

HOW TO WIN FRIENDS

By Mahatma Devesh Bhikshu



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PREFACE

All the human race is one family. According to the Vedas, there is only one caste and it is 'Humanity'. Hence, there ought to be no difficulty in being friendly with others. We have set narrow limits. We have harmed our own cause by so doing. We must rise above such narrow barriers. We must shower love and compassion and show respect and appreciation for the views of others. These are bound to go a long way in creating the feelings of friendship amongst us all.

With Love and blessings,

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1 Aim

With the advancement of modern civilization, increase in cut-throat competition and many competitors vying with one another, it has become very important that human-beings may avoid coming into dash in direct opposition, but try to go ahead in a friendly spirit, that may pave the journey of life with happiness and pleasantries, thus making it more enjoyable, without feeling its pains and sufferings.

In one word, our aim is to create friendliness amongst all, without any bias or prejudice, as the Vedas say:

द्विते दृथह मा मित्रस्य मा चक्षुषा भूतानि समीक्षन्ताम!
मित्रस्य चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे !! यजु. ३६ – १९

O God! Dispeller of ignorance, grant me the ability and strength, so that all the beings may see me with the eye of a friend. While I may also see them, *i.e.*, all the living-beings, with the eye of a friend. Thus, we all regard one another and see as friends.

If I see others as friends, it is certain others would respond my gesture. This is but natural, in that we are all one-family, our Father being the Creator, All-Mighty God and we are all His children. But unfortunately we generally forget this too often in our ego of either bodily strength, or because of the position we hold or wealth. This is our great mistake and sooner we are able to realise this, the better would it be for all.

I have to state the fact ruefully that the so-called civilization has made man very selfish, as with the growing population, the struggle for existence has become harsh, while the greed of man has also increased manifold. As with the change in the economic system in terms of money, it has also become easier to exploit the poor. While every endeavour is being made to produce more and more, the facilities can hardly match the rate of growth in population, thus accentuating the situation to a point, where friendliness of 'Haves' is imperative for 'Have-nots', as otherwise it may explode, destroying all.

This is more applicable to countries like India and as the Vedas tell us, we must share the pains and pleasures in active participation, solving the problem as one family. Our resources being limited, we must adapt ourselves to the circumstances and make plans accordingly, rather than depend on loans from others, as such a course would render the future bleak, it being quite clear to those who are able to foresee.

In this context, the under-mentioned hymn from Yajur-Veda is worth noting:

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत !
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम !! यजु ४० - १!!

God is pervading the entire universe, even every planet in the whole cosmos. Hence, O Man ! abandoning all considerations of this perishable world, you need not covet the wealth of others. Be not greedy as after all whose wealth is this?

Because God, our Father, is pervasive everywhere, we should enjoy all material things in life in a spirit of renunciation. In other words, we have no right to amass wealth or any other thing, because in so doing we deprive others of their due share and become guilty and sinful in the process.

No one can claim that the wealth that he has earned with the dint of his hard labour is his own, and nobody else has a right on it. To think in this spirit is downright sinful, because if, by worldly manipulations, we come into possession of certain material things or wealth, it does not mean that none else can claim right over it. We know that one family members have a definite right over it all, as much as we have and as advised by the Vedas, we should consider all as one family. In that case, how can you ignore others, those particularly who are less fortunate in this race ? It becomes our bounden duty to help them in every way possible and it is nothing but friendliness.

All of us should understand one significant question that has been asked in the above-mentioned hymn—whose wealth is this? It is neither yours nor mine, because all wealth is bestowed on us by God, as we get everything from the womb of the Mother Earth, created by Him. So we can say that it is all His, or that of the people and all living-beings as a whole, and of none in particular. Therefore, we have to divide and distribute it amongst all, everyone having his due share according to his needs. There is no place for greed here.

No compulsion was enforced, except that the rich considered it their duty to help their poor brethren as best as they could most willingly and it gave them happiness as well as name and fame. Because the Vedic system enjoined such a willing duty on all that none should eat alone - **केवलाघो भवति केवलादी !** One who eats alone, eats nothing but sins. So, the Vedic socialism prospered and everyone was happy, thus sharing the pains and pleasures, being tied in friendly bonds.

2 Criticism

The habit of criticism is so much ingrained in human mind that more often than not, we rush to find faults without giving proper thought or consideration just on an impulse, least caring for its consequences only because we want to purge our feelings. Would it not be wiser to ponder on the subject a little more dispassionately from the other person's point of view ? The possibility is likely that we may change our mind and begin to appreciate the efforts put therein.

Of course, constructive suggestions if offered indirectly without any offensive remarks are welcome. But what matters is that these be given sincerely in order to help improve the methodology, so that the results be more pleasant and desirable. Whatever we say or do, it should not be offensive, but mellowed so that it be accepted by the other person readily in a friendly spirit.

I remember back in 1953, an Englishman who was on loan to the Government of India as Director of a technical branch was on tour to an Armament Depot in Vishakhapatnam. There one day during his inspection, he saw some boxes lying in haphazard manner in a storeroom, not properly stacked, but placed one over the other. Whilst talking to the officer-in-charge of the Depot, who was with him all the while, the Director told him how once an Inspector in England, when on inspection, knocked down such stacks with his boot. What a way to point out indirectly and it had the desired effect, as the Indian officer immediately called

the officer-in-charge of stores and told him the views of the Director smilingly.

There is a couplet in Hindi:

कागा काको धन हरे, कोयल काको देय!
मीठी वाणी बोल के, जग अपनों कर लेय!!

A crow does not steal wealth of anybody; a cuckoo does not give anything to anybody. The only difference is that a cuckoo speaks sweetly and thus all like it

The secret of success in life depends on it. By speaking sweetly, we not only get our work done, but in the process win others' hearts as well. Some years ago, I was to travel by train with my family and seeing a compartment almost empty, we asked the coolie to put our luggage in it. But a few fellows in it objected saying that the entire compartment was reserved. Because I knew something about the reservations, I questioned but they were adamant. I, therefore, asked the coolie to put our luggage in it, while these fellows began resisting by force. When I saw that the train was about to move, I pulled the chain and soon Railway officials came there on the scene and I told them all what was going on. The Railway officials then questioned them and it was revealed that three of them were Railway employees. They produced their identity cards and the Railway officials noted their particulars, asking me to sit in the compartment comfortably assuring me that necessary action would be taken against the culprits.

The train started to Delhi, the journey being of about two hours and it being summer season, my daughter felt thirsty and asked for water. Seeing this, one of them came forward with a glass of water from their Surahi they had and requested me to

accept the same and offered it to my daughter who was about four years at that time. As I was not happy with their behaviour, I did not want the water to be given, but they insisted and I had to yield. After about half an hour, they requested me to forgive them, admitting their mistake, leaving no choice to me but to do so. Soon after getting down at Delhi Railway Station, I contacted the concerned Railway official and told him not to take any action on my complaint.

Such incidents are quite common in our country because of rampant corruption, public facilities being inadequate and most of the people being illiterate as well as selfish, the concerned employees take undue advantage. Yet this cannot be said about all, because there are exceptions who do their duty sincerely and honestly, considering themselves as the servants of the people.

Unfortunately we are trying to ape the western countries that are affluent, without giving proper consideration to the conditions here. We are in a rut and do not want to give it up for the sake of little convenience. While the rulers also want to take the easy way, without giving serious consideration about the future, always having in view the present contingency. Such a course is fraught with grave dangers ahead.

Criticism is a great canker if it is not done with sincerity and sympathetic attitude as it kills the budding artist or writer in the making.

But some courageous and spirited young flowering minds accept the challenge with determination and are able to wade through it resolutely. The story of some writers whose articles were returned rejected as many as seventy times or more, yet they did not give up and were at last successful, should give hope and courage to others who want to follow.

When we try to point out some fault in others, while our one finger is raised towards them, the three are pointed towards our own selves, simply indicating that perhaps we are three times as guilty as the others. Hence, we must be very cautious in criticising and try to find those faults in us first to see whether we are amenable to those mistakes!

Some Hindi poet has very nicely described the role of a critic, as under:

निंदक नियरे राखिये, आँगन कुटी छवाय !
बिन पानी साबुन बिना, निर्मल करे सुभाय !!

Keep a critic or detractor in your compound by providing him all the facilities, as it is he who makes your habits clean, without water and soap. So, the role of a critic is indeed laudable. But we must have the eye to assess his worth.

Some Sanskrit poet has written a very nice couplet, as under :

यथा ही सम्यग पुरुषः परदोषे क्षणं प्रति !
तथाचेनिपुणः स्वेषु को न मुच्येत बन्धनात् !!

As a man is clever in finding faults in others all the time, if he exhibits such cleverness in finding faults in self, he is likely to become perfect, free from all the faults. So, be your own critic and thus be able to remove your weaknesses by and by. We call this self-introspection.

Our relations in family generally become sour as we mainly, because of our frankness and proximity, forget to display formalities and begin to criticise each other, sometimes so vehemently that life becomes unbearable. We must exercise caution and control over our emotions and impulses by not giving

vent to our feelings that may hurt others. Because there are other ways to improve matters, but we hardly pause to think of them.

In so far as children are concerned, they have to be taught, not through criticism and admonishment, but by love and appreciation. The age-old practice of chastisement and punishment has given way to cajoling and coaxing. Previously, it was believed that the children should not be fondled, but punished for not studying, as stated in Mahabhasya:

सामृतैः पाणिभिधनरन्ति गुरवो न विषोक्षितैः
लालना श्रयिणो दोषास्तङ्गना श्रयिणो गुणाः!!

The parents and teachers, who punish their children, consider as if they are giving nectar to drink with their own hands. But such parents and teachers, who fondle their children, consider as if they are giving poison to them and thus destroying their life. Because fondling children makes them vicious, while right punishment makes them virtuous. That is why corporal punishment has totally been banned in all educational institutions.

However, criticism has its role in society, if done tactfully without sarcasm and with a spirit of guiding the person concerned in a friendly way.

“A friend is someone with whom you
dare to be yourself.”

3 Appreciation

There is nothing in this world, more so any human-being, who does not possess any good point, quality, attainment or property that can be sincerely appreciated. You must have the eye to discern the same, as even a snake or scorpion or a toad has its merits.

I read about an incident of a writer who was travelling from Calcutta to Delhi. When the train stopped at some station, the writer got down on the platform to buy something and when he returned to the train, he saw an old man comfortably seated in his place reading a newspaper. The writer told him—“Gentleman! this is my seat and I have been coming from Calcutta sitting here.”

Without giving any notice on what the writer said, the old man remarked—“Your voice is very sweet; you must be a good singer.” The writer replied in the negative, but the old man said— “Oh, your voice is so good that you must begin singing.” By this time, the writer’s anger had vanished and he began searching for some place nearby to sit.

The writer says that he wanted to be angry with the old man, who had usurped his seat, but his anger melted and in his mind he began thinking about beginning to sing, as all his colleagues used to praise his voice. But he took it as a joke and when the old man in the train praised his voice, it had a sudden effect and this aroused a feeling of self-appraisal in his heart, as he had been

ignoring the gift of God. But these words of the old man changed his life altogether into a pleasant note of song.

The writer says that he considered over it for quite long, as the old man remained in his memory. What did he gain by praising the writer ? First, the old man continued seated in the writer's seat during the travel, and secondly, he had captured the imagination of the writer.

From the above, it is clear that a word of appreciation or praise has the secret of cheering the doer as well as the one who is the object of such an appreciation. I read a story in an English magazine some years back and I am recapitulating the same from my memory. Once a young robber accosted an old lady with the intention to rob her. But the old lady had spent her life working hard and she knew how to appreciate the good, qualities of others.

When the young man raised his gun to frighten her, she did not lose her composure. But looking straight lovingly in his face, she said— “What a nice strong body you have! Your mother must be very pleased to see you.” The boy replied harshly to stop all that nonsense chatter. But the old lady continued in the same vein — “If I had any son, I would have very much liked him to be as strong as you are. Son ! What you do?” By this time, the boy had lowered his gun and replied that he was unemployed. The old lady said — “Oh, it is very bad, as you can do anything you like. Perhaps you need some money. I do not have much, but whatever I have, let us share it.” By this time, the boy's ideas had changed and he said somewhat haltingly that he would not take her money. But the old lady thrust some notes in his hands, saying — “Son! you would soon progress in life and shine your mother's name.” The old lady thus was able to save her life by

appreciating the young boy and above all showed the right way to him.

Teachers, who are not able to get the work done through reprimand from their students, are able to get it done quite easily by speaking a few words of appreciation. When a teacher says to one of his students that his handwriting was good, from that time onwards he or she becomes conscious and his/her handwriting improves all the more. In the evening when a husband returns from work tired and his wife may say a few words of praise, these can soothe his tired nerves. If a husband and wife praise each other in this manner, their life is certain to be very happy.

An English novelist has said — “Life is not worthless for one who can reduce the pain of others.” All of us can reduce the pain or burden of our colleagues in this way, as it has been truly said — “Joys shared, joys doubled; sorrows shared, sorrows halved.” It is possible that some may not like or accept our sincere appreciation, but our heart feels the comfort and joy by doing so.

Appreciation and praise was the norm in our society of ancient culture, as we find this quite often in Ramayana. The example of how the Vanara-soldiers when reached the sea-shore searching Sitaji and finding it difficult to cross the vast expanse of the sea, Jamwant praised Hanuman, saying — “O Pawanputra ! How is that you are standing quietly? You are the one who can accomplish this task in a trice, once you make up your mind. So, be ready and fulfill the hopes of all of us, who would be awaiting you here.”

These words of encouragement did work wonders, as Hanumanji immediately agreed to go to Lanka across the sea and not only he was able to go to Lanka, but saw Sitaji in Ashok-Vatika, thereafter killing many Rakshasas, including a son of

Ravana, named Akshya Kumar and also burnt the golden palaces of Lanka before returning to his fold.

Another example is that of Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati, who during his peregrination, when went to Multan (then part of India) met a man named Ami Chand. He was Tehsildar and a good singer of Bhajans. So, during the course of Dayanand's lectures, Ami Chand sang some Bhajans in a very sweet voice. After Ami Chand left, Dayanand said that the fellow had a good voice and praised him. Someone told Rishi Dayanand that Ami Chand was Tehsildar and a bad character in that he was a drunkard and being licentious had sent his wife away to her parents, enjoying with a prostitute whom Ami Chand had kept in his house.

Next day when Ami Chand came and sang some Bhajans, Rishi Dayanand said to him — "Ami Chand! You are a gem fallen in a gutter." These words had the desired effect and Ami Chand on return to his house, asked the prostitute to go away, broke all the wine-bottles and brought his wife. From that day onwards, his life changed so much so that he wrote many devotional songs, that are sung even now in congregations and Ami Chand really became a holy gem, as spoken by the Rishi.

You might have come across such cases in your life also. In our office, there was a clerk, named K.L. Agnihotri, who was a good singer. But he used to stammer whilst talking. Because of this drawback, he thought that he would not be able to sing on the All India Radio, although in small gatherings, he used to sing very nicely and while singing there was no sign or trace of stammering. Thus, he could not gather courage for some time to go for a test on AIR. But the author told him time and again to try. So, one day we were able to persuade him, praising him for his accomplishment, to go for the necessary test and lo! he was

selected and soon he became quite famous as a Grade One singer of AIR. Unfortunately, the young man's career was cut short because he had a fatal accident, while travelling on his scooter in Delhi itself.

Flattery or sycophancy should never be resorted to, but sincere appreciation or praise does wonders indeed. And if parents can tactfully exercise this tool on their wards and children, many wayward students can be brought to the right path of life in good time, thus channeling their energy in the service of the nation.



4 Give Importance

The question is how to give importance to each and every person in life, as we want to be friendly to all. It is not so difficult as this may appear. Because according to our Vedic culture, it was incumbent on all to perform Yajna. As a result of this, Yajna was done in every household twice a day—once in the morning and next time in the evening.

The meanings of Yajna are — (1) to revere the Gods, i.e., the elders, who are more learned and experienced. (2) To be in the company or to behave friendly with the equals. (3) To give alms to the poor or say to love those who are younger in age or position. In this way, while performing Yajna by offering fragrant material to fire, spreading sweet fragrance all round removing pollution of all kinds, making the five basic elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether) holy and pure, we are able to give importance to one and all, whosoever cares to attend the Yajna performance or you may call it Satsang. There is no discrimination of any kind and all men, women and children are invited to attend such congregations.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed." So, we should be friendly to all those who need us. According to a Sanskrit poet, the qualities of a good friend are as described hereunder:

पापान्निवारयति योजयते हिताय,
गुह्यं च गुह्यति गुणान् प्रकटी करोति !
आपद्रुतम च न जहाति ददाति काले,
सन्मित्र लक्षणमिदं प्रवदन्ति संताः !!

A good friend prevents his friend from committing any sins and always engages him in such deeds that are beneficial, i.e., that which are holy. A good friend displays his friend's good qualities by telling these to others that are not known to them. In times of distress, a good friend never leaves, but helps by giving whatever is required. These are the qualities of a good friend according to the sages.

It is indeed a sound advice on which you may test yourself, as well as your friends. Remember that these tests can hardly be applied to fair-weather friends, as well as those who are in your company for dance, drinks and such other vices. You may easily shun such friends, as they are actually enemies in the garb of friends.

The desire to be important or you may say the desire to be great is found in each and every individual. That is why, we see that many people who cannot rise to any position in society, take recourse to such devious methods, e.g., smuggling, dacoity, etc., and become notorious, thus making their name so well-known through newspapers.

This feeling of importance and its craving makes one to accept gladly all the sufferings he has to undergo in the process. We find that this feeling of importance is given to us, right from the time we entered schools/ colleges, as in the institutions the children who excel in studies, games, etc., are given rewards. Such is the case in the various Forces in all the countries as they confer various honours and awards to their members. In our country twice in a year — on Republic Day as also on Independence Day, our Government honours some people from all walks of life, by giving them various titles, decorations and encomiums for their excellence of skill in the different fields of activities.

While these awards bestow importance to the recipients, others also get inspiration thereby. In this connection, Milton, the great poet, says:

Fame is the spur that clear spirit doth raise;
The last infirmity of noble minds;
To scorn delight and live laborious days.

What to talk of ordinary folks, even noble people have a hidden desire to earn name and fame for the sake of which they work hard day and night. Of course money matters a lot in life. But it is bound to come all along.

Emerson has said— “Every man I meet is my superior in some way. In that, I learn of him.” If that was true for Emerson, it should be many times more true for you and me. We can certainly think about the good points of others, in whose contact we have to come. And we can sincerely appreciate those good points from our heart. There is nothing wrong in it. Thus, the other fellow is likely to feel important and the encouragement he gets would raise his standard of efficiency all the more. Because he would not like his standard to be lowered in your eyes and estimation.

The Government has instituted some awards and honours to be given to the farmers, who are able to give record produce in their cultivation or milk, etc., from their cattle. They are also given loans so that the peasantry be able to contribute their mite in making the country self-sufficient. Thus, their importance in building the nation is being recognised. Similarly, the Government is also giving loans to the industrialists, as also prizes, especially to those who are able to export goods to other countries.

If we want to be friendly to others, we must take interest in them, i.e., we must be actually interested in their welfare. We must see what is it that they need and explore ways and means to enable them to procure the same. We must give them the capacity, the know-how and education so that they are able to meet their needs without any help or assistance.

We must arouse in them a keen interest for self-improvement by doing their duties in the best manner possible so that they begin to go ahead on their own, rather than looking for help and support from others. This can best be done by appreciation of whatever the faculties they possess and giving them importance, as Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati said — “The good and noble people should always show respect to those who are ignorant and not so well educated, so that they like to come and listen to their advice and discourses and after some time they would become interested. This is the certain way to attract them, having been convinced about their own importance and welfare.”

“True friendship is a plant of slow growth,
& must Undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity,
before it is entitled to the appellation.”

George Washington

5 Love

Instinctively everyone loves his or her own self and whosoever honestly and sincerely looks after others interests as well, he or she is likely to be loved in turn. God has created this instinct of love in all human-beings, nay in all living-beings, on which the process of creation rests entirely for which love in opposite sex is a natural phenomenon.

But we human-beings generally blunt its edge because of the struggles of life and certain other norms of the society in which we live. The relation of wife and husband is the culmination of love. But in modern society, we find even this being shattered on the hard rock's of materialism, causing utter dismay all round.

Man has become too intelligent to love even his better-half because of narrow selfishness. This is the ugly side of the picture, about which we must all be cautious. Because to my mind all sorts of love has its holy place in our society, i.e., love for the family, love for the society, love for the country, love for all living-beings and above all love for God, the Creator.

As we grow in age, in stature, so our love should transcend all limitations, as stated hereunder:

अयं निजः परोवेत्ति गणना लघु चेतसाम !
उदार चरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् !!

This is mine and that is thine. To count in this way behoves only to narrow-minded persons. But those who are broad-hearted, for them the entire world is their family.

You may say, it is divinely love. But it is divinity that bestows greatness on you. And the key to it lies within your reach and power. Have the courage to grab it and open the lock — Love your work so much and so intensely that whosoever comes in your contact, would begin to love you instinctively. All because of your skill and unique expertise that you possess, whatever you do, it has its individual stamp of your name, quite different from all others, only because you have fused love into it. Your love gives it brilliant shine and excellence so much so that people marvel at its perfection.

Love is power; love is wealth; love is greatness. Hence, we should love and be loved by all. When we love our duty, our work, as a matter of fact we love ourselves and because of this virtue, the people around us begin to love us also. What a magnetic attraction love has, if it is done rightly?

In this world, we see that all parents love their children. When they see that at some stage a child becomes wayward and neglects his studies, they perforce have to resort to take him to task, so that the child does his duty for the sake of his future. And it is all done because of love towards him. Similar is the case of the teachers who at times have to punish the children even.

Love is a great force which if exercised properly can change the course of life, as we read about Saint Tulsidas, who was infatuated in the love of his wife so much that when his wife had gone to her parents, he could not tolerate her separation and in the night when it was raining heavily, he crossed a swollen river with the help of a dead body, reaching his wife's apartment at mid-night climbing up catching hold of a snake hanging from the roof.

Seeing him, his wife Ratnavali said:

अस्थि चरममय देह मम, तामें ऐसी प्रीति !
जो होती भगवान में, कट जाति भवभीति !!

My body that consists of nothing but bones and skin, you love it so much. If you love God as much, then all your worldly troubles may be over. History tells us that it had the desired effect and Tulsidas's love for his wife was changed into love for God (Ram), as a result of which the bard in him was awakened, producing the great book for all time, known as 'Ram Chant Manas' read in most of the houses not only in India, but even in foreign lands.

Almost similar is the story of Mahakavi Kalidas, whose books are so popular written in Sanskrit that some of their parts are shown on the television also. Their theme is love mostly, e.g., 'Abhigyan-Shakunta' and 'Megh-Doot' describe about the all-pervasive force of love existing through Nature – Soul and God. The German writer Goethe has described his 'Abhigyan-Shakuntal' such a marvellous, wonderful book, reading which one is transported into heavenly bliss. Kalidas was a rustic fellow as a youth and it was after his marriage with the princess Vidyottama, that his life changed because of her love and he has become immortal for all time to come.

In Atharva-Veda, there is a hymn as under:

सहृदयं समनस्यमविद्वेषं कृणोमिवः!
अन्यो अन्यमभिहर्यत वत्सं जतमिवाघ्न्याः!!

O, you the people of this world! all of you have been made by Me (says the Creator) with heart and mind. Hence, be not jealous; behave with one another just like a cow who loves her just-born calf.

It means that we should have heart, i.e., love for all, especially for those who are in distress or trouble deserving our helping hand. We have been bestowed with His grace, mind to think positively and act accordingly. We should never be selfish and if God has given us health, wealth and knowledge, it is our duty that we ought to utilise these in the love of those who are not so lucky.

Once Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati, who was an intense votary of truth, whilst walking on the bank of the river Ganga, was accosted by a Sadhu, who said—“You are Param-Hansa, who has renounced all; then why are you entangled in the web of recant or decorations. Why don't you wander without any worry or attachment?”

Swami Dayanand Saraswati replied— “I am free doing all this. Whatever I am doing, it is all because of my love for the people and that is what the Vedas tell us.” The Sadhu retorted — “Why are you bringing in the love of the people here ? Love your soul about which the Vedas teach us.” Affirming his statement, the Sadhu quoted the discussion held between Yajnavalkya and his second wife Maitreyi from Upnishad, wherein Yajnavalkya

said —

आत्मा व अरे दृष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः!

O Maitreyi! only this Atman (soul) should be seen, heard, accepted and always thought of.

Swami Dayanand replied — “Whom do you love?”

The Sadhu's answer — “I love soul.”

Swami Dayanand — “Where is the soul?”

The Sadhu's answer — “It is in all, from a king to a beggar; from an ant to an elephant.”

Swami Dayanand — “Do you indeed love the soul?”

The Sadhu — “Have I spoken a he?”

Swami Dayanand — “No, you do not love the great Soul, which is in all the living beings. You only care for your own body and worry about your alms, you get. Have you ever thought of about thousands of people in our country, who are so poor that they cannot afford even two meals a day; have no clothes to cover their body and no place or roof to hide their heads? They are passing their days like sheep and goat in dungeons, slums somehow. Nobody cares for them and they die.

“O Mahatman! If you love the soul in all-pervasive, you must love all these like your own self. A true devotee of God does not hate anybody, considering all like his own soul and tries his best to alleviate their sufferings. Such a person can really be called ‘Lover of Self’ or the lover of soul.” Hearing this, the Sadhu touched the feet of Swamiji and went away.



6 Be Courteous

In our country, courtesy has become a Very scarce commodity, mainly because of the lack of proper education. While according to our Indian culture, courtesy and politeness are the chief proposes of education and learning, as it is said — विद्या ददाति विनयम् ! Education gives humility. On the contrary, we find most of the people haughty and the reason can be adduced to the western type of educational system prevalent here.

Besides, with the growing population enormously, the rate of pro-duction of goods and facilities has not kept pace with it. Hence, there is paucity of things to meet even the basic necessities of life and, therefore, frustration amongst the large section of the people. There is not much of a competition here for the products or goods. Also many public facilities are owned by the Government, e.g., education, transport and the like. The overall result of these controls is that courtesy, humility and politeness have become the victim in our society.

Under such circumstances, to be friendly to all is more essential and the root of it lies in the under-mentioned Sukta of Yoga-Shastra:

मैत्री करुणा मुदितोपेक्षानाम सुख - दुख पुण्यापुण्य
विषयाणा भावनाताशिचत्त प्रसादनम् !!

As there are four types of people in all societies generally, we have been advised that with the people who are happy, we should create friendship by trying as best as we can. While those who are

unhappy, with them we should behave kindly and always try to share their pain and suffering. The third type of people are those who are really virtuous and holy, we should try to mingle in the company of such people as best as possible. And lastly are those who are sinners and bad people. With such individuals, we can be friendly, if we ignore them. But all these above rules apply to commonly good people, and not to those reformers who are out to change the society as a whole.

Whatever may be the case, we have to be friendly and courteous to all, since without this basic trait, our gestures are likely to be misunderstood. We must have a sincere, honest and straightforward approach by talking to him, giving him all the opportunity to first talk by being a patient and sympathetic listener all the time. It is always better not to bandy arguments against what he says, but try to win him over by love and concern for his welfare.

Good manners are an asset of a civilized society. The only difference to my mind is that whatever we say, we should mean it and not make it a simple and plain formality of saying time and again — ‘Thank you’, ‘Sorry’, etc. It does not cost to be courteous and even if it does cost, let us patiently bear it for the sake of good relations and friendship we want to cultivate.

You will agree that curt and rough manners cause ill-feelings and even quarrels at times, while courteous manners are always a delight. What impression do we create on others with whom we have to come in contact in our daily business of life? The first advantage of courtesy and politeness is that you disarm a person the moment you readily accept your mistake with a sincere regret at heart.

You do not lose anything by cultivating the charm of manners. Of course, thereby you certainly lose your roughness, becoming gentle in a trice. A Hindi poet has written the following lines:

प्रेम पड़ौसी को दो, मित्र को सत्य हृदय दो !
मानहीन को मान, भीत को सदा अभय दो !!
भक्तिपूर्ण मन से दो, मात - पिता को आदर !
भाई - बहिनो को दो, ज्यादा संपत्ति सादर !!
शुभ आचरण स्वयं को दो, बच्चो को शिक्षा !
दीनजनो को दो उनका हक समझ सुभिक्षा !!
अपने को स्वाभिमान, सेवा दो जान - जन को !
प्रभु के पवन चरणों में, दो निज तन - मन को !!

Give love to your neighbour; give true heart to a friend; respect the downtrodden and give fearlessness to one who is afraid; give respect to parents and give proper share of the property to your brothers and sisters; give good conduct and character to self and give education to children; give due rights to the poor; give due respect to self and give service to all, while surrendering your body and mind at the holy feet of God.

Just in a few lines, the poet has told us the method of how we should be courteous towards all those in whose contact we have to come daily in our life. Remember 'Courtesy begets courtesy' and if we are able to make it a habit to be always courteous gracefully, we are likely to become popular also. In your life, you might have come across with such a person, whom you are not likely to forget for quite some time only because his or her behaviour was exemplary in courtesy and politeness. Can't you do the same so that people may remember you with happiness?

Life is a continuous process of learning and we can learn many such traits from others wherever we find them. What matters

most is that we must put them into practice in our life and feel the joy of the same in our heart And by so doing, you only share your happiness with others.

I know there are moments in life when one has to say 'No' about certain matters to their near and dear ones, to friends and neighbours and to many others. But this can also be couched in as polite a language as possible, making the other person feel your inability in the circumstances. Let him understand your position well and be convinced of your inability in the matter, so that he goes happily back to his home.

In our scriptures, it is said — सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात् न ब्रूयात् सत्यं प्रियं ! It means that a person should always speak truth sweetly; never uttering any word in a manner that may not be sweet to hear. Herein lies the purport of courtesy, i.e., even if one has to say something which may not be good to hear, it should be couched in a language so that its bitter effect is removed as much as possible. By so doing you can take the sting out of it.

“One measure of friendship consists not in the number of things friends can discuss, but in the number of things they need no longer mention.”

Clifton Fadiman

7 Accept Challenge

Because of the struggles in life, there are many occasions when the going is not so good that the mood of despondency takes over or say some frustration comes in mind. We must shake these off consciously making all effort, saying to ourselves time and again — I am determined to go ahead. These obstacles are nothing and I am going to shape them into stepping stones.

Before going to work or whatever your mission in life is, whilst stepping out of your home, repeat the above mentioned idea in your mind in order to boost up your morale. Do it with all your heart and soul, seeking God's benediction and soon you will find yourself quite happy. Whatever our business in life may be, we cannot get on nicely without the active co-operation and friendly help of many other people and our success largely depends as to how much we are able to elicit from others, attracting them towards our task in hand.

So, you take up the challenge sincerely in your mind, while throwing a challenge to others to do likewise, in a healthy competitive spirit just like games and sports, without creating any feeling of ill-will. And this can easily be done if we give greater importance to other participants, by appreciating every bit of their effort, ignoring our own. All sorts of prizes, awards, trophies, medals, etc., are given to encourage the participants, as also to throw a challenge. But at times, we see that because of sharp competitions and big money being at stake in games and sports, these take an ugly turn. Moreover, games and sports which were

once considered a source of joy and happiness, have now become professions in themselves, money monopolising all our activities in this mad world!

Unfortunately, in modern world everything is weighed in the balance of wealth and mammon worship is the trend of the day. Therefore, all relations including friendship has become tainted accordingly. See what Atharva-Veda says:

प्रियं मा कृणु देवेषु प्रियं राजसु मा कृणु !
प्रियं सर्वस्य पश्यत उत शूद्रे उतार्ये !!

O God! Make me dear among the learned persons; make me dear among the great warriors; make me dear among the traders and business community as well as among the farmers and the labourers.

Vedas say that we are all children of God. So, the teachings of the Vedas are of universal brotherhood and friendliness. But we find that the spirit of competition and challenge sometimes creates jealousy among some people, which is harmful to the society as a whole. We should accept the challenge in right spirit and never become prey of jealousy or ill-will.

Similarly, a challenge can be given always maintaining the spirit of friendliness, forsaking all selfish motives and as far as possible to help others in their progress and welfare. Swami Vivekanand says — “Good motives, sincerity and infinite love can conquer the world.” Why can’t we be inspired by such thoughts and friendly gestures and overtures towards all in whose contact we come, without thinking even for a moment about his position or status. We must not forget that “It is the heart, the heart that conquers, and not the brain.”

Here I may tell you that it is almost useless to try to convince others by weighty and sound arguments. Of course, these are good to boost our own moral courage, but when it comes to others, it would be better if you allow them to have their say first and try to win them by love and friendliness, rather than by sheer intelligence. Never give them a feeling of inferiority as such a feeling may keep them away from you.

Through arguments, you may be able to win the point, but generally you fail to win over the man to your side. Hence, it is always better to show love and affection which should be of course genuine and giving scope to his point of view, you may be able to succeed.

Amongst the learned people of Vedas, there are some points about which there have been different opinions, e.g., whether the duration of life can be increased/decreased depending on an individual's self-restraint or control of mind and senses or that the duration of life is decided and definite. Though there are many hymns supporting the idea of life's duration being less or more depending on an individual's way of leading it and certain other factors of climatic conditions, etc., yet we come across some learned people who are still adamant about the duration of life being fixed. Such pundits give their own arguments in support of their view and these cannot be easily dismissed as worthless.

Even otherwise, it is always better not to enter into sharp arguments and accept the other person's point of view if you want to maintain his friendship. You may do so for the sake of courtesy, accepting the challenge in your own mind to win his friendship.

For any good social work, one has to accept the challenge in his own mind first to prepare for all the eventualities that are

likely to come in the shape of opposition from the people themselves, whom you want to help. History is witness to this and all reformers had to face stiff opposition not only from the forces who had vested interests, but even from those for whom they were working. In many cases, such great reformers had to sacrifice their lives.

One great advantage from all this is that by and by many others come into the fold, who also are ready to accept the challenge and continue the good work, started by some lone figure. The example of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, is before us all to emulate and make our own life really happy in carrying out the mission which has stirred our heart and soul.

So, challenge in life must be accepted by us all, if we want to contribute our share in mitigating the miseries of our brethren who are not so fortunate as to be able to get their due share in life whether it be in the shape of education, learning and knowledge or that of other material wealth and status in society.

“Select your friendships carefully.....
Gather people around you
who will reinforce your lifestyle.”

Dan Buettner

8 Noble Motives

Though generally people think that to appeal to noble motives is not so practical in life, as to motivate someone to act by which he can get some advantage materially. This may be true to some extent, as there are all types of people, who can hardly be swayed to change their views. But one thing is certain that howsoever bad a man may be, deep down in his heart some fine and noble sentiments lie hidden and it is up to us to stir them and make him feel his real position in life. Such a device has changed the lives of quite many people. And if it could do so in the past, it can also do now as well as in future.

It is also seen that appeal for any noble cause never goes in vain. Because all the charitable and similar organisations are carrying on their work with the help of funds received from the public. Many rich persons contribute large amount of sums, as even the governments allow tax con-cessions or exemptions on such donations, thereby encouraging the donors. All religious institutions are covered by such exemptions, though it is a different matter how much good and noble work they do!

Most of the so-called religious institutions are sectarian and help only a certain section or group of the society, thus discriminating between man and man, not being conducive to humanity as a whole. In this way, the noble cause becomes tarnished as such considerations create ill-will and jealousy, as also adversely affecting the unity of the nation. Unfortunately, the

human race is at present divided because of the so-called religions throughout the world.

This problem is very acute in India, where the rulers and the Government support such ideas and institutions, more so in the name of minority, though they always profess to be secular. Because it serves their purpose as in this way they are able to allure such minority groups to vote them to power, not realising the fact that such a course is very harmful to the country. Considering such an attitude of the Government, though the country is known to be a democracy, yet the majority community has to suffer, while the minority communities, that are always out to destroy its unitary set-up, are given undue advantages, unlike other countries in the world. The irony of the situation is that in the Muslim countries, the Hindus have either been wiped out or treated as second rate citizens. So, we see how noble our Government is and how democracy is functioning here.

The past history of India is so glorious that we read in Manusmriti:

एतद्वेश प्रसूतस्य सकाशादग्र जन्मनः !
स्वं स्वं चरित्रं शिक्षेरन पृथिव्यां सर्व मानवाः !! मनु. २/२० !!

All the persons of the world should sit at the feet of the Brahmins of this country and take lessons on character. As the rulers were very noble and always cared for their subjects like their own children, unlike modern times when the politicians and the rulers generally as a class are rank selfish by nature and worse than the foreigners (Britishers), policy of divide and rule is still being followed.

How noble our past rulers were, Mahakavi Kalidas in his famous book 'Raghuvansha' has described the glorious manners in which the monarchs of Raghu family ruled:

प्रजानां विनयाधानाद्रक्षणाद भ्रणादपि !
स पिता पितरास्तासां केवलं जन्महेतवः !!

This is about Raja Dilip who had made proper arrangements for the education of his subjects, thereafter suitable employment or work according to their ability and capacity, protection and supply of food, clothing, etc. Thus the people lived a happy and peaceful life. Raja Dilip was, as a matter of fact, the actual father of his people; the parents were known as mothers/fathers only because they had given birth to them.

As is the ruler, so are the subjects and it is truly said that 'A people get the government they deserve'. What was the reason of India being the cradle of nobility in the past? Simply because, the teachings of the Vedas were the accepted norms of the society as a whole.

Detailing further, Mahakavi Kalidas says:

त्यागाय संभृतार्थानां सत्याय मितभाषिणाम !
यशसे विजिगीषुणां प्रजायै गृहमेधिनाम !

These monarchs amassed wealth only to give in alms to the needy and poor; they rarely spoke to project their truthfulness; they won other countries only for the sake of glory and fame; they married only for the sake of getting children.

शैशवे अभ्यस्त विधानां यौवने विषयैषिणाम !
वार्द्धके मुनिवृत्तीनाम योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम !!

They used to study during childhood; when young enjoyed all the worldly pleasures; on reaching old age, they renounced their kingdom and went to the forests as Vanaprasthis, Munis, and in the end left this body through yoga.

Because of the divine system of the Vedic way of life, the people on the whole were noble and virtuous. That is why it was said that there were thirty-three crores of gods living here, i.e., almost all had the divine and godly qualities.

Once it so happened that a few sages came to the town of a king, known as Ashwapati. After discussions, as was the custom in those days, the king requested them to have their lunch with him. The sages replied — “We cannot take food here because the royal food is tainted with Rajsik and Tamsik qualities. This would adversely affect our pious lives. So, please forgive us.”

Hearing this, the King Ashwapati replied:

न में स्तेनो जनपदे न कदर्यो न मद्यपः !
नाना हितागनिनारविद्वान न श्वैरी श्वैरिणी कृतः!!

In my entire kingdom, there is no thief, no miser person, no individual fond of any intoxicant either. And there is none who does not perform Yajna (sacrificial fire); none is illiterate either. Besides, there is no adulterer, then how can there be any adultress ? This kind of nobility of character of the nation was found in those days.

So long as the Vedic teachings were in vogue, nobility thrived throughout the length and breadth of the country. The Chinese traveller Fa Hein who came here about three thousand years ago, when Pataliputra (now Patna) was the capital, has written about the conditions in the country eulogising the character of the people, stating that people never locked their houses and nobody

cared to pick up even if gold coins be lying scattered on the road. Besides, the womenfolk were revered as sacred—the dictum being:

मातृवत परदारेषु परदृव्येषु लोष्ठवत !
आत्मवत सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्यति स पण्डितः !!

People considered others' wives as their mothers; others' money or wealth as a clod of earth. While the behaviour was based 'Do unto others as you would like to be done unto you' and such a person was considered learned. This was the code of conduct or Dharma prevalent in ancient India.

But unfortunately, our rulers are trying to ape the west, little realising the warnings given by great western thinkers. Mr. Havell says:

“None but the ignorant will recommend you the path of western commercialisation, as leading to true national prosperity. Nowhere in India existed such utter depravity, such a hopeless physical, moral and spiritual degradation as that which exists in the commercial cities of Europe directly brought out by modern industrial methods.”

The great writer John Ruskin says:

“Alas! if read rightly, these perfections are the signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and degrading than that of the scourged African of helot Greek.” In this connection, Professor Huxley has written:

“Even the best of modern civilisation appears to me to exhibit a condition of mankind which neither embodies any worthy ideal nor even possesses the merit of stability. If there is no hope of a large improvement of the conditions of the greater part of the

human family, I would welcome a kind and fiery star which would sweep the whole affair away as a desirable consummation.”

He further goes on to say — “If the alternatives were presented to me, I would deliberately prefer the life of the savage to that of the people of the Christian London.”

Our rulers as well as most of the people are ignorant about all this and thus they are leading the country to an abysmal state, about which all right thinking people are worried as they see no escape from this. In the end, I may quote Mr. Thausser:

“The proud westerners got hold of the scientific end of the stick and groped laboriously along its length for centuries to find at the other end a venerable old Rishi of Vedic times chuckling under his luxuriant beard, ‘Did I not tell you so’ ?”





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