it.”

That evening the deer took Little-wit to his home. On top of the tree under which the deer lived was a crow. He saw the two together and asked the deer, “Dear friend, who have you brought along?” The deer explained how he had found a new friend. The crow told the deer the jackal was not to be trusted, but the deer did not believe him. “Let us all live together, happily,” he said.

Next day morning the jackal took the deer to a field of ripe corn. The deer enjoyed his meal and started going there every day. The farmer saw the deer and set a trap for it one day. The jackal saw the farmer setting the trap and was happy. He thought once the deer is caught, the farmer would cut him up and he would then attack the farmer and eat the deer to his fill.

The deer did get caught in the trap laid by the farmer. As the deer lay struggling inside the net, the jackal came along. The deer was very happy, “Cut my net, friend,” said the

deer,” let me free.”

“Ah!” said the jackal. “My teeth alas are not strong enough for this net...”

Saying so, he hid behind the bushes. Then the deer realized the crow had indeed been right, the jackal was not a true friend.

Meanwhile, the crow was flying about looking for his friend, the deer. He saw him and immediately flew down and cut away the net. The deer was now free, but the farmer was coming towards them. The crow told the deer, “You be still. The farmer will think you are dead. I will save you.”

The deer was still. The farmer thought, “Oh poor thing, He has died in the very shock of being caught.” He began picking up the bits of the net that the crow had strewn around while tearing it. The crow meanwhile disturbed the jackal. The farmer saw the jackal and started chasing it. The deer and crow escaped quietly.

When Hiranyaka finished telling this story the crow who wanted to be his friend said, “But you see even in this story the crow is a friend. Let me be your friend. I will be good.”

Hiranyaka said, “yes indeed!” He therefore agreed and the crow and Hiranyaka became friends.

Childrens Corner

How a Dream Came True

About 4000 years ago, there lived a pious man in Palestine called Yaqoob. He was the chief of his tribe. He had 12 sons, Yusuf being the second youngest of them. Yaqoob loved Yusuf very much not only because he was so handsome, but more because he was also very wise and sincere.

Yusuf had ten elder half brothers. His real brother, who was younger than him, was called Benjamin.

One day, Yusuf had an unusual dream in which 11 stars, the sun, and the moon all bowed down to him. When he told his father about his dream, his father said that the dream meant that good things were going to happen. "But do not tell your brothers, they will be jealous of you," warned the father.

The ten brothers were already jealous of their father's special love for Yusuf. They made an evil plan. They carried him away and threw him into a dry well deep in the forest. No one ever went to that part of the forest...it was dark, deep and lonely. Now they could enjoy all of their father's love, they thought.

However, God came to Yusuf's rescue. A caravan from Midian that was going to Egypt happened to pass nearby that place. A caravan

member came searching for water and on seeing the well, let his bucket down. Yusuf was about 16 years old. He got hold of the rope and came up when the rope was pulled up.

In those days people used to have slaves working for them. So the members of the caravan took Yusuf to Egypt and sold him as a slave there. That was how he travelled from Palestine to Egypt.

Luckily his master in Egypt was a courtier of the Egyptian King. After some years, when Yusuf was older, he came in contact with the King. The King was greatly impressed with Yusuf's personality and wisdom. He made him his most trusted minister of agriculture.

But what do you think happened? Egypt and the surrounding areas were hit by severe drought. Yusuf, however, managed the agricultural affairs so well that the Egyptians accepted him as their hero.

People from all surrounding areas began pouring into Egypt since food was available at a fair price only here. Palestine, too was affected by drought. So Yusuf's brothers also came to Egypt to buy grains at a cheaper rate; little did they realize that the minister they had come to seek provisions from, was their own

brother. As soon as the stepbrothers entered the palace, Yusuf recognized them, but they did not recognize him, for it never occurred to them that the young boy whom they had thrown into the dry well 20 years ago, could have survived to rise to such a high rank!

However, Yusuf did not tell them who he was. Yusuf gave them enough provisions and treated them well. The brothers told Yusuf that they had old parents and one younger brother. So Yusuf asked them to bring their parents and younger

brother on their next visit. When they arrived, Yusuf welcomed them, embraced his parents, and pardoned his stepbrothers. Showing them the deepest respect, Yusuf made them sit on the throne and said, “Welcome to Egypt in safety. ‘

Seeing the splendor and the high position of Yusuf, all the eleven brothers fell prostrate as a mark of thanksgiving. That is how the dream that Yusuf had had as a boy of the sun, the moon and 11 stars prostrating themselves before him had, at last, come true.



happiness is
not
something
ready
made...

it comes
from your
own actions

dalai lama

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Dr. E Sreedharan
Metro man

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