

Words by choice!

1

By Gita Krishna Raj

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“Oh! I have **tolerated** this for long enough! I can’t put up with this nonsense any more!” – many of us cry out impatiently, unable to make the offender correct his vice. His acts may be vicious or virtuous, but our stand of intolerance is certainly a shortcoming. “Oh! But I did try my level best! I put up with so much hardship for so long! I just can’t **tolerate** this anymore!” – the protests immediately flow. But right there, within that exclamation, lies our fault. Yes! OUR FAULT!

What is Tolerance? **Tolerance** is nothing but the negative reverse of **Intolerance**. Consider the word Patience! **Patience** is the inner understanding that every individual has a right to opinion (whether that opinion is a vice or a virtue is beyond generalizations). **Tolerance** is a passive state of mind where we “tolerate” or “put up with” others’ behaviour by building a fortress around us to protect us from the offender’s onslaught. But this fortress, however strong, may give away under constant pressure.

On the other hand, **Patience** is an active state of mind, which understands and accepts another’s right to opinion. Here, our soldiers of good conduct and right behaviour, not only protect us from outside onslaught, but also campaign on our behalf, urging the offender to forfeit his offensive acts and leads him in the right direction.

If we have “*tolerated*” nonsense and “*put up with*” others’ bad behaviour, then it is nobody’s fault but our own that we are still being treated in the same offensive style. With **patience** we understand that somewhere along the way of growing up, some *wires* of the offender’s character have got mixed up resulting in his giving us periodic *shock*.

If we succeed in patiently overpowering this hijack on our sensibilities; politely yet firmly adhere to our natural right conduct; and gently urge the offender to follow our lead, he will surely be on a peaceful track to self-improvement. By marching our **soldiers of patience** we will certainly win the battle that by merely building fortresses **of tolerance** we might lose.

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2

By Gita Krishna Raj

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Draw a straight line on a piece of paper and ask your friend if he can make it smaller. “*Oh Sure! Just draw a bigger line beside it. There, now it is smaller!*” – This is the way most of us would respond. It is after all human nature to compare and only by comparison we arrive at the conclusion that something is *smaller than* or *greater than* the other. We then bracket the *winners or successes* and the *losers or failures* by setting *standards or normals*. From forty is the pass mark in school, right through grading our skills at interviews, even comparative studies on our performances to gauge our promotions, till our very last breath, we always compare if we are better or worse than others. “*It is after all a competitive world and we can’t live in isolation*” – we protest verbally.

Comparing is *the act of examining if he/she/it is like or unlike the other*. When we compare we are bothered by the fact that we are similar or dissimilar to the object of comparison. Comparison is only possible between parallels – you can’t say “*the wind is chill yet the water is blue*”. When we are talking of the weather we say “*the wind is chill yet the water is warm*”.

Try this for a change. Fold a piece of paper into four and then draw a straight line from one end to another on the facing page. Ask your friend the same question “*Can you make this line smaller?*” With no room on this page to draw bigger lines, he is sure to be puzzled about your answer. Without involving any other lines you can make the existing line appear smaller – just open up the sheet! Yes, indeed, the line is *smaller in relation* to this larger sheet than it was in relation to the page that was folded.

Relating is *the act of referring and determining the relationship between he/she/it with something else*. They don’t have to be on a comparative plane – that is they neither need be similar nor dissimilar or even comparable. When we say, “*the wind is chill and the water is blue*” – we are not talking of the weather but relating in general to the environment of a place.

Comparisons will make us either pleased or disappointed with ourselves – “*He is better than me in cricket*” or “*I am better than him in cricket*”. Whereas if we **relate** to the world of cricket, we would say “*My cricket has no impact on the audience*” or “*My cricket has an impact on the audience*”. Here we are referring to the world (the audience) and determining if we make a difference or not.

Like the straight line that looks larger on a folded sheet and the same line appears smaller on the open canvas, our objects under scrutiny would relate differently under various circumstances. The most significant analytical line would be a graph comparing our past to our present and including our aspirations for the future. This single line when related to our world would guide our progress – other lines don't matter.

If you feel oppressed by close knit comparisons, widen your horizons and open up to the world. If you feel inferior by comparing yourself to others, relate to your closer family and contribute to your world. And if you feel superior by comparing your accomplishments to those you consider inferior to you, just look out at this unique universe were you are but a tiny little particle.

Relate to your world, you will realize that there is always scope to give more. **Never compare** anybody with you for no two of us are **like or unlike** anybody else.

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By Gita Krishna Raj

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“*Charity begins at home*” is a maxim that all of us are familiar with. However an often forgotten truth is “*Giving away what you don’t want is not charity!*” But with human vanity we go about judging others and ourselves by what is given away in charity. As Swami Vivekananda says, “*If you pray ‘O Lord let the world be full of charitable people!’ – you mean let the world be full of beggars also!*” Let us not try to cloak our home clearance as charity!

Give is the act that causes someone else to **receive** from the giver – be it materials, advice or even love. By giving you make the receiver feel obliged to you for what he has received. When we **give** away something it is either because we have no use for it anymore (as in the case of materials), or we are interested in showing off that we are familiar with the topic of discussion (as in the case of advice).

Try **sharing! Share** is the act of doing or having something **together** with others. Here, *a part of the giver is given* along with whatever else is being given. When you give advice, it remains just information, when you share your experiences it helps in understanding. When you give away unwanted clothes it is charity, when you share your own clothes with those less fortunate, you are spreading humanity. When you give your love and expect the other to respond - if they do not return the feeling of love, it becomes a burden to them. When you share His divine love, you are spreading peace that will automatically return to you multifold.

When the mother-in-law **gives** advice on how to treat her son, she makes a competitor of her daughter-in-law. When she **shares** her experiences of bringing him up, she will gain a confidant. When the daughter-in-law **gives** excuses for her behavior, she gives license to her mother-in-law to judge her, when she **shares** her problems with her, she will gain a loyal advocate!

When you issue a cheque for a fantastic sum to some orphanage, they will send you a beautiful letter of gratitude – with a request for further contributions. When you spend a few hours with those children, **they will share their entire happiness with you and make your visit worthwhile!** If you give sympathy, you will make them feel insufficient, when you share their burden you will give them strength.

As J.R.Lowell puts it –

Not what we give, but what we share

For the gift without the giver makes it bare.

Every time you *share* you expand your life, while every time you just *give*, you will limit yourself. Every time you have the urge to give – try sharing. You will find every single person responds by sharing his life with you.

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4

By Gita Krishna Raj

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“Don't worry! He will come around! I can influence him to change his mind!” With pride we go about exerting our charms of persuasion, influencing those around us to behave the way we think they should. With our limited knowledge and limited experience we label certain actions as right and some others as wrong. Deeply committed to our cause of what is right, we barge ahead influencing others to follow our instructions. In that process we fail to realize that once this source of influence is gone, people would revert back to their earlier ways.

Influence is the power to persuade some one to *do* some thing, causing them to change. But influence whether good or evil has a certain amount of pressure attached to it - most often the influencer is not even aware of it! Once the subject is out of the orbit of influence, the subject returns to his normal self.

We ourselves have experienced this, haven't we? While at college the collective influence of college-mates sways our every action. Yet hardly a year out of college we have out-grown those earlier influences, succumbing to newer ones. While good influences are useful and necessary during those moments of strife, they fail to change the thinking of the individual. For our attitude to change we have to be inspired!

To inspire is to give someone the *desire to change and the courage to act on his desire*. “Inspiring” is the art of motivating the thinking intellect of the individual so that the acts he performs are out of his own reasoning. When transformation takes place out of such inspiration, it doesn't surrender to mere influences.

When we manipulate our children to behave in the fashion we want them to, we exert our influence. Once they grow up they are going to out-grow our influence on them and will become susceptible to other forms of influence. When on the other hand, we inspire our children to think for themselves in a positive manner, we will be enabling them to become individuals who can contemplate on their own, not falling for outside influences.

Influence works on the action – we are persuaded to change the way we act. *Inspiration* works on our intellect – we are motivated to change the way we think, action follows. If someone has

remained just a good influence on your life, its time to let go and move on for transformation can be achieved only by inspiration. The same thing applies to us too! If we have spent many long hours trying to exercise our influence on others, it wouldn't really help them in the long run. We have to begin to inspire them by being the right example.

You can influence others to fill their lives but they will remain empty within. Only if you can inspire them with encouragement can you make them flower within. *Influence* is like taking a horse to a pond – he may or may not drink. *Inspiration* is the Alma Mater way – it strives to make the horse thirsty!

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By Gita Krishna Raj

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My cousin at the age of five was made to take music lessons. After about six sessions, she returned home and declared that she would no longer go for these classes. When asked why her prompt reply was *"I already know **Sa re ga ma pa da ni**. They just keep repeating this in class. So I don't want to go!"* It was indeed difficult to explain to a five year old that **SPEAKING** *Sa re ga ma.....* was very much different from **SINGING** *Sa re ga ma.....*

Many persons today, with a thirst for knowledge, go on amassing information through any source available – books, talks, forums, etc. After attending ten workshops, when they find people repeating what they are already familiar with, they begin to consider themselves **knowledgeable** on many a varied topic and never fail to prompt or reveal the fact that they **know** all that the speaker wishes to say. *"Oh! I have heard all this before..... He is taking everything out of the Bhagavat Gita..... Nothing new in today's speech..... This issue of **Frozen Thoughts** is again about love, kindness, relationships.....nothing new..."* People with this attitude hardly realize that though there are but Seven notes "Saptaswaras", a true artiste every time he/she sings, transforms these notes into heavenly music transporting not just the singer himself but the listeners too, to divine bliss. **Knowing** about an experience is not the same as **experiencing** it. Can we explain the concept of colors to a blind man? Does a born deaf understand the potential of his vocal chords? Haven't we as children **experienced** heat before we accepted that too much of it would burn us? Would we be able to explain the concept of light if we had never experienced darkness? Knowing the scientific details of childbirth hardly prepares you for the actuality! **Knowing** is nothing but having the knowledge about certain things. **Experience** is also knowledge about those very same things but includes its **practical effects in daily life!** As Lord Tennyson puts it **"Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers"**.

Many years ago, Swami Vivekananda visited a great sage, a very holy man. They talked of the Vedas, the Bible, the Koran, and of revealed books in general. At the close of their talk, the sage asked Swami Vivekananda to go to the table and pick up a book. It was a book that, among other things, contained a forecast of the rainfall during the year. The sage said, *"Read that"* and Swami Vivekananda read out the quantity of rain that was to fall. The sage then said, *"Now take the book and squeeze it."* As Swami Vivekananda did so the sage said, *"Why, my*

boy, not a drop of water comes out. Until the water comes out, it is all book, book. So until your religion makes you realize God, it is useless. He who only studies books for religion reminds one of the fable of the ass which carried a heavy load of sugar on its back, but did not know the sweetness of it." This is true not only of religion but on all aspects of life. **Knowing** anything that doesn't translate to **wise** action is an unnecessary burden that many of us carry.

It hardly matters if all the topics that are being discussed are the same, if all the relationships under review face the same emotions, if every page we read talks about right living and if we are familiar with each and every line being spoken to us. If we can laugh again, cry again, think again, re-live every emotion, respond in some way every time we come across the message and learn to imbibe these qualities into our very personalities, then and only then do we realize that we have learnt to create music – not just understood the theories of making music.

William Cowper in *The progress of error* writes **Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much; Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.** Come; let us rejoice with wisdom the music of the cosmos leaving behind the egoistic noise of mere information.

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6

By Gita Krishna Raj

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“This bus is too crowded, I think I shall wait for the next one” - Perhaps you shall wait for too long! *“This opening is not the right opportunity for me. I think I shall wait for the next chance!”* – You may have to wait for it all your life!! *“I need to acquire so many things in life – name, fame, status. I shall wait for providence to provide”* – Your waiting for will lead you nowhere!

Waiting for is that state or time when you stay without doing anything. It implies a passive state of mind that is too focused on just one aspect of a thought process. Waiting for is being engrossed in a question or desire, not even aware of the answers or fructification of those desires. If we decide to wait for our heart’s craving to be satisfied, we will be mentally concentrating all our energies on that wish though may physically not act to implement the same. In the process of *waiting for* one particular end result, we are likely to miss a thousand different opportunities to satisfy other yearnings.

This certainly doesn’t mean give up your desire! On the contrary, *seek* to fulfill your desire! *To seek* is to try to find by asking, looking or searching. Here, the mind is active looking for all possible answers. When we seek to succeed, we are ready to utilize all avenues of growth. In the process of *seeking*, we gain not only what we started looking for, but also many a thing we might have missed had we *waited for* a particular result.

A scientist is *seeking* to find not only answers to questions he has raised but also questions to further deepen his research. A true spiritual aspirant is also *seeking* to find not just a religious ideal of God, but with an open mind the absolute truth perceivable by him. *Waiting for* scientific discoveries or enlightenment will get them nowhere. Similarly a quest to lead a better way of life cannot get postponed *waiting for* the right time. *Seeking* a better life will automatically ensure your progress towards achieving it. Indeed Jesus Christ said, *“Seek and you shall find”* not *“Wait for and you shall receive”*.

Nothing illustrates this better than the story of the priest who was *waiting for* God to save him from death during floods in his village. Standing atop the tallest building, the priest prays with all his might to God to save him from getting drowned in the floods that was sweeping his whole village. The priest refuses to leave with the other villagers to safety, nor does he

accompany the boatmen who come looking for survivors. He even refuses to alight the helicopter, which hovers above his head even as the water rises to his neck. The priest on dying comes face to face with God and questions his Lord *“Why did you let me die?”* God replies, *“I sent you those villagers, those boats and finally even a helicopter to reach safety. Why didn’t you use any of them?”* The man replies *“I was waiting for you!”* God replies *“What a fool you have been waiting for me. You should have spent that time seeking life.”*

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By Gita Krishna Raj

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When my daughter was a toddler, she had two powerful weapons that she used indiscriminately to win every battle. The first was tears and when that failed she used her second – a beautiful smile with a ‘sorry’. The very tone of saying ‘*I’m sorry mummy*’ would melt away all the differences. Yet today, now that she is a mature six-year old, she has removed the word ‘sorry’ from her vocabulary. When I prompt her ‘*say sorry*’ she promptly replies ‘*but it is not my fault*’. While earlier her ‘sorry’ was merely an escape route, today she refuses to accept responsibility for her actions even where she needs to.

When I look around myself, I find many an adult equally reluctant to use the word ‘sorry’. Perhaps it is time to recollect the meaning of ‘sorry’. While *apology* is defined as *an expression of regret for a wrongdoing*, *sorry* is just *an expression of regret*. Don’t we say in condolence “*I’m sorry for your loss*”? Does it by any chance mean that we have murdered their kin? Don’t we automatically say, “*I’m sorry to hear you are in trouble*”? By using the word *sorry* are we taking the responsibility of causing their trouble? While an *apology* is repenting the wrong act performed by one self, the term *sorry* merely means, “*I regret*”. Admitting our guilt and compunction at the way we behave has many a time been overpowered by our ego. It takes a responsible adult to acknowledge his faults and apologize. Whether we are ready or not to take on the responsibility of our words and actions, shouldn’t we at least regret the disturbance we cause others?

Even if our act was right and the other wrong, there is no harm in saying, “*I’m sorry you are hurt*”, “*I’m sorry things are going wrong*” or “*I’m sorry you misunderstood me*”. In fact only by expressing that you are dissatisfied with the current situation, expressing “*I’m sorry*”, will you be able to make the other understand that the differences are merely a dissimilarity of opinion or point of view but not one of basic value. If you act as if you just don’t care or if you make it a clash between the egos, there is going to be no solution.

When you express regret that the other is hurt or is unable to understand, you create the right environment for them to think for themselves and genuinely express an apology. Nowadays, I first tell my daughter “*I’m sorry that you are crying. That certainly doesn’t please mummy. But what you said/did hurt me too*”. Now she immediately comes forward to say “*I’m sorry mummy. I won’t do it again*”. Oh! If only we adults learnt as quickly!!

Words by choice!

8

By Gita Krishna Raj

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“*It gives me great pleasure to...*” – the first half of that sentence says it all. Pleasure is always triggered by factors outside of you and in the same breath can be taken away from you by external elements. I’m sure we have never sold as many ‘*I love India*’ T-shirts during Republic Day or Independence Day as during the world cup. It is nice to know that something can inspire such patriotism in us, even if it is only a game of cricket. But those of you who were quick to change out of that attire and switch channels when you decided India could in no way win, was watching the match a *pleasure*???

Pleasure is the feeling of *satisfaction and enjoyment* arising out of a mental call for a repetition of an excited state of mind experienced sometime in the past. The first experience evoking a positive response in any facet of life is *Joy*. Joy is a virgin experience of happiness. When the mind stores this excitation of the mind as ‘pleasure’ it begins to long for a repetition of the same experience. As this second experience has a predecessor it now falls within the realm of the relative. The second performance is compared with the first and judged as equally pleasurable, less pleasurable or more pleasurable than the first. Now, every time it falls short of the previous experience, it stimulates displeasure for it longs for satisfaction based on the past.

All sporting activities are fundamentally joyous. But the minute we introduce a competition or any form of relative thinking, it changes into pleasure and displeasure. Climbing a mountain is a joy. But if you make it a competition based on speed, even if the comparison is with your own earlier performance, it becomes a victim of pleasure. Dancing is sheer joy; yet critics who believe it their birthright to comment on every facet of the dancer corrupt dancing to the realm of mere pleasure.

Pleasure is exciting; Joy is calm. Pleasure arises out of repetition; Joy is always born anew. Pleasure is satisfaction from external activities; Joy is an internal state of mind. Pleasure has an opposite – displeasure; Joy is an unchanging state of happiness. Pleasure is controlled by the world outside; Joy is controlled only by your will power. Pleasure dies when faced by displeasure; true joy is immortal and unchanging. Every time you are able to express something as a moment of pleasure, just remember you are entrapping it within the world of

the relative. If sheer joy flows through you, mere words can never express the depth of that feeling!

World cup 2003 was sheer Joy to me! I've never been a cricket buff; I neither bought an *India* T-shirt, nor did I huff and puff and throw it aside when Sachin lost his wicket at four runs. If you had been watching for *pleasure* you must have been disappointed. But those of you who watched with *joy* will surely appreciate with me the sheer determination of the Indian team to bat in front of a world that had already pre-judged them as incapable of winning the match. Hats off to the Indian cricket team for the joy they gave me!!

Words by choice!

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By Gita Krishna Raj

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With pomp and splendor we go about *forgiving* every body worthy of our sanction. It gives many of us a great kick to be able to magnanimously say ‘*I forgive you your sins*’. Perhaps such nobility for a change gives us a feeling of power akin to that of the divine. Indeed forgiveness is said to be the greatest of all virtues. But never has our Lord *reminded* us of His generosity!

To forgive means to stop feeling angry or resentful towards someone for an offence or mistake committed by them. Many of us liberally come forward to forgive other’s errors. It takes a little longer to forgive our own selves. But a forgiving heart is indiscriminate in offering forgiveness. Beware! It is also the easiest way to feed the ego.

Most people who forgive have forgotten to practice its twin virtue – *graciousness*. To be gracious means to forgive and forget. It means we are not to remind others or even ourselves of our virtue *forgiveness*. When you forgive somebody from an egoistic point of view, it becomes hard to forget, for the very purpose of *granting forgiveness* is to boost your opinion of yourself. If on the other hand forgiveness is born out of *genuine graciousness*, the act of forgiving is also *forgotten*. Indeed such forgiveness is born from inner understanding that *if we don’t have the strength to forgive, we don’t have the right to crucify either!*

A gracious person doesn’t need to fight over petty issues for empty victories that don’t really go beyond the surface of the matter. A gracious person never tells ‘*I told you so*’. To be gracious comes from the very depth of a person and can never be rattled by ego trips to defend or contradict opinions. If someone comes right up to you and boasts about his qualities and values, be sure he lacks the primary virtue of being gracious. And next time you have the urge to talk about your own worth, think twice if it would still make you feel *gracious*.

The mystic poet philosopher of last century Kahlil Gibran writes “*Listen to my protest, and do not be merciful, but be just, for mercy is bestowed upon the guilty criminal while justice is all that an innocent man requires.*” Granting *mercy* will make you *forgiving*; but *gracious* you will be when you recognize that even the act of granting mercy is truly a *divine justice* bestowed through you!

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10

By Gita Krishna Raj

“Hey I saw you the other day on TV!” screamed a voice from behind. I turned to see the owner of the voice – an old acquaintance whom I hadn’t met for long. After an exchange of “Hellos”, she one again exclaimed *“Hey I saw you on TV!”* After a pause, I smiled, nodded my head, and continued with other topics of conversation. Back home my niece called out to me *“I had the pulav you made for lunch.”* Again I paused, smiled, nodded and continued the conversation in other directions. The telephone rang and to my surprise it was a dear friend from my college days. Excited, we chatted on for sometime till my friend announced *“Hey! My mom had been to your dance show the other day!”* Once again I waited, in vain, a smile and nod, both not visible to my friend on the other side of town. So I followed it with a “Hmm...!”

Replacing the receiver after half-an-hour, I mentally rehashed the entire conversation. Standing before the mirror, I enacted the smile, nod and *“Hmm...!”*. Totally dissatisfied with the haughty feel it stirred, I racked my brains for an alternate way of responding to these people. ‘Do I have to thank people for merely *acknowledging* my presence and actions?’ I wondered. Isn’t that what all of them did? – Merely acknowledge that they had *“seen me on TV”, “tasted my pulav”, and “attended my dance show”*. Isn’t *Thank you* the usual response for *appreciation*? So what would be the right response to *acknowledgement*? – An acknowledgement from my side in the form of a smile, nod and *“Hmm...!”*

Very often we fail to express our appreciation, stopping with just an acknowledgement. If only we could cultivate the habit to appreciate everything – big and small effortlessly, we will surely find a lot more joy in the world! For myself I decided, I will not wait till they learn to appreciate. Let me thank them even for the acknowledgement – perhaps that is the best they can right now!!

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11

By Gita Krishna Raj

I had been explaining for a little over an hour the need to be truthful to my little friends. They all listened patiently though I knew they were waiting to burst with questions. The first little hand rose. *“Akka, If I tell my friends my real marks they will no longer be my friends! How can I be truthful when they will judge me by my marks? I cannot keep explaining to everyone the reason for getting poor marks. I understand that telling lies are wrong but how can I tell them the truth?”* I was surprised at the vehemence of this ten year old. This was their world – the world of marks! There were equally worried faces all around me. None of them seemed all too keen to share their real academic results. *“Well!”* I said, *“While you should never utter lies, you don’t have to always bare your soul to everybody. If you are not keen to share your marks, say ‘I am not too happy with my performance this time. I’ll tell you when I am satisfied.’ That would be the truth, wouldn’t it?”* There were a few moments of intense concentration on their little faces. Another hand rose *“Akka! If somebody is really ill and the doctors declare that they wouldn’t live very long, should we tell them the truth or not?”* Somehow one child’s question is always echoed in all the little faces. They were looking at me with great expectation. I said, *“There is a difference between TRUTH and FACT. The diagnosis of someone’s impending death by the medical fraternity is a fact and all near and dear ones need to act with that in their mind. However, it is not the truth and as such the patient never need know. Don’t go out of the way to say ‘you are going to live another hundred years.’ But ensure that a mere fact doesn’t color their last few days!”* Most of them looked absolutely confused. I realized death was not the example to be used to elaborate this difference to little kids. I said, *“A FACT is from the past; TRUTH is the present. The whole of History is a fact. Human beings have evolved from cave men to sophisticated gentlemen and ladies. But this entire civilization is a mere fact to all of us. What your father and grandfather have accomplished is also just a fact. What you are achieving today and what you plan to achieve in your future is your TRUTH. Don’t get carried away by facts of your family being well off, very reputed, famous ancestors, etc. Directly start working on the Truth of your life – what you plan to become. If you have got poor marks in your previous exams and you have decided that in future you will work harder, then those earlier marks are just a fact. Your efforts to get better marks will be your Truth.”*

Some of their faces had cleared but a few question marks remained on the others. A confused little boy said, *“Can you give us some other example Akka?”* I wondered what other example

would clarify the question. I resumed “*Now consider Abdul and Bharat to be friends. Abdul cheats Bharat of his money. Chandru is a common friend to Abdul and Bharat, whereas David has never even heard of them. Bharat tells Chandru about Abdul’s loss of character. Here it is the Truth for Chandru needs to protect himself in future dealings with Abdul. But if Chandru tells the story to David, who has never met Bharat or Abdul, then it remains just a tale – a Fact not really relevant to David. That is equal to gossip. Truth is only when it is relevant and necessary to the context. It would not be a lie on the part of Chandru not to mention Abdul to David, because that piece of information is irrelevant to David. Abdul cheating Bharat is a Fact; it is an elaboration of Truth to Chandru’s ears; but mere information to David. Just imagine if later it were found that Abdul had not deliberately cheated but had a valid explanation for the delay in return of money, Chandru being a friend of both Bharat and Abdul will come to know of this reversal of opinion. However David may remain in the dark and unnecessarily hold that information against an unknown Abdul whom he might meet many years later. Therefore while you should never tell lies, always speak the TRUTH but don’t keep elaborating on unnecessary FACTS.*” The little faces cleared, now this was more understandable to them. Well TRUTH is one, but we adults seem to be more concerned with innumerable FACTS! Let us learn to again be child-like in our acceptance of *Facts* and regain our faith in *Truth!*

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12

By Gita Krishna Raj

Wise people say, “*It is a vulgar mind that needs to **command** when you can get things done for the **asking**”*. Yet most of us are willing to label our minds as *vulgar* as long as we can have the power to command over others. Little words of common courtesies, which we try to imbibe in our children, are least common in our daily lives and elude us in actual practice. I never fail to prompt to my little daughter “*Say the magic word*” every time she misses her “*Please*” or “*Thank You*”. Yet more often than not we forget to use these little magic words to our colleagues and co-workers. Only when the boss forgets his quota of “*Thank You*” due to us, do we realize the importance of these two little words. While the intonation of command while addressing our juniors comes very naturally, sub-ordination to our superiors is something we never relish.

The very idea that the boss *requires* our presence at his residence for a luncheon makes the entire three hours a long boring ordeal. “*Saturday is a half working day – So you join the luncheon party at my house by 2 pm*” – the boss’ command evokes our uninvolved grumbling presence. Whereas “*Saturday is a half working day – Why don’t you join the luncheon party at my house by 2 pm?*” – the boss seeking our co-operation, makes it an invitation we are unlikely to refuse. The former would make us “*an uninvolved guest*” while the latter will make us “*a committed employee*”. And no doubt we hand over these commands when our turn comes. “*Get my briefcase/bag from the car*” we direct with pomp to our drivers/maids instead of just asking “*Will you bring my briefcase/bag from the car?*” – a matter so routine they would anyway do it on their own without any prompting.

And still fewer among us are so liberal as to include the words *Please* or *Thank you* even while talking to our near and dear ones. Our most common excuse for not using these little magic words is that they are too formal. Well, there goes a saying that *familiarity breeds contempt!* Ain’t it better that we remain *respectfully formal* than *condescendingly familiar!* Just imagine how much

more pleasant our interactions will be if we can restrain our vulgar minds from *commanding* when things can be done for the *asking!*