

THE 12 PRINCIPLES OF VALID ACTION

- From the book "The Inner Look" by Silo, an Argentinian Philosopher, Thinker, Writer, Poet, Founder of International Humanist Movement and Spiritual Guide to Millions.

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FOREWARD

In our daily life we need some guidance about what to do and what not to do. When we were young our parents dictated the rules. Share your food, respect elders, be obedient etc were good acts and mischief, fights, use of bad words etc were bad acts. It is not that we followed all the rules. But these rules gave us some direction for our actions.

As we grew up other sources started dictating the rules. Sometimes it was the friends' circle, sometimes work colleagues, sometimes people whom we respected and some time it was religious gurus. And, of course, often it was government propaganda. Thus, taking liquor that was supposed to be bad action once now became important networking tool. Obedience was good once and rebellion became trait of being progressive now.

And if we observe we realise that many of the rules contradict each other. Something which was good once, became bad later and vice versa. As our world view expanded we realise that there is also differences in rules for different cultures. In one place calling elders by first name is the norm and in another it is bad manners.

That brings us to the question that if these rules change from time to time and place to place then what is the sanctity in them? And after all who decides what is good and bad?

It is here that Silo in his book *The Internal Landscape* suggested the need of rules also called as principles that will not be governed by external dictates but by the internal experience of the individual. They are a set of ideas to reflect and test in our daily life. In a way they are also laws of behaviour of a sort. Not as a moral or legal prescription but rather as descriptions of how forces will function and whether the action will bring happiness or suffering within the individuals.

Thus, there is no preaching in these principles. It is a general guidance. If we follow the principle, we are likely to feel nice, better and would like to repeat such acts. On the other hand, if we violate the principle, we are likely to experience suffering.

There are 12 principles. It is important to note that these 12 principles are to be seen in totality and not in isolation of each other. It is important to reflect on these principles and to observe their impact on our daily life.

These principles are elaborated with examples in this booklet. The examples here are only indicative and we should try to relate the principles in our daily life and evaluate our own experience.

Elaborations by Parimal Merchant.

INTRODUCTION

The Principles of the Valid Action are explained in this book. But what is the Valid Action? Let's explain it in brief.

A cornerstone in Silo's teachings is to overcome pain and suffering, or, in other words, to make happiness and freedom grow within and among human beings. This depends largely on what human beings think, feel and ultimately do. That is, our actions. Actions do not just influence our present but also our future; they build our direction in life, having a consequence not just for us but also for those around us.

From this point of view, and broadly speaking, there are three types of actions, i.e. either good, bad or indifferent (neutral).

Good actions are called "unitive actions" because they produce an internal experience of unity, agreement and harmony among what we think, feel and do. In brief, they give an experience of greater happiness and freedom.

Bad actions are called "contradictory actions" because they produce an internal experience of lack of unity, agreement and harmony among what we think, feel and do. In brief, they give an experience of suffering, conflict, contradiction, etc.

Indifferent (neutral) actions are neither good nor bad, i.e. they do not have a major influence on our happiness and freedom. For instance, sleeping, eating, travelling, and other activities of a routine nature and necessary for daily life.

Silo says: "Learn to distinguish a difficulty, a problem, an obstacle, from a contradiction. While those may move you or spur you on, contradiction traps you in a closed circle with no way out."

As we may see, the main reference to determine whether an action is good, bad or indifferent is the **direct personal experience** we derive from our own actions. Conventional standards are not always good for all human beings, everywhere and forever. Here there are no theories, opinions or other external sources to judge the right or wrong of our actions. In Silo's words: "*Thus, what-one-must-do does not depend upon distant, incomprehensible, and conventional morals, but upon laws: laws of life, of light, of evolution.*" Here nothing is placed above the human being, the happiness and freedom of which remain as the central concern.

Any of the above types of action has different degrees of importance, influence and consequences. Thus, among the good actions, there are some very special ones that are called "**Valid Actions**". These are the best actions to make happiness and freedom grow within us and around us.

Valid Actions are good actions having three distinct characteristics to identify them and make them so special. The first one is, indeed, **internal unity**, the experience of tight agreement among our thoughts, our feelings and our actions. There is no internal division, opposition, incoherence or contradiction among those three aspects.

The second one is the **continuity in time**; that is, there is no remorse or repentance and we would like to repeat those actions since the experience of

internal unity stands throughout time.

The third one is the **sensation of inner growth**; that is, the sensation that we improve as human beings by behaving in that way, that we become better human beings in our own eyes.

Valid Actions are not meant to achieve success, wealth, pleasure or fame in the world, they are meant to help us free ourselves from suffering, from contradiction, from incoherence, from violence, from meaninglessness.

Valid Actions can be improved through repetition, thanks to our inner experience and our meditation on that experience. Therefore, they are a road to inner liberation, to improvement as human beings, to revealing and strengthening a true and definitive Meaning in Life.

Through them, we will also realize that happiness and freedom are only possible if they are sought not just within us, but also thanks to helping others make their happiness and freedom grow.

Valid actions are those that end in others, going in the direction of their freedom. If we want to overcome our profound contradiction towards happiness, freedom and meaning, we must produce valid actions. If these actions are valid, it is because they help those around us. Every phenomenon that makes suffering recede in others is experienced as a valid action, as an act of unity, in the one who carries it out.

The Principles of The Valid Action explained in this book are a set of recommendations, sayings that enable us to remember certain laws of behaviour that contribute to a life of unity and meaning. They are conceived not as moral or legal prescriptions but rather as constants, descriptions of how forces will function in action or reaction depending on the placement, the location, of the person who acts.

In "*The Inner Look*", Silo says regarding The Principles:

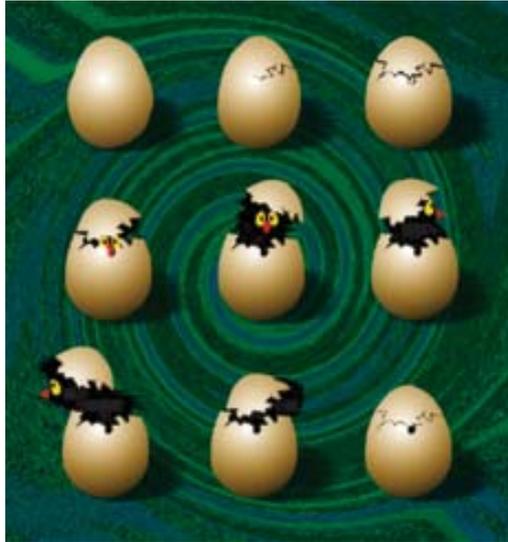
"It is not indifferent what you do with your life. Your life, subject to laws, is open to possibilities among which you can choose.

"I do not speak to you of liberty. I speak to you of liberation, of movement, of process. I do not speak to you of liberty as something static, but of liberating yourself step by step, as those who approach their city become liberated from the road already traveled. Thus, what-one-must-do does not depend upon distant, incomprehensible, and conventional morals, but upon laws: laws of life, of light, of evolution."

Finally, highest among these Principles is the one known as the "**golden rule.**" This Principle says, "When you treat others as you want them to treat you, you liberate yourself."

With these few introductory words, we welcome you to very helpful explanations on The Principles of The Valid Action.

Fernando Garcia



1. The Principle of Adaptation

**“To go against the evolution of things
is to go against oneself”**

Life evolves - moves from one state to another, continuously. It could be about people, situations, relations. It could be about our understanding, our beliefs, our comprehension. In all aspects new replaces old. It is important to understand that whatever evolves, no longer remains the same and requires first acceptance of the new situation and then appropriate response.

Our own life could be a good case in point. As infants, we were completely dependent on our parents for food, shelter and protection from danger. Little by little we learnt how to walk, to speak and communicate our needs. By imitating elders, we became self-sufficient, and gained more independence. We learnt more things about the world and started forming our own views. The same I, who would accept my father's view without any hesitation, started seeing lacunae in the same views. It is said that often the pendulum moves exactly opposite – rightly or wrongly – from ‘mother knows everything’ to ‘mother knows nothing’.

Evolution is bound to take place. What we have in our hand is to appreciate and adjust our approaches accordingly. We may try to do it and but even if we fail, we can in no way turn the clock back and go back to the earlier stage.

Example

- A child growing into adolescence and then youth, starts having changes in personality. What if he is treated as child all the time?

- A child growing into adolescence and then youth, needs to start becoming more independent. What happens if he continues to act like a child?

In either case the situation is not very healthy. If it continues in the same way, what will happen? There may be a rebellion in the child in the first case, or his progress will be hampered in the second. The same situation can happen in our other relationships as well.

- At the time of marriage the relationship between spouses is different, and will grow more matured as they grow in life. Their attention to each other changes on the arrival of a child. Does it mean that they love each other less?
- After a son's marriage, the sole right of the mother over him changes. Does it mean he does not care?
- Our friends grow and move into new stages of their own lives. They can't be always available as they used to be once upon a time. Does it mean that they care less?
- ~~A person of a different religion was very good friend and very nice to me. As he grew his views about religion became fanatic and he started hatred of me. Has he become a bad person?~~

Such is the case of every relation. The life of all the parties involved evolve and it means changes in their perspectives. Life also evolves with exposure and new knowledge.

Example

- Once upon a time, even in America, they used only horse-carriages as then that was the only mode of transport in absence of railways, automobiles and airplanes.
- Once upon a time a person catching typhoid would die in the absence of effective medicine.
- Once upon a time a person would die of snake-bite and since the real cause was not known, witch-craft prevailed.

With the advent of new technology and knowledge about life, most of these things changed. While this is true for the society as a whole, it applies to individuals as well.

- A villager watches about city life on TV and starts aspiring for the same. Can he be same again?
- A person blindly trusting some others – teacher, priest, police or politician – learns about the corrupt things they are involved with. Can he trust them in the same way again?

And just in the way knowledge itself evolves and helps us evolve, other social dimensions also evolve.

Example

- My parents grew up in an era of acute scarcity. Now when things are not that scarce should they still remain in denial?
- I got my first phone when I was 35, does it mean that my son should also get his first phone at 35?

It is not necessary that all changes are for good only. In the name of changes often value degradation is pushed in. Often, more than evolution, self-centered motives might drive such situations. We need to be careful in interpretation of the changes about what is evolution and what is manipulation.

- A society in which divorce was once taboo, experiences it happening for the silliest of reasons.
- A society which cared for old people now starts talking about keeping them in old age homes.
- Generations becoming more self-centered and not minding a 'use and throw' approach in relations.

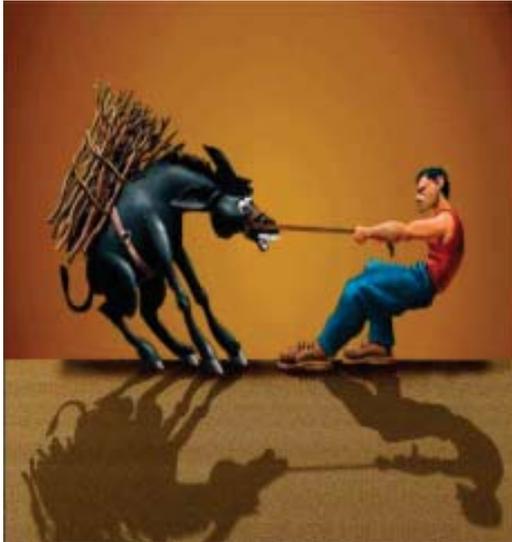
Finally, let us look at a very personal aspect of evolution which has to do with our body.

Example

- We got our body in a particular form with colour, dimension, physique, etc. but we may like it or not.
- Our body needs rest. If we work endlessly without appropriate rest or food, the body will fall ill.
- Our body ages. We may hide wrinkles or dye the hair, but we can't stop the changes in internal working such as gradual deterioration in senses etc.
- Lastly, the body dies. We need to accept death. Society labels death as a sad event and everyone around is expected to be sorrowful. In the process is there not a denial of the greatest truth of life?

The principle suggests that life around us evolves. It is in our hand to accept or oppose the evolution. If we oppose the evolution, it is not going to stop, but it is us who will end up suffering, and losing our mental and physical balance.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



2. The Principle of Action and Reaction

**“When you force something towards an end,
you produce the contrary”**

Things, people and situations around us, each has its own limits. If we blow a balloon it becomes bigger, looks good, but when we keep on blowing, it grows up to a point and then it bursts. Same applies to all limits. Up to a point the efforts are useful and productive, and beyond that it become counter-productive.

Of course, one must put efforts in the desired direction. We must stretch, going beyond what we thought was the obvious limit. Often, we underestimate the capabilities and therefore the limits. In fact, when we stretch, new capabilities come out. Yet there is a difference between stretching, putting efforts and forcing beyond limits. One needs to know where to put a stop.

Example

- Our body has certain capacities to stretch. Sometimes, doctors in the operation theatre carry out surgeries non-stop for more than 24 hours without sleep. Their body supports them. But does it mean that they can continue to do so always?
- To earn more money, we over stretch our body for more work. In the beginning we find it capable of working far more than we thought. But how long can such over-stretching be sustained without side effects?
- For fitness, we start doing exercises. The trainer forces us to go beyond what we thought was the maximum we could do. But does it mean we can go on like this for ever?

- To reduce our weight we start dieting, resisting the most tempting food. It tests our determination. But does it mean that we can remain healthy by starving beyond a point?
- On the other hand, to survive we need food. Does it mean we can go on eating endlessly?

The way we can talk about our body also applies to things around us and even to Nature.

Example

- The car with notified capacity of four can perhaps accommodate six. But if we try to load it with sixteen, can it still sustain?
- To increase production, we keep operating a machine at a faster speed and that too without proper lubrication. Of course, for some time it will give a higher production, but how long?
- To increase the habitation, we go on cutting down the forests. We may love the sight of growing cities, but will the decline of forest cover not have its own effect?
- For the gains of humanity Nature is exploited recklessly. In the short term it means good profit. But what does it mean in long run?
- The soil has capacity to produce certain amount of grains. We can use fertilizers to increase the capacity to some extent. Yet if we keep overdoing it and for a long time, the soil itself may become infertile.

There is another dimension of limit, that is in terms of required process and minimum time. We should certainly manage the time efficiently and try to shorten the time as much as possible. But often in our pursuit of challenging the limit, we may not follow the desirable process or crash the time with disastrous outcomes.

Example

- To reach fast we may overspeed. We might end with an accident or a cop catching us resulting in more delays.
- To finish our work fast we do it in a hurry. In the process we may commit mistakes that very often makes us have to do the whole work again.
- To cook fast we may raise the flame and the dish may get ready but not with the right taste.
- To get a promotion at any price we may cut corners, start putting emphasis on pleasing superiors or play politics and not do the actual work. Often it may succeed but it may backfire too.

What is true for any situation is also true in human relations. Building relations requires time and retaining relations requires not only the time but also the sense of proportion.

Example

- The family is always supportive in advancing one's career. But if it ends up with extended hours for ever towards a career and no time for the family, the patience of the family is breached.
- A child may respect the parents and listen to the criticism. But, if it is criticised all the time, it will develop immunity to the same.
- A friend or colleague may welcome suggestions about where they can improve. But if it is fault finding at all times, they would start avoiding.
- Any relation building means spending casual time together. If we want to be efficient and speed up our work with only need based communication, work will be done but lasting relations may not be built.

In relations, it is also important to understand that there is a way of doing things and if one deviates, the other other may tolerate the deviation but there is a limit to their tolerance.

Example

- It is good to try with our best capacity to explain things to others, by putting out facts and information. But beyond that if we try to convince the other person that our point of view is the only correct option and that he should agree with us, instead he may reject us.
- When we listen to others and respond to their concerns it may advance the relations. But if we try to sell our ideas by hook or by crook, it may backfire.

Thus, this principle suggests that when we put efforts, we stretch limits and this is fine, and we should do it. But what is important is to understand the limits. Forcing beyond the limits will be often counter-productive.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



3. The Principle of Well Timed Action

“Do not oppose a great force. Retreat until it weakens, then advance with resolution”

When we want to do something, there may be hindrances on the way. If the hindrance is in the form of a great force, and if we try to oppose it, the chances are that we will be swept away. This means it is important to judge the magnitude of the hindrance. Small hindrances will be there, they can also be called as resistances. They may create some irritations - or, at the most, some inconveniences - but overcoming them would be easy.

On the other hand, there may be some hindrances that would demand special efforts. This can also be called difficulties. When we stretch ourselves, and handle such hindrances, overcome these difficulties, then in fact our abilities grow. I found mathematics tough, had to work hard and then I could solve complex math problems. In the process of overcoming difficulty my abilities grew. So, in a way such hindrances, such difficulties are welcome. What is important is to understand the difference between inconveniences, difficulties and a great force.

The hindrance in the form of great force does not mean that we must give up our project. After all, force is a dynamic thing. We need to wait for a time in which the force reduces or we have mustered up enough energy to overcome it and then advance resolutely. It is a question of relative force.

I am on a journey. The sun is hard, and the terrain is rough. Both these are inconveniences, irritants, but they do not matter much. On the way there is a

steep climb. Now walking is strenuous and exerting. It is a difficulty. I continue and now I reached higher ground. But on the way a train is passing. It is a great force. Now I wait and allow the train to pass. Then I continue my journey.

Example

- While on a journey, the car engine has heated up and stopped working. What do I do? I allow it to cool down, and then attend to it to make it work again.
- Taking out butter from the fridge I found that it is frozen like a rock. I keep it out for some time. Once it gets warmer, it becomes soft and smooth to apply.
- I appeared for a very difficult exam and I failed. The subject complexity overwhelmed me like a great force. I didn't give up. I studied more thoroughly and now having mustered force by mastering the subject, I could succeed.

We can see similar situations in our personal life as well.

Example

- Habitually I get up at 8 am. I want to start getting up at 5 am but I am unable to change the habit which is like a great force. What I do is to talk to some friends and we collectively help each other to get up. Thus, when we collectively muster energy to get up early it is more than the force of the habit of wanting to sleep, thus I advance.
- I wanted to diet but my love for sweets, like a great force will not allow and I could not resist. I joined a diet program where the doctor shouted at me for taking sweets. Now the fear of the doctor shouting at me created a new force, giving energy more than the force of the love for sweets and I could proceed on my diet.
- I wanted to give up smoking, but the habit was strong and like a great force would not allow me. I tried many times and every time I lost. Once, I announced to all my friends that I am giving up smoking. Now it became an issue of honour, since they would ridicule me if I was caught smoking. The fear of being ridiculed, as a force, eventually became greater than the force of habit, and I could succeed.

Old habits are like a great force. Similar is the case in dealing with others. When they are emotionally charged up, they become angry or stubborn. At that moment the situation is like a great force.

Example

- The child did not do his homework and when confronted by the father he was on the defensive. It became an issue of honor for him. At that time the father sensing a great force did not tell him anything, but later in a more conducive moment, explained him the importance of doing the

homework.

- When I reached home late, my father was furious and shouted at me. I allowed the fury to calm down and later explained that a friend had met with an accident. I had to rush him to the hospital and in the process got late.
- I went to a customer and he was stubborn, like a great force, that he would not change his supplier. I did not press for sales but continued to visit him in a friendly tone. After some time, the force declined, and he started giving me orders.

One of the cause for people getting emotionally charged up is the belief systems. It is quite strong. Similar is the case of mob mentality. In a false sense of boldness - 'manhood' - a person may try to fight it head on. That is dangerous. It is better to use wisdom and wait for the right moment.

Example

- People have a strong belief in a leader. At that time if you criticize the leader, you will have a tough time. On the other hand, if you allow some time to pass when people experience failed promises, then it may be more conducive to address them.
- When a nuclear test is successfully carried out, the whole country is rejoicing assuming it as a great national achievement. Anyone opposing it at that time is more likely to be branded as anti-national. It is only when the fury is settled that logic may be explained and understood.
- Riots are like a great force. It is better to remain low key. Once the force of the riot goes down then we can proceed on whatever we want to do.

This principle explains the need of using wisdom and judgment in approaching any task. The type of hindrances need to be understood and dealt with appropriately. In front of a great force, it may be wise for one to retreat but that is not forever. One should wait either for the force to cool down, or accumulate energy bigger than the force and then advance, moving on, firmly.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



4. The Principle of Proportion

**“Things are well when they move together,
not in isolation”**

In our body, our life and in the world around, we can observe that things are connected with each other. There is a certain relationship and a proportion.

In our body there are different parts and they work in beautiful co-ordination with each other. The oxygen intake, blood circulation, food digestion and even waste disposal. All processes are carried out in close co-ordination by different parts of the body. They are closely connected and with an appropriate proportion for each of them. We can imagine the monstrosity if any one part, e.g. head, keeps growing and the other parts of the body don't. The body is a perfect example of balance.

Example

- To become slim, if one starves, the balance of the body is disturbed. One may become slim, but the health may get affected.
- To satisfy the taste, we may eat food with harmful components or high quantity. We will enjoy the taste but affect our health.
- To earn more money, we may work more and compromise our sleep. We may be able to sustain for some time and then the body will give up.
- Living a cozy life in an air-conditioned house with nothing physical to do may be projected as a life of luxury, but if the body does not get the exercise, enough fresh air and sunlight that it needs, it may manifest in form of other weaknesses.

As our body, our life also has different components, different areas of development. We can talk of mental, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual development. They again are inter-connected and affect each other. The intellect, feelings and physical abilities all need well-rounded development.

Example

- One studies all the times. He may get good marks, may get strong intellectually, but may not have physical or social abilities.
- The other way around, one spends all the time playing or with friends. He may get strong in sports and social skill but will not be able to handle intellectual challenges.
- One is very strong physically but has no sensitivity to others' feelings. He can bully the people but can't win their love.
- A housewife caring a lot for her children and family is fully immersed into it, unconnected with the world. Eventually she may find a big gap between her ability and others ability to grasp the world.
- One may spend the whole life chasing fame, status, power, prestige, etc. If in the process, and in the purpose of all these, if life's true purpose is not realized, then even after getting everything, one may find emptiness.

As we have seen the importance of balance in body and life, same way balance is also important in other parts of social life.

Example

- The father may go out to earn money, but he also has a role of grooming the children and taking care of others in the family.
- Son may want to go with friends, but sick mother requires attention.
- With good external exposure, husband develops social skills, but the wife is not involved and lags behind.
- A manager is required to run the business, so is a worker. Work may be different but there is a role.
- Same way, in a society a teacher is required and so is a farmer. Each one has his own role.

On the other hand, balance is to be maintained between human interest and the nature.

Example

- If factories pour poisonous effluent into the rivers and seas, polluting the environment and killing plants and animals, it would cause ecological degradation which in turn will also affect man.
- For human survival oxygen is required and trees play an important role in the cycle of oxygen generation. If for expanding cities, green cover is reduced disproportionately, it could cause imbalance.

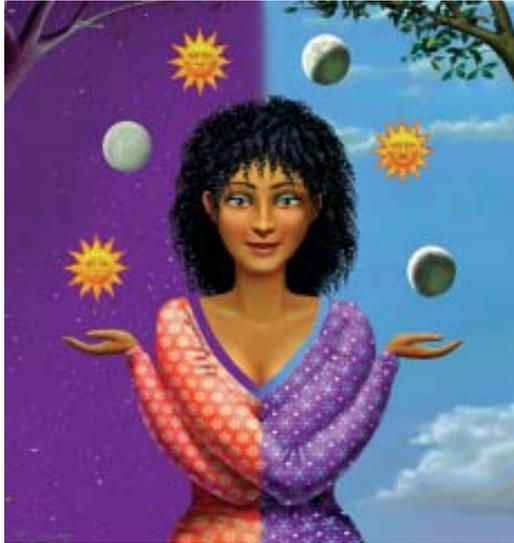
Finally, balance is to be maintained between what one does for self and what one does for the society. In a short-sighted society, people will be busy in minding their own business and indifferent to the society. Such society will fall into the hands of thugs where corruption, violence and injustice will thrive, eventually affecting the lives of the very people busy in minding their own business.

Example

- We can enjoy the fruits of trees planted by our previous generation, but in turn we also have to plant the trees.
- We are a part of the neighborhood, city, state and a country. While we need to pay attention to development of ourselves and our family, we also must recognize our role in larger society.

This principle addresses arrogance in the individual and makes one realize the role of different parts in one's life. It is a humbling realization that we are what we are, because of so many factors and it is important to maintain the balance between them.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



5. The Principle of Acceptance

**“If day and night, summer and winter are well with you,
you have overcome your contradictions”**

As we look around, we learn that things change. Day turns into night and night turns into day. I love the day. It brings brilliant sunlight and vibrancy in the world, ushering in, all kind of activities. It is so dynamic. On the other hand, I dread the night. Full of darkness and absolutely dull, unproductive. Whether I like it or not, day turns into night. I lose what I like, and I am in face of something I dislike. Within the same period of 24 hours, I have to face both. Half of it I like and the other half I dislike.

On the other hand, what if I develop a new perspective that recognizes the beauty of night. Darkness, the landscape sometime bathing in soft moonlight. Sky full of stars reminding us about our space in the universe. Quietness all around with splendid serenity.

Now what happens? I will be able to celebrate the day as well as the night. With this change in perspective, when I learned to see good side of whatever I am left with, my life is brightened.

How good it would be to develop such perspective – to be able to see positive in whatever situation I am placed in. It applies to various aspects of life.

Example

- When I am fit, I enjoy the actions. When I am bed ridden, I enjoy the rest.
- When I am tired and can't work intellectually, I enjoy meeting friends.

- I am blind and can't see. I enjoy the world of touch and sound.

Nobody wants to be sick, tired or blind. Putting it differently, to enjoy the world of touch and sound, there is no need to be blind. The point here is very different. It is about accepting the situation and learning to see the best side of it. With changes taking place all along, I will be placed every time in new situations. If I perceive positive sides of all the situations, I will be able to celebrate all colors of life, without remorse of what is gone or what was not there in my life.

Example

- I entered a singing competition, but precisely at that time, I got sore throat and could not sing well. I did get upset for a while, but later I found myself enjoying singing of others.
- With weak financial position, I could not afford to travel by reserved compartment. Travelling in unreserved compartment I enjoyed witnessing different colors of life, where often people helped each other by accommodating and often fought with each other for bigger space.
- It started raining and I did not have any protection. I could feel a rare pleasure of rain drops rolling over my body, feet in cold, flowing water and enjoying witnessing water splashes caused by passing vehicles.

We can imagine what would have happened in each of the situations above, if I had not developed this new perspective. In each case, I would have been grumbling, cursing, wondering why it had to happen to me only. I would be unhappy and tense and who knows in such a mood, I might have picked up a fight with others and spread bitterness around.

In life, what I am endowed with, the situation that I am emplaced in, itself may be different from others. What is important is that even this situation itself may keep changing.

Example

- When I was a kid, our family was rich. We had a big house, car and used to visit dazzling travel destinations every vacation. Suddenly my father faced a huge business loss and we lost everything. We had to live in a small rented house with a sudden struggle for survival. The social respect turned into contempt. How dreadful were those days! Frustrated as we were, all of us became bitter.

But when we realized this different perspective, we started realizing our collective strengths and started working hard to come out of the situation. Now that we are out of the situation, looking back I cherish those days of struggle, challenge and rebuilding our life. I feel our best abilities came out in those times. Without that we would not have become as tough and fearless as we are now.

Again, it does not mean that to become fearless and tough everyone should

go through such situations. As seen above the point is very different. It is about developing a perspective of seeing the positive in all kinds of situations that have already arisen and enjoying the journey.

It is not only about losing money and material wealth. What about losing our dear ones?

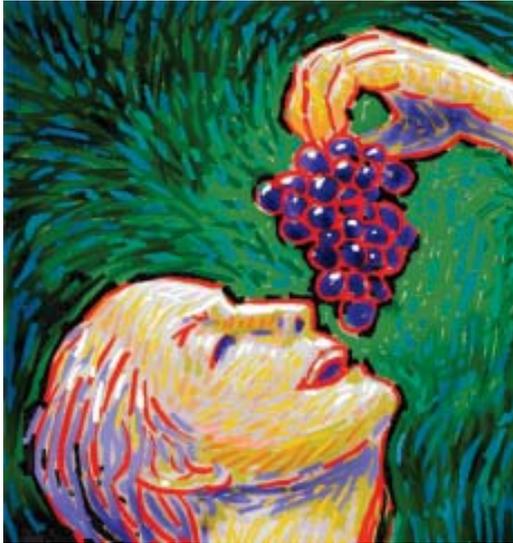
Example

- My mother died. I had been trained that death is a sad event and I must be sorrowful. However, having developed this new perspective of equanimity, I could see how complete and satisfied a life my mother had lived. She was an ocean of love and care in which all of us blossomed. Her kindness was like a beacon all around. She had touched and shaped so many lives and in a complete selfless spirit, spread cheerfulness and happiness all around, irrespective of her own health or wealth.

As hard as I tried, I could not only feel sorrow about her death. Rather I also felt blessed and a determination to continue on the road of goodwill chartered by her.

This principle explains that in life different experiences will arise. Situations will change. If we develop the perspective of equanimity, our ability to accept the changes will be greater. We will be calm and will be able to spread positivity around.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



6. The Principle of Pleasure

“If you pursue pleasure, you enchain yourself to suffering. But as long as you do not harm your health, enjoy without inhibition when the opportunity presents itself”

All of us love pleasure. We relish the food that we like. We love the company of our friends. We enjoy the movie of our choice. We cherish the vacation with our family. All these are our pleasures.

But often we are given strictures against pleasure. We are told the virtues of giving up pleasures. We are made to feel guilty for indulging in pleasure. And we are left with a question - is pleasure good or bad? And who will decide? Perhaps the best way is to decide with our own internal register.

If we have craving for the pleasure, we will not be able to concentrate on other things. We may get the object of pleasure or not, but till then we will remain mentally bogged down. This is the meaning of the first part of the principle. If we pursue pleasure, it will occupy space in our mind, thereby enchainning us to suffering.

Example

- I am in my class at college thinking about the dinner party to be held later tonight on the college grounds. In the process, I can barely concentrate in the class. I get a call from my mom saying some guests are visiting and she wants me to be at home. I am terribly upset for missing the party.

- My favorite movie is released. I was looking forward to this day. I am on the way and there is a traffic jam. I get wild with one and all as I will miss the movie.
- Since morning I have been excited as I am to meet my best friend this evening after a long time. But just a few hours before the time of meeting he calls me up that he can't come, and I lose my mood.

Thus, anxiety of looking forward to the pleasure will result in disquiet. And by any chance if I do not get it, it will bring great distress to me. Irrespective of pleasure being good or not, the anxiety and craving for the same seems to tie me down and to that extent is not good for me.

On the other hand, there are kind of pleasures that eventually harm our health.

Example

- I started smoking modestly for fun. I was certain that I would not become an addict. However, after some time, I found myself dependent on it. After every few hours, if I did not smoke I felt uneasy. Soon I found it harming my health.
- Similar was the case of alcohol. With friends we party, and it is not a party without alcohol. Over a period, consumption of excessive alcohol started affecting my health.
- I am having diabetes and must exercise control in food. However, I love sweets. Devouring my favorite Gulab Jamun gives me tremendous pleasure. I adore it. However, after that my sugar level goes up and my health is affected.
- I am proud about my social media presence. I keep on posting innovative posts and feel great delight the moment I notice friends 'like' my post. I spend hours and hours, often at the cost of sleep.
- I love being with friends. We have late night parties and if they are occasionally, it does not matter. But when I have many such parties consecutively, it starts affecting the health.

It seems that all this is fun when done moderately. But when indulged in excessively, it starts affecting one's health. So, if I enjoy on one side, I suffer ill-health on the other. What is the point?

On the other hand, when I do not crave for it, but indulge in pleasure with moderation, I enjoy it in a way that it does not affect my health. Then my experience is very positive.

Example

- I went home from work and suddenly found that my old friend had come to visit us. We chatted for a while, had dinner together, shared memories of old times. It was a lovely experience and we loved it.
- We were invited to a function and the food there was excellent. Instead of

the usual, we tried other varieties and loved it.

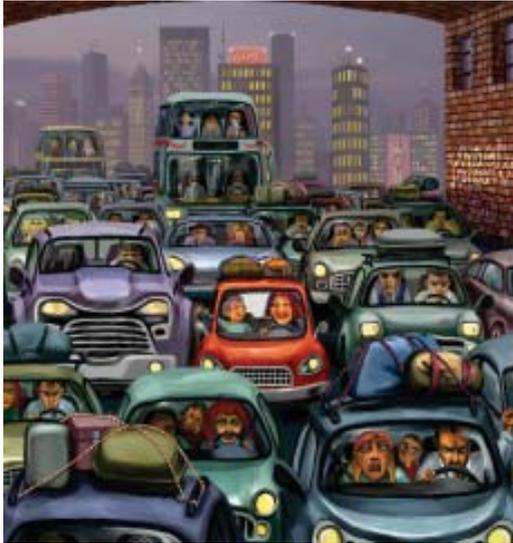
- We had a holiday and found out that a nice movie was running in a nearby theatre. We decided to go for the movie with the whole family. We enjoyed the movie and the moments we spent together as a family. We had a lot of fun.
- A colleague had a birthday and had arranged a party. We enjoyed the music and dancing in the party. Meeting the family members of my colleague was a pleasure. And the cake was delicious. It was a good time.

In all these occasions, I had a good time. It was a great pleasure. Of course, there was no craving for it. I enjoyed it as it came. And it was in moderation. There was nothing excessive that would affect my health.

On the other hand, I realize that in all the three cases, if I had resisted and denied myself then I would have lost the pleasurable moments.

This principle says that in such moments, it is worth while enjoying without inhibition. Following the principle, what I find is that there is nothing wrong in pleasure by itself. What is harmful is the craving for it and excessive indulgence that affects health. If I take care of the two, there is no need to deny myself of the pleasure when the opportunity is present.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



7. The Principle of Immediate Action

“If you pursue an end you enchain yourself. If everything you do is done as though it were an end in itself, you liberate yourself”

We all have aspirations. We have dreams. We have wish lists. We believe our happiness is linked with those dreams and wait for the dreams to materialize. We will be happy when we get there. But till then what?

It is like waiting to reach the destination. We are eagerly waiting to reach there. Till then the journey appears arduous. The time seems to be too long. Every few minutes we look at the watch to see how much time is remaining and it seems to be endless. It is so boring and frustrating. And hell will be let loose if we are told that for some reason we are likely to be delayed even further. We get disturbed, annoyed and of course we will spread that grudge all around.

Our happiness is in the destination. For that we have decided to take up the journey. But what happens if we enjoy the journey as well? Then it will not be arduous. It will not be painful. Rather it will be a joy. This happens in all aspects of our life.

Example

- I have taken a long-distance train to visit my native place. I am dreading the long journey and curse the railways at the slightest hint of delay. Of course, in the process I can't enjoy the scenery, the endless wilderness all around, and a stretch of relaxed state of doing nothing.

- I have come to receive my friend at the airport. I am looking forward to meeting him. He is taking time in coming out and my anxiety mounts. Of course, in the process I can't enjoy the rich scenario of the arrival zone, diverse kind of people coming out with different expressions on their faces, and witnessing the lovely hugs some of them are giving to the people waiting for them.
- As a student I am concerned about getting placement and will be happy when I get a good job. I attend college only because I have to do that to get the job. On the other hand, how nice it would be if I fully utilize my college time to learn from all the possible sources and strengthen myself?
- When I get a job, I start hungering for faster promotions, in the hope that real happiness lies in promotions. As a result, I find my present work boring, useless and a waste of my talent. How enjoyable a process it would be if I enjoy my present work as well?
- When I am waiting for a destination, the present becomes provisional, as I am preoccupied in reaching the destination in the belief that I am going to be happy only when I reach there in the future. In this way I postpone happiness for tomorrow. In the process I do not put my heart in the present and enjoy what I am already doing.

Example

- I do not put my heart in my present job, because I consider it as only provisional and wait for an ideal job in the future.
- To live in our present house is only provisional as I believe that we are going to have a different life when we move to a better house.
- I do not enjoy my present business as I believe that it is a matter of time when I will become a business tycoon and rule the industry.

Does it mean we should not have goals at all? It is only when we want to reach a destination that we start the journey. Goals are useful. The idea of reaching there gives us energy. It drives us to take on even a difficult journey. The point is not that there is anything wrong with the goal. Rather the point is about how we enjoy the journey towards the goal.

Example

- For fitness I decided to walk. Every few minutes I keep looking at my watch about how many minutes I have walked and how much more is remaining. I am thinking of buying a gadget that will tell me how many steps I have walked, what distance I have walked and how many calories I have burnt. So many things to care about!

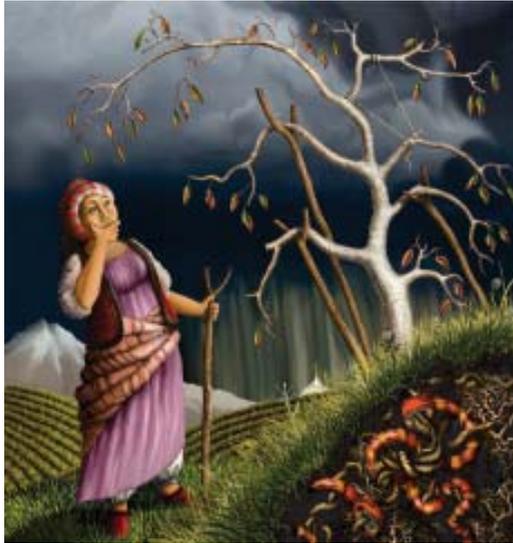
On the other hand, how will it be if I enjoy the walk? The sound of the birds chirping, the cat sheepishly passing over the wall from one compound to the other. The light breeze and the multi-coloured leaves shimmering in the trees. The fragrance of the flowers blooming in the nearby garden. The

awkward walk of a cute baby hanging on to the young mother. Two old men greeting each other on the road loudly cheering and laughing.

While I enjoy all these, I will continue to walk. My goal of fitness remains. I will walk what I had planned. But I will do all that along with other pleasures of the walk.

This principle brings out a rich perspective that the goal and the journey are not opposed to each other. One is not the price to be paid to get to the other. Rather each one could be a joyful experience in itself. When we develop this approach all our actions could be more joyful.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



8. The Principle of Comprehended Action

“You will make your conflicts disappear when you understand them in their ultimate roots, not when you try to resolve them”

We face problems everyday in all aspects of our life. Problems with our bodies, relations, families, work, money and so on. Some problems are quite simple. We are hungry, and the problem is over when we get food. We are tired, and the problem is over when we take rest. But some problems are quite tricky. No easy solution seems in sight. Whatever we do, they continue to persist.

Example

- I feel lethargic and tend to procrastinate every time. I can't complete anything in time. I try hard. I make audacious resolutions. But at the end I am back to square one.
- My husband is bitter. I try different tactics to make him happy. For some time, the issue seems to have been resolved, but soon it resurfaces.
- At work, my boss is angry with me all the time. He gives me more and more work and then keeps finding fault with whatever I do.

In all the above situations, personally I am not happy. I want to be better and live a dynamic life. I love my husband and want to see him happy. I love my work and I would like to see my boss happy. I am trying all the things to the best of my knowledge to solve the problems. But nothing seems to work. This keeps me disturbed all the time. I am struggling to come out, I tried meditation, I tried positive thinking, I even tried to fix the vastu.

In each of the situations above, what is described is the manifestation. What I have been trying to resolve is what appeared on the surface. When I tried to understand the root of the situations, I realise that the actual problem is something else. Of course, the roots of the problem are not easily visible, it requires effort to understand and openness to learn.

Example

- During the course of self-knowledge, working on my biography, I realized that certain events in my formation years have produced in me serious fears of failure. I had tried something new and had failed. And because of my failure, my family had to suffer a lot. Now I understand that I am excited to do new things but as I proceed some where the inner fear lurks, “what if I fail” and it robs me of all the energy of moving forward.
- Spending some quiet time together, and opening soft communication with love, I learnt that my husband has suffered a big loss in the business for no fault of his. There was a devastating fire at the place of a big customer who owed us a lot of money and now the chances of recovering the money are very slim. There is a huge financial burden on his head and he is worried that to pay the debt we may have to sell off our house as well.
- On some investigations, I found that my boss is involved in some underhand dealings. He is worried that I may come to know about it and knowing my straightforward nature, he is afraid that I may speak out.

Once we understand the roots, we realize that whatever we have been trying so far would have never addressed the roots. I was struggling with the manifestations whereas the roots were all together different. Now that I know the roots, there is better clarity. Now I am better equipped to address the conflict.

Example

- Now that I know my biographical issue, I need to work on myself first to recognize that the situation in which my earlier failure created havoc is not there anymore. One option is to work with some other people who are better at handling failure. Another option is to work on things where the consequences are nominal. One of the biggest consolation for me here is that now that I know the root of the problem, I stop blaming myself and can be more confident.
- Now that I learn about the real anxiety of my husband, first thing I realize that there is nothing wrong with me and there is nothing wrong in our relationship. That itself was a great relief. The next thing I realize that though there was a loss, there is very little my husband could have done to prevent it. It was not his fault. The burden of huge debt was shattering and my husband at this stage needed support. When I told him that there is no problem if we have to sell off the house, that we can live in rented

house, that I am with him, and finally, I am sure with his dedication and hard work, we will recover again. These words itself gave him renewed vigor to fight with the situation. And of course, our relations reached a new height of proximity and mutual support.

- When I learnt about the corrupt practice of my boss, it was clear that he wanted to harass me so that I leave the job and his fear of exposure is reduced. I knew he was very powerful in the firm and I can't do anything against him. I found it wiser to leave the job and take up another one free from this conflict.

This principal suggest that it is prudent to dive deep to find the roots rather than struggle with the manifestations of the conflict. In that way we stand higher chances of addressing the conflict.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



9. The Principle of Liberty

“When you harm others, you remain enchained, but if you do not harm anyone, you can freely do whatever you want”

I am free to do what I want. But in the process, when I end up harming others, there are consequences. The other could be more powerful than me, and there is always a danger of him retaliating back and harming me even more. It is possible that the other could be weaker than me. The possibilities of his bouncing back at me are minimal. But then, there are some other finer aspects involved here.

In all of us, there are some warm sentiments as human being. Those of being kind, helpful, good, generous etc. That is why when we see another person in a problem, our first instinct is to rush to help him. It is these sentiments that haunt us internally when we harm others who are weaker than us. We will be left feeling guilty and a sense of having done something wrong. Well, we can suppress these sentiments and become ruthless. But we will register it as a deep betrayal.

Example

- We are having a party and are dancing to loud music late at night. There are some elderly people living around and they are getting disturbed. If they are powerful, they will call the police and we will not only have to stop, but will also have to end up paying a fine. On the other hand, if they are not powerful, they will only plead helplessly. The

inner voice deep within us will prompt us to help them, but in an arrogance-driven ruthlessness, we may continue ignoring them. However, we can't escape a deep sense of betrayal within us.

- We are in a hurry to board the train. There is a queue, and all are standing in the queue. We decide to jump the queue and rush towards the front. Now if some people in the queue are more powerful than us, then they will not only prevent us but also turn us back with insults. However, if they are weak, they can't stop us. We even board the train earlier than them, but a voice within us disapproves our action and we are not happy about it.

Harming physically is not the only way. There are many other forms in which we end up harming others.

Example

- I am free to express my views, but when I make derogatory remarks on others regarding their religion or race, what I have, in fact, done is to harm them. It is called religious or racial violence. Other examples could be intolerance, obscurantism, fanaticism, fundamentalism, excommunication, discrimination, etc. or racism, apartheid, untouchability, theories of racial supremacy, sending certain races to the front line of battlefield, etc.
- I am free to do my business. But, for example, when I know that there is a shortage of onions and I hoard the same so that I can sell it in the future at higher prices, what I have done is to harm others economically and it is called economic violence. Other examples could be monopolization, exploitation, fraud, bonded labour, overpricing, bribery, under payment, adulteration of products, robbery, usury, blackmail, hoarding, etc.
- I can do what I want but when I threaten others to make them do what I want them to do, then what I have done is called psychological violence. Other examples could be threats, blackmail, brain washing, false propaganda, false values promotion through mass media, biased education, misinformation, nihilism, etc.
- Finally, when I notice someone else doing harm and I do nothing to stop it, then by not opposing I am in a way supporting the harm being done, and it is known as moral violence. Other examples could be, indifference, mind one's own business, self-centeredness, egoism, etc.

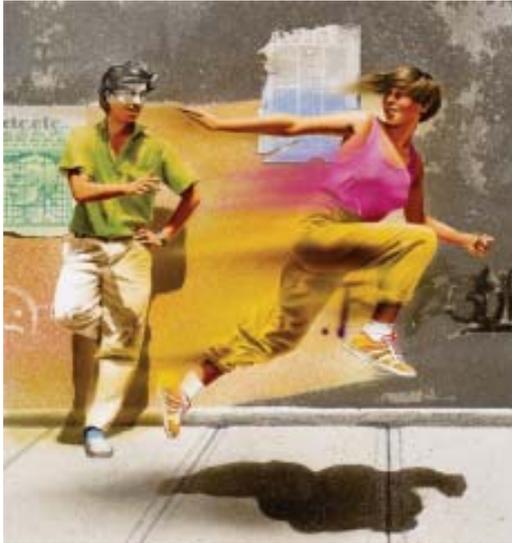
Thus, I am free to do what I want. Others may also like this freedom of action and we may do things together. But when I force them against their wishes continuously, I end up harming them. In the way I respect my own freedom, I also must respect others' freedom. I do not get the right to impose my views on others. Similarly, others also do not get the right to impose their views on me.

Example

- I do not want to go to the party. But my friends insistently force me to go along with them. They were free to go to the party, but when they imposed their wishes over mine, they were harming me by committing violence of a sort.
- Let us take the converse. They want to go and if I do not want to go with them, they say that I am disregarding their sentiments and therefore hurting them. It is not true. They are trying to impose their desire on me and I am fully justified in resisting it.
- A college friend says that I should marry him and if I do not marry, he will commit suicide. He is trying to convey to me that by not agreeing I am harming him. Again, that is not true. He has a right to propose, but I equally have the right to accept or not. What he is doing is to blackmail me and that is psychological violence! I am fully justified in resisting it.

This principle suggests that each one has a freedom to do whatever one wants within one's own limits, and that no one has a right to impeach on others' freedom. That would amount to causing harm and it has its own consequences.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



10. The Principle of Solidarity

“When you treat others as you would have them treat you, you liberate yourself”

How should we behave in the world? When we were young, our parents suggested to us one kind of behavior – be nice to all, say sorry, share before you eat, etc. As we grew up, the world taught us another kind of behavior – be on your guard, snatch your share, run and capture the seat in the train, etc. Religions and moral teachers preach us one thing, and TV serials and movies suggest that the opposite behavior is the one that will work in the world. We are swung from one corner to the other, like a pendulum. In the process, we do not have any yardstick, so we move by convenience. In this changing world, can there be one yardstick for Behavior?

The approach suggested in these principles is to look at our internal feelings. What makes us feel good, makes us feel inner growth, is what we would like to repeat, is what is worth doing. So even in respect to behavior with the world, we can explore applying the same criteria.

Example

- For a small mistake in the work, I shouted at the subordinate. I could see him getting depressed. Later, I felt I should have handled it better.
- When I was late in reaching home, my mother kept calling me every half an hour. I got annoyed and shouted at her, saying that I am not a small kid and she should not call me repeatedly. Later, I felt that I did not do the right thing.
- My wife and I were to go out together. I reached home a couple of hours late.

She was waiting all along. When she questioned me, I reacted angrily at her and accused her of casting suspicions on me. Our evening was spoilt.

As we can see from the above examples, I myself felt bad about my behavior. So, one thing that I learnt is what I did was not right. That is a good beginning, but how do I move forward, what could have been the right behavior?

If I place myself in the position of the other person, and see things from his/her point of view, I see things differently. Mostly, how would I like to be treated if I were them?

Example

- If I was the subordinate, I know, I would not have done the mistake deliberately. There must be several reasons, right from unclear instructions, to limited personal abilities, to mental state at that time, that the mistake happened. In this position, I would definitely like to be shown where the mistake was, but would have loved if the discussion remained at level of mistake, and been shown a way out, rather than just being shouted at.
- If I was in the position of my mother, I would notice the anxiety that she has about me getting late. She knows that I am not a kid any more, and that I can manage myself, but still the anxieties are so much that she is unable to control herself and hence called repeatedly. If I place myself in her position, I would have realised that in truth she would have loved that her anxiety be transformed to reassurance by knowing that the son is safe and there is no need to worry, instead of being dismissed (just as I had actually done to her in an earlier example).
- In the case of my wife's position, if I were her, I would like to be appreciated for being ready and waiting for two hours. I can imagine in these two hours, what all would have gone on in her mind and the restlessness she would have experienced? And so, when I finally arrived, she was justified in getting excited and enquiring about the delay. If I were in her position, I would like to be shown understanding and appreciation for patiently waiting instead of being accused of distrust.

All these examples show a new perspective, When I try to see things from their point of view, I realise how I should have behaved. And if I would have behaved in that way, they would have been happy but more importantly, I would also have felt nice and would be happy myself. I would feel that I have handled the situation well, that I have grown internally and that I would like to repeat such behavior.

That is the suggestion of this principle. When I put myself in another's shoes and try to see things from his perspective, and I realise from this position how I would like to be treated; and then behave in that way, which is "treating others as you would have them treat you, you liberate yourself" in terms of being happy ourselves and spreading happiness around.

Example

- A maid servant is doing manual work. There is dignity of work. She would like to be treated and respected as an individual human being. The same applies to porters, barbers, drivers and so on.
- Parents and grandparents have grown up in another era and have their own beliefs and concerns. They would like to be respected for what they are.
- The friends and other people around me, each one of them has distinct characteristics. They would like to be respected and accepted as they are.

These examples suggest that everyone likes the treatment that I would also like for myself. So, if I make a simple criterion, to treat them in the way I want to be treated, things would be easy, simple and everyone will be happy.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



11. The Principle of Denial of Opposites

“It does not matter in which faction events have placed you. What matters is for you to comprehend that you have not chosen any faction”

Is this principle saying that we have no freedom of choice at all? No, this principle is stating that sometimes our freedom is restricted to choices among already existent possibilities. And there are areas where we have no choice. In such situations one option for us is to crib about it, be unhappy about it, resent it, keep complaining, keep wishing that had the situation been different life would have been wonderful. But such an approach, makes us unhappy and we continue to suffer. On the other hand, if we accept such situations gracefully, recognizing that we have not chosen them, then the anxiety will reduce.

We were born in a particular family. We did not choose our parents, they belonged to a certain social and economic level which completely conditioned our life. We were inducted in a particular religion, traditions and customs. Our parents could groom us, educate us, form us according to their possibilities. It is because of these factors that today we can do something and can't do some other things.

In such situations: two choices are in front of us. One, is to be unhappy with all that and keep wishing that had I been born in another family, had another kind of grooming, had another kind of education, relatively what a great situation it would have been. I can keep doing that and can continue to be unhappy with whatever I have and whatever I am. More important is that in the process, I fail

to see the positive sides of the situations.

Example

- I was born in a village and grew up there. My cousins, grew up in Mumbai. Sometimes I find that they are far smarter than I am. I wish I was born in a city.
- I studied in a local school in a vernacular medium. When I see some others who studied in convent schools and thus speak English fluently, I wish I also had studied in convent.
- Our family situation demanded that I start working immediately after school and hence could not go to college. When I see those going to college and the confidence they emanate, I also wish I could have gone to the college.

Each of the above situations was a given, and I had not chosen it. Sometimes the situations may be opposite.

- I am eating lunch and I see a beggar. I feel guilty that whilst he does not have food, I am eating.
- I am looking out of my house and see people living in slums. I feel guilty that they do not have proper houses and that I am living like this.

In such situations if we can help, we should take the initiative, but will need to appreciate that we are living in a de-humanized world, full of violence, injustice and inequalities. We have not chosen it. We can work to humanize it, but can do only to a certain extent. There is no point in feeling guilty about a situation that we have not created.

Example

- I am born with certain intellect and was not good at studies. I could not comprehend what was being taught. My parents shouted at me and the society labeled me as 'bad student'.
- From a young age my physique had been unique (it could be too thin or too fat) and people joked about me. I was ashamed and always felt, why is it that they pick on me only?
- I had a particular skin color (very dark or brown or fair) and heard people taunt me about it.
- I had certain abilities or disabilities.

In all these situations if I realize that I had not chosen them and accept that they make me neither superior nor inferior, I will have less cause to complain. There are times when we even choose certain aspects and that in turn work out to be bad. Then we can keep cursing ourselves for the bad decisions that we took. That is one option. Another option is to realize that at that time with whatever information was available we took the best decision. The events turned out to be unfavorable. What we had chosen was one thing and where the events placed us was another thing, one that we had not chosen.

Example

- To reach a place in a hurry, I decided to take a route which generally has been faster. On the way I found that there was an accident and there was a traffic jam.
- I prepared hard for my final CA exams. But the question paper was set out side of prescribed syllabus. I had no choice but to attempt it and I thought I did well but when the result was announced I learnt that I have not cleared it.
- I kept my money with a bank in fixed deposit. Now I learn that the bank has failed and my money is gone.

Same thing can happen in our relationship with others. Each one of them have their own temperament, background, aspirations, apprehensions, fear and anxiety.

Example

- My grandmother is a very traditional lady My very proud of traditions. Whenever my friends come over, she likes to talk to them and opinionates about their personal lives. I feel embarrassed because it's a situation that neither my friends nor I have chosen.
- My father makes strict rules and it makes him angry if they are not adhered to.
- My sister is very stubborn and every time she wants things to be done her way only insisting that she is elder, a fact not chosen by either of us.
- However, the dress sense of my spouse in my opinion is appreciable because although she likes to wear high heels she doesn't do so taking into fact that she is taller than me.

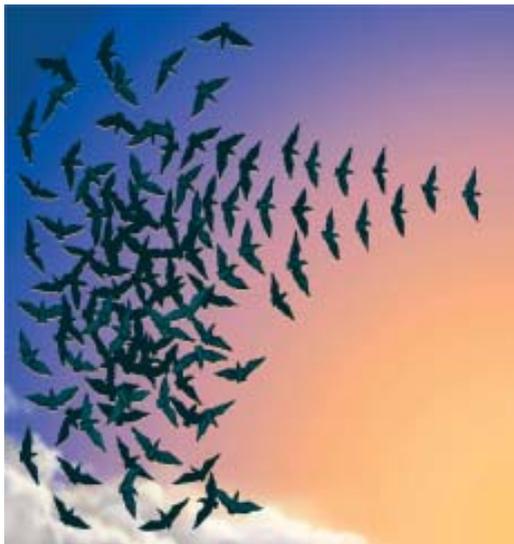
When we compare our country and our society with the developed ones, we feel bad about our situation. We often feel that we will never improve. Seeing religious division, casteism, corruption, unethical politics often makes us feel ashamed.

Finally, we are born in an era where power and profits of few are more important than lives of thousands. Where human beings are not placed as a central value in social and personal life. Where all do not get equal opportunity for education, health and quality of life. Where manipulation abounds, and huge amount is diverted from social welfare to armaments.

Of course, we work together in transforming the ills of society, by humanizing it but at the same time remembering that these ills were given: we were neither the cause of them nor did we choose them.

The comprehension of this principle will reduce fanaticism in us, and will permit us to understand that others also have not chosen their factions and will liberate us from a wrong sense of suffering. This understanding of the historic divides enables us to use our energies in constructive directions.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.



12. The Principle of Accumulation of Actions

“Contradictory and Unitive acts accumulate within you. If you repeat your acts of Internal Unity, then nothing can detain you”

We can classify our everyday actions into three types. Most of them are routine which we carry out as a way of daily life such as brushing teeth, taking bath, combing hair, eating food, going for work etc. We can call them neutral actions. We carry out such actions almost mechanically. Such actions are important in our daily life, but they do not have deep impact on our life as the other two types have.

There are some other actions which when performed gives us a very nice feeling. Some kind of internal certification, that we have done a good deed. We like it. We feel better about ourselves. We feel that we have grown, and we feel like repeating such actions. This kind of feeling can come when we are considerate about others, when we let go, when we go out of the way to accommodate others, when we act out of concern for others, in solidarity with others. We can call them positive actions, valid actions or as is suggested in this principle ‘unifying’ actions.

And there are some other actions which when performed give us a bad feeling. After the actions we feel remorse, we wish we had not acted in that way. We ourselves disapprove our own action. When for our selfish purpose we end up harming others, when we manipulate others to take advantage, when we get angry on someone or we are anxious to take some revenge. On all these occasions what happens is that internally we are on fire. We are anxious and tense. We don’t like this situation but then we are into it. And when we’re into

it we end up harming ourselves, others around us, as well as our relations. We can call them negative actions or as is suggested in this principle “contradictory acts.”

Let us take examples of unitive acts.

Example

- I am walking on a road and I see a blind man trying to cross in heavy traffic. Though I am in a hurry, I go across and help him to cross the road.
- My maid is not well. Though there is a lot of work to do I tell her to take rest.
- My husband is furious at me without any fault of mine. I feel that something must have disturbed him and without feeling bad I try to pacify him.
- A colleague of mine insulted me. I know that he is going through tremendous personal tensions and instead of getting angry at him I feel sympathy for him.

In each of the above actions, nobody tells us anything. It's a voice within us that arises, that says 'well done'. That is what is called internal satisfaction, we feel worthwhile, and a sense of internal growth, and we would like to repeat such actions again. These are the indicators of unifying acts.

On the other hand, in similar situations we may act in an opposite manner.

Example

- I am walking on a road and see a blind man trying to cross the road. I feel lethargic to walk up to him and decide to continue on my way. Later I felt that I could have helped him to cross the road, and that feeling made me unhappy.
- My maid is not well. I know it, yet I insist that these are all excuses and as guests are coming, the work has to be done. Despite her weakness, I release her only after my work is done. But later I feel I was a little harsh.
- My husband is furious at me without any fault of mine. I bounce back picking up a fight accusing him of his other faults and remind him of all previous occasions when similar things had happened. We fight and end up with bad feelings towards each other. Later, I realised the foolishness of it all.
- A colleague of mine insulted me. At that moment I could not do anything. But I kept score, and at the first opportunity took revenge by humiliating that colleague in the worst possible manner in front of others. Later I regretted that I made him feel small and inconsequential, and that really hurt.

In each of the above actions, again nobody tells us anything. It is within us a voice arises, that says 'not good'. 'why do you have to do this?' 'could you not have done otherwise?' This is what is called internal dis-satisfaction, we feel worthless, we have fallen in our own eyes, and we feel ashamed of ourselves.

These are the indicators of contradictory acts.

Contradictory acts sound bad and make one feel bad. Unifying acts sound good and make one feel good. Then why would anyone want to do contradictory acts at all?

The fact is that daily life is a blend of actions. We are gripped by our emotions and when we are pushed, we immediately tend to react agitatedly as we have our own memories, perceptions and fears. It is only when we are attentive that we can reflect on the situations. Thus, when we train ourselves to pause and reflect, seeing the others' point of view, that we can feel their difficulties. We feel solidarity when we act with compassion and understanding.

We can't always do that. Often, we will end up reacting and doing contradictory actions. In such cases there is no point in killing ourselves with guilt for having committed such actions. This principle tells us that in everyone's life both contradictory and unitive actions keep on taking place.

It is only when we are attentive, be sensitive to other person's point of view, and be alert, that we can focus on repeating unifying acts. One simple formula is that any act of self-less giving will be unifying and any act of harming others or using others for selfish gain will be contradictory.

Both kind of actions will continue in everyone's life. The principle says that to the extent we can be attentive and intentionally try to increase the unifying acts, its cumulative weight will "outweigh" the weight of contradictory acts thereby swinging the balance in a positive direction helping to lead our lives in a bright and new way.

Like other principles of valid actions, this principle is a law of behavior. This law suggests that if we implement it in our life, happiness will increase. On the other hand, if we break it, suffering is likely to arise. We can try it out in our own life and find out for ourselves.
