

# Attitude Shift

Sanskrit Maxims  
for Contemporary Life  
and Leadership



SHASHIKANT JOSHI

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*Ancient Wisdom Modern Times Series*

# Attitude Shift

Sanskrit Maxims for  
Contemporary Life and Leadership

SHASHIKANT JOSHI

*PracticalSanskrit.com*



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**Attitude Shift – Sanskrit Maxims for Contemporary Life and Leadership**

by Shashikant Joshi

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*to the many seers of ancient India  
their wisdom is fresh like ... a mint.*

*to the modern readers and leaders  
who can take from them ... a hint.*

*to the fans of 'Practical Sanskrit'  
who love Sanskrit and its wisdom.*

*to my family and so many friends  
whose love 'n' support I can't fathom.*

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# Praises for Attitude Shift

(Views expressed here are in personal capacity only.)

“ **Attitude Shift** is an amazingly smooth compilation of basic learnings from the rich heritage and culture of India. Read it, not just to recap the wisdom of your parents and grandparents but also to share it with your children, friends, colleagues and peers. Keep it handy, you will enjoy skimming through it during those kinds of days when all else seems incomplete.

*Prakash Bagri*

*Unilever and Intel veteran, Business & Marketing professional*

“ **Attitude Shift** lucidly encapsulates, through simple English, the traditional knowledge and wisdom enshrined in Sanskrit phrases. There is a lot that the modern leader and manager can learn from and enrich his or her professional as well as personal life from each page of this book. A delightful read.

*Surojit Bose*

*Associate Director, Sustainability FAS, PricewaterhouseCoopers*

“ Reading Shashikant Joshi’s **Attitude Shift** is an humbling experience. Shashi through meticulous research and careful interpretation of ancient wisdom shows us that what we espouse today as new theory on leadership has been in existence for over two thousand years. Shashi brings out an important distinction – change, as we know it, is only of the material world. Wisdom and values are age old and constant.

*Jayesh Chakravarthi*

*SVP & Country Head – IT, Fidelity India*

“ Shashi’s lucid interpretations and explanations of ancient maxims from Sanskrit *nyāya* should be invaluable to those interested in managing their work life and even life itself. In **Attitude Shift**, Shashi has done an excellent and essential job of bringing the wisdom of our seers to the common people in a practical, pragmatic and inspirational manner.

*Sandipan Deb, Senior Journalist*

*Former Editor, ‘Open’ magazine and ‘The Financial Express’*

*Former Managing Editor, ‘Outlook’ Magazine*

“ There is a social price that every country pays for economic progress – the worst of which is to disregard, ignore and indeed forget, its own rich cultural wisdom. It has happened in India. **Attitude Shift** is at the forefront of the fight against this unfortunate phenomenon. Shashikant has the courage of conviction, the depth of knowledge, and above all, the perseverance and the passion to -

*Well – let me dive into the depths of time,  
And bring from out the ages that have rolled.  
A few small fragments of those wrecks sublime,  
Which human eyes may never more behold.*

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio

Shashikant brings out the wisdom from ancient Indian works that is relevant to modern management in a simple and entertaining way. I would recommend it strongly to anyone seeking clarity in thought and action as a corporate yogi.

*Aditya Nath Jha  
CEO, Krayon Pictures  
Former Head, Global Brand & Communication, Infosys Technologies*

“ Pithy advice conceptualized thousands of years ago is as relevant today as it was then. In **Attitude Shift**, Shashi has related them to our modern personal and professional life. Easy to read and practical in its applicability this book bridges the past to our present.

*Anjan Lahiri  
President and CEO, IT Services, MindTree Ltd.*

“ I fell in love with the lucidity and simplicity of *nyāya*-s in **Attitude Shift** and the way Shashi has explained them. A *must read* for today's leaders, managers, youngsters and thinkers. I congratulate the author for the great service of re-connecting people with Sanskrit and its treasures.

*Santosh K Misra, IAS  
Director, Employment & Training, Tamil Nadu  
Managing Director, Overseas Manpower Corporation Ltd, Tamil Nadu  
Former District Collector, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu*

“ In **Attitude Shift**, Shashi bridges the gap between the timeless wisdom of India and the leaders of today through selected Sanskrit maxims in a succinct manner.

*Dipchand Nishar  
Senior Vice President, Products and User Experience, LinkedIn*

“ Several of these pages reinforce my own view of life. **Attitude Shift** will be of great help to many who are looking for guidance and inspiration in conducting their day-to-day life. There is a good mix of modern and ancient.

Rajendra Sharma

Former GM R&D, Mahindra Automotive Division  
Henry Ford Chair Professor, Mechanical Eng. Dept. IIT Chennai

“ There is a wonderful story and lesson in a small Sanskrit verse. It is almost as if you close your eyes to contemplate and find deeper meaning to your life from these golden sayings saturated with wisdom. **Attitude Shift**, with its concise and pregnant-with-meaning ancient Sanskrit verses, quickly unfolds most of the key aspects of Management and Leadership.

KP Singh

Manager of Data Services, Insight Communications

“ **Attitude Shift** is an intriguing compilation of ancient Sanskrit wisdom with direct applicability to today's business. Shashi has done a commendable job in simplifying these maxims into everyday language using relevant examples. The *page-a-maxim* style makes the book most readable that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Pavan Vaish

CEO, IBM Daksh

“ **Attitude Shift** brings eternal wisdom of ancient times, which is so germane to modern corporate leadership principles. It triggers and stimulates the thought process guiding seamlessly to ‘introspection’ mode alleviating to understand your true ‘SELF’ and improvise. A *must* read for Corporate Leaders.

Rahul Vashistha

VP, Head of Corporate Procurement, PT Nestle Indonesia

“ **Attitude Shift** is a great interpretation of select Sanskrit sayings that helps unlock the wisdom that is so relevant to contemporary society. Its lucid style of writing makes easy reading for all. The author does not take the stand of a management guru but instead leaves it to the readers to make best use of the interpretation in their daily lives in an appropriate manner. A *one-of-a-kind* book.

Prasad Vemuri

Resident Director and VP, ICRA Sapphire Inc, Trumbull, CT, USA

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# Foreword

Education through English medium tends to cut people off from the beauty and wisdom contained in Indian languages. It is to the credit of Shashikant Joshi that using the same medium of English he has conveyed the distilled wisdom of ancient Indian maxims, selected from the vast sea of Sanskrit literature. Moreover, he does so in a language to which the modern SMS-texting generation can relate.

We live in an age of information overload, in which we often lose sight of the distinction between information, knowledge and wisdom. The objective of **Attitude Shift** is not only to communicate ancient wisdom in today's idiom but also to make it applicable in day-to-day life. One must remember, though, that wisdom is an end in itself and not just a means to better management practices. The very first *nyāya*, *Ahibhuk and the Boatman*, is about spiritual realization and not merely about mundane concerns. In Indian tradition, there is no dichotomy between material life and spiritual life. The maxims chosen in **Attitude Shift** point towards that continuum; they are applicable to worldly as well as spiritual pursuits. They are meant for contemplation. Their real purpose is to make us better human beings first, and subsequently better managers.

Shashikant has used a light conversational style to drive home the message, in his words "The take home message," but I find the language notes at the bottom very interesting. Interpretation of the maxims is subjective; the language notes take the reader to the original source. One can draw one's own conclusions. Therein lies the usefulness of this book, which for Shashikant has been a labor of love. It should interest both young and old readers; the older ones will get the perspective of the youth and the younger ones the insights of the old.

One looks forward to the next volumes in the series because there are copious *nyāya*-s in Sanskrit. Shashikant's labor of love would continue to enlighten the readers in future also.

Chiranjiv Singh

Former Additional Chief Secretary to Government of Karnataka  
Former Ambassador of India to UNESCO

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## Preface

On February 1, 2011, Bill Taylor wrote in *Harvard Business Review*, an article titled ‘Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill.’ In it, he mentions about a physician practice in Atlantic City, New Jersey –

*The “Special Care Center” does all kinds of things differently from other medical practices, including hiring full-time “health coaches” who work with the doctors but spend almost all of their time with the practice’s low-income patients, helping them manage chronic illnesses and improve their lifestyles.*

*How does the practice’s leader, Dr. Rushika Fernandopulle, find the right people for these unusual (but critical) jobs? “We recruit for attitude and train for skill.”*

*Over the years, as I’ve studied high-impact organizations that are changing the game in their fields, they’ve adopted a range of strategies and business models. But they all agree on one core “people” proposition: They hire for attitude and train for skill. They believe that one of the biggest challenges they face is to fill their ranks with executives and front-line employees whose personal values are in sync with the values that make the organization tick. As a result, they believe that character counts for more than credentials”*

An 11th century Sanskrit work, called *Hitopadésha*, echoes the same sentiment of ‘hiring for attitude and not for skills’. It is a rework of the famous *Pañchatantra* from the 3rd century and is an easier entry level textbook for Sanskrit students. In it comes a story of an old tiger that was unable to hunt as well as he could in his youth. He sat by a riverbank, holding a golden bangle, yelling, “Someone, please take this golden bangle, for free!” A passer-by, on the other side of the river, heard him and asked about it. The tiger said that a saint told him to do something about all the sins he has accumulated by killing people and animals all his life. So, he is now a vegetarian and giving away all his belongings. He urged the passer-by to take a dip in the water, chant a few *mantra-s* and receive the charity with honor. The greedy man entered the waters only to discover it was muddy and sticky, and while he tried to get out,

the tiger started to approach him. Then the passer-by pondered these words of wisdom as his death neared him – “Examine everyone’s nature (attitude), and not other [acquired] skills; [because] transcending all skills, the innate nature remains paramount.” (सर्वस्य हि परीक्ष्यन्ते स्वभावा नेतरे गुणाः । अतीत्य हि गुणान्सर्वान् स्वभावो मूर्धनि वर्तते ॥ sarvasya hi parīkṣhyanté svabhāvā nétaré guṇāḥ, atītya hi guṇān\_sarvān svabhāvo mūrdhani vartaté.)

A lot depends upon attitude. The rest is sheer luck. The glass is half-full. The night is nothing but a precursor to the morning. David kills Goliath. The mind is much more powerful than matter, and attitude is all about the mind-set. *A controlled mind is our best friend and an uncontrolled one our worst enemy.* (*Bhagavat Gītā* 6:5)

I took the cover photo on Beach No 7, *Barefoot at Havelock* Eco-Resort on Havelock Island in Andaman and Nicobar Islands in September 2010. It was my way of revisiting my high school, Kéndrīya Vidyālaya No 1, after 25 years, on the pretext of an anniversary gift to my wife. The Resort, no doubt, is out of this world. The photo captures the **basic traits of a leader**. No one is born as a leader. Only money can be inherited, and in some countries, even the position. We call it as dictatorship, *not* leadership. Title is not a cause, but the result of leadership. Titles do not make leaders; leaders make titles. So, **step out of your titles**, your big shoes; or the big sandals, as the case maybe. **Have a vision** as grand as the ocean, nothing less will suffice. For when you aim for the ocean, you may be lucky enough to get a lake. Do not be afraid of your vision. Go embrace it with passion and **have courage** to take on the ocean, even if on your own! Everything else – determination, execution, persistence etc. – is required for success even if you are not a leader. However, these are essential to be a leader – **courage to dream, courage to think beyond oneself and courage to start alone!**

Leadership, at a personal or professional level, with or without authority, plays a role in everyone’s life. We are all a role model to someone, and we need to influence and inspire people. People are writing volumes, doing cutting-edge research and conducting expensive seminars on

leadership. At the end of it all though, or at its very start, it is a thought game. Thoughts and desires have been analyzed extensively and almost exhaustively in India over many millennia.

The deep ocean of Sanskrit literature covers a vast range of topics. Practical, social and spiritual pearls of wisdom abound in its depths. There seems to be a misconception prevalent that Sanskrit works deal only with hard-core spiritual and religious matters. That cannot be further from the truth. Empires cannot be built only on spirituality. For millennia, Sanskrit literature covered many fields of knowledge. Up until the 1850s, India was the richest society in the world. The only producer of diamonds, India produced the best steel (Wootz steel) and steel weapons (supplying even to the dreaded Roman army) as well as the best muslin. The theoretical sciences and arts were very advanced including mathematics, astronomy, linguistics, theater, music as well as the practical sciences of surgery, medicine, agriculture and metallurgy. India was so rich that even the *Americas* were discovered accidentally because Europe was *really* trying to find new sea-routes to *India*. Something worthwhile must have been in this land.

Sanskrit has been an important carrier of the wisdom of this historically sought-after land. Many critical works were translated in Persian, Arabic and European languages much before you would guess! Plato gives the chariot allegory to explain the human soul, and in a much earlier work of *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* Yama, the god of death, explains the nature of soul to *Nachikétā* with a much more elaborate and spiritual chariot allegory.

The all-pervading emphasis on spiritual aspects colors even practical wisdom with a holistic brush, which seems to be the *new* trend as well. For long, the leadership and management theories developed in the West have been profit-focused to the extent of neglecting the humans creating the profit. All the way from the coal-mining days of early Industrial Revolution to as recent as a few decades ago, the *other* human has been seen as yet another resource to further *my* profit. Only in the recent past, has the focus changed, because of the realization that a human-centric

policy will give better and long-term profits. Business, at the end, has to be about profit.

Apart from the spiritual enlightenment, my focus in studying Sanskrit literature has been on the usability of the wisdom, the circumstances in which certain truths were revealed and the need to reinterpret them for changing times. Time and again, every society and religion has reinterpreted truth. Without this exercise, truth gets buried in the sands of time, and wheels are reinvented and religions formed. “*When in doubt of what is the truth (even after the great seers have already elucidated it enough) in a given time and space, then those wise men who are able to guide, who are productively engaged in action, who speak sweet and truth and only desire good for all; what they say is the truth and what they do is the dharma.*” (*Taitirīya Upaniṣad, Shikṣhā-vallī 1, Anuvāka 11*) This implies that truth should be reinterpreted with time and circumstances, and only those who do it with no hidden selfish agenda should interpret it. Even in science, Einstein revisited newton’s truths!

While working on the many wise maxims, or Sanskrit *nyāya*, which form the matter of this book, I was awestruck by the subtlety of logic, aptness of keen observation and the power of a good example. The word *nyāyah* does not mean only ‘justice’. It is a pithy statement capturing a situation; often a distillation of social wisdom and carries in its few words an entire story or situation. While reading, I could simultaneously see the connection to contemporary corporate world and people skills. In this venture, I have enjoyed digging through various dictionaries, thesauri, old books and cross checking references. So, first and foremost, it is indeed a labor of extreme love. It is *not* a scholarly work on Sanskrit language; those works usually gather dust these days. However, I have taken good care to provide all information as accurately as possible without getting too technical. The knowledge of Sanskrit is not even required to benefit from this book.

We have to make connections across ‘categories’ to see new visions. This book itself is a proof of this. There are many Sanskrit scholars with immense knowledge and sharp brains! Anyone who can memorize,

understand and use *Pāṇini*'s approximately 4000 grammar rules fully, is already a fine specimen of human brain. *Pāṇini*'s comprehensive and scientific theory of grammar in his seminal work *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is one of the earliest known grammars of Sanskrit, the earliest known work on descriptive and generative linguistics, and it stands at the beginning of the world history of linguistics itself – no extrapolation, no hyperbole.

However, there is an apparent disconnect between the modern Sanskrit scholar and the demands of the contemporary people of action, decision and influence, as if Sanskrit is fossilized with no practical and present relevance. They write in Sanskrit, at most some translations in vernacular. They do not address the present needs of the young and the restless on whose shoulders, rests the future of any society; whose ‘wisdom springs’ trickle mainly through the medium of the English language.

Modern leaders are mostly unaware of what great guiding principles, observations and ideas have been discovered for all of humanity. It is interesting to note that major universities in the USA and in Europe have departments studying Sanskrit works! But even in India, people are only quoting and being guided by foreign thinkers. The only occasional reference one sees is of the *Bhagavat Gītā* in management. The moss hiding the treasure chest of wisdom in the ocean of Sanskrit literature is so thick, and the lid so heavy, that no one dares to open it.

There is so much more. This work is a humble attempt in a mission. It primarily serves three purposes. *Firstly*, it is a compilation of Sanskrit maxims, *nyāya*. I have only selected the ones that are useful even today. Apart from the original words and language help for the Sanskrit enthusiasts, the focus is on the explanation in simple English. Because of the sheer number of such maxims, I have chosen to present the work in two parts. '**More Attitude Shift**' will be coming out soon as well. *Secondly*, it gives thought points for people who have or want to lead, who want to go beyond taking instructions, beyond just filling the belly for tonight. It does so with age-old content and interesting observations of human behavior. It gives something to think deep, not just your own

selfish good, but for the greater good of all the people who either depend on you or consent to follow you. *Thirdly*, it bridges the gap between the old and the new. Mere literal translations are not enough. It is not enough to know the dictionary meaning of a word. One has to process it with a pure heart and a clear mind to be able to bring back the true spirit of the message, untainted by selfish or modern skewed perspectives.

The book has a conversational style, short ideas, small bites, crunchy taste with a dash of Indian spices – not just hot chili by the bucket, but a blend of various spices to give the right flavor and nourishment – making it a perfect companion to your morning coffee or *chai*. There is no high cholesterol of quantitative charts, diagrams and dry statistics. There are stories, anecdotes and enough trivia to keep you interested and distracted from realizing that you are getting a wisdom pill. This is the *guḍa-jihvikā nyāyah* or the ‘treacle on the tongue’. *What touches our heart, lingers longer than what hits our head.*

I have also kept some short and not so critical *nyāya*-s towards the end of the book, for the sake of compilation and humor. They act like roughage with the healthy diet!

The general layout of each *nyāya* is as follows:

PERCHED EAGLE DOESN'T MOVE	4. English translation of original saying
agachchan vainatéyo'pi अगच्छन् वैनतेयोऽपि	2. IAST (International Alphabet for Sanskrit Transliteration) of original short phrase
Garuda, son of Vanitā, is the king of the birds, akin to an eagle. It has golden wings and is called Suparna. It is the fastest of birds and hence Lord Viṣṇu requested him to be his transport.	3. Original short phrase in Devanagari script
Unless you take the first step, the journey doesn't begin. No amount of wishing, planning will take you any close to success unless you take the first step. Remember the story of the hare and the tortoise?	5. Elaboration.
<b>Take initiative, make the first move.</b>	6. The take home message.
<i>Language notes: अगच्छन् वैनतेयोऽपि पदमेकं न गच्छति ॥</i> = agachchhan vainatéyo'pi padamékam na gachchhati.   agachchhan = while not going. vainatéyo'pi = vainatéyah (eagle) + api (also).	1. Full original nyāya. Language notes for the Sanskrit enthusiasts.

This book has been possible due to the direct and indirect help of many people, but I must name a few. When I was in ninth grade, my **late grandfather** gave me a copy of *Hitopadésha* that was printed in 1917. It was the first Sanskrit book I saw, that was not a school textbook. It changed the way I look at Sanskrit, for that matter any subject. My father, **Ramésh Joshi**, taught Hindi in Kéndriya Vidyālaya schools and wrote poems of satire and compassion during some very tough personal times. He showed me the magic of creation with words, love for language and the power of heart-felt thoughts transcending the mundane. Even as a third grader, I was the first ears for his poetry. My wife **Shalini** has continually tolerated and supported my whims (may be because I never gave her much choice). My lovely kids **Pragyā, Praṇav** and **Prāñjal**, my sources for energy and purpose every day, allowed me to spend less time with them in the recent past. **Prakāsh Bāgri**, a Unilever and Intel veteran in Bengaluru, told me to start writing all the Sanskrit *funda* I was talking all the time. I think he just wanted me to shut up, but now, here we are! The **fans of Practical Sanskrit** blog ([PracticalSanskrit.com](http://PracticalSanskrit.com)) and Facebook page ([Facebook.com/PracticalSanskrit](https://Facebook.com/PracticalSanskrit)) made me realize that Sanskrit and its wisdom still have takers from all walks of life. Indeed, their sustained interest gave me the encouragement to write this book.

**Readers like you**, thank you, for deciding to walk along the wisdom trail of India. Enjoy the stream of undiluted wisdom flowing directly from the source. Lastly, to the **Divine Grace** that has made me able enough to contribute whatever little I can, to the passion and understanding of Sanskrit wisdom.

Even though I have tried my best, some errors must have remained undetected. A humble request to the intelligent reader – have a big heart to forgive, but do let me know via email.

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February 2011  
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# Attitude Shift

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## AHIBHUK AND THE BOATMAN

*ahibhuk kaivarta nyāyah*

अहिभुकैवर्त न्यायः

*Ahibhuk* was a regular user of *afeem* (opium), his very name suggests ‘opium-eater’. Even the word *afeem* comes from Sanskrit word *ahi-phéna*.<sup>1</sup> One day he boarded a ferry boat that was pretty crowded. Delusional, he wondered what if he got lost in this crowd and could not identify himself? So he tied a rope around his ankle and dozed off confidently. Unknown to him, the boatman heard his somewhat loud concerns. Playing a joke on him, the boatman removed the rope and put it on his own ankle. Upon waking, *Ahibhuk* screamed, “Oh no, I have indeed lost myself and changed into a boatman!”

A century ago, a western translator mocked it thus, “And this nonsense is meant to teach the identity of the individual with the One Self!” Let us see how this ‘nonsense’ has far-reaching depth for life and leadership.

We are *Ahibhuk*, delusional that this body is the real us. The river he is crossing is the *bhavasāgara*, this world, the ocean of happening, of births. The crowd on the boat is humanity – the people in the world. We all share the journey going across the ocean of births and deaths. But, we want to identify ourselves separate from others and even the Divine Principle – the boatman. At the end when we wake up, we are indeed one with the Divine Principle. That rope is our false identity, name, title, power, ego with which we bind ourselves. By the Divine Grace, those who are freed from the rope of ego, from whose eyes the veil of illusion (*māyā-jāla*) is removed, they see their true identity with the Divine Boatman.

As a leader, have a perspective, vision, and deeper understanding. Know that you are not made by labels. You make labels. Go beyond labels. Lead without authority. You started that way in the first place.

### ❖ Go beyond labels and titles.

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*Language notes:* अहिभुकैवर्त न्यायः = *ahibhuk-kaivarta nyāyah*. |

<sup>1</sup> *ahi* = snake, poison, poisonous. *ahi-phéna* = *afeem*, opium. *bhuk* = one who has eaten. *ahibhuk* = opium-eater. *kaivarta* = boatman.

## POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITY

*tat-sthānāpanné tad\_dharma-lābhah*  
तत्स्थानापन्ने तद्धर्मलाभः

“When you take that position, its responsibilities also come with it.”

You cannot just have the rights and power of the position, you need to take the duties as well. Everyone wants to be a doctor, engineer, IAS officer, lawyer, minister or the CEO, SVP, Director etc. But these positions are not just of power and money; they bring with them the responsibilities. You need to put in lot of hard work to be worthy of these positions of influence and impact. If we put someone who is not worthy of carrying out the duties due to lack of skills or knowledge, that person will just get the position but will do no justice to it.

It is not just promotion to a higher position for its powers; you have to take the duties as well. Promote someone who actually deserves it and can handle the duties. Do not do so because of any other factor like friendship, relations, looking politically good for some affirmative action or quota system. You would not do that for weight lifting! Positions that require physical strength know no such relaxation of qualities, like hiring for military, pilots, astronauts or firefighters. Then why so for positions that require mental abilities, technical skills, character tenacity etc.? It is not enough to have a title of MD; you need to be able to cure some patients as well.

The movie *Spiderman* has the famous quote – “With great power comes great responsibility.” This is what to which Peter Parker’s uncle was alluding.

❖ **Do not just desire you chair, deserve it.**

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*Language notes:* तत्स्थानापन्ने तद्धर्मलाभः = तत्-स्थान-आपन्ने तत्-धर्म-लाभः = *tat-sthānā-āpanné tat-dharma-lābhah* | *tat* = that. *sthāna* = place. *āpanné* = in the event of having gained, obtained, acquired. *tat* = that. *dharma* = duty, responsibility. *lābhah* = gain, (one gets).

## SHOWING OF ARUNDHATI STAR

*arundhatī-pradarshana nyāyah*

अरुन्धती-प्रदर्शन न्यायः

The Ursa Major constellation is called *Saptarishi* or ‘The Seven Sages’. The second star from the tail-tip is Mizar which represents *Vasishta*. It is a binary-star with a faint star next to it, which is called Alcor or *Arundhati*.

After the wedding ceremony, one of the first rituals for the groom is to show the *Arundhati* star to the new bride as an ideal of marital harmony. To show this faint star *Arundhati*, one first points out the *Saptarishi*, then its tail star, then the *Vasishta* and then the faint *Arundhati* star. Some women have objected that this indicates that the wife should follow the husband. In reality, *Vasishta* and *Arundhati* are a binary-star which means that no one is leading, but they are together. It is the togetherness, team loyalty and support that is emphasized rather than who should lead. In marital context it implies that no matter what may be the situation in life, stand by each other, move together in harmony. Even one modern anthropomorphic interpretation of this binary star is that of a couple, done by Alan Henderson, in an explicit amorous embrace. That too is an aspect, if only one, of marital bliss.

Lead from the known to the unknown. Whether it is the new employee or a student, or your child; whether you are ‘selling’ new ideas, policies, products or programs to employees or clients, start from what they know, and lead their path to the green pasture you are ‘selling’. Along the way, show how it is possible to traverse the path or implement the policy and what the benefits will be.

*Change meets resistance of the unknown.* If you remove the unknown factor, make people understand the journey and destination, they are more willing to travel with you.

### ❖ Lead from the known to the unknown.

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*Language notes:* अरुन्धती-प्रदर्शन न्यायः = *arundhatī-pradarshana nyāyah*. |  
*arundhatī* = the star. *pradarshana* = showing, exhibition.

## SLITHERING LIZARD IS NOT A SNAKE

*na hi godhā sarpanī*

न हि गोधा सर्पन्ती

“A slithering lizard does not become a snake on account of slithering.”

The Sanskrit word for a snake is *sarpa*, from the verb root *sṛi*, to slither. From *sarpa* we get the English word serpent. One of the defining qualities of a snake is its slithering, because of lack of any legs. In Sanskrit, all reptiles are called ‘slitherers’, *sarī-sripa*.

But, just because it slithers a lizard or an iguana does not become fearsome like a snake. No one is scared of a lizard. Slithering is just one quality! A snake is not dreaded by its slithering, but by its deadly poison and hiss. Without the power of the snake, just imitating its gait does not earn ‘respect’.

One does not become great just by external appearance or position. One needs the qualities of power to be powerful. True leadership is not by position but by inherent qualities.

Merely putting on a black power-suit would not give you the power. Bill Gates looks as powerful in his jeans and T-shirt as in any corporate suit, even after he leaves Microsoft. A variegated scalp does not make you Aamīr Khān of Hindi blockbuster *Ghajani*. A quirky hairstyle does not make you Einstein or APJ Abdul Kalām, the former President of India and an eminent scientist. Wearing Niké does not make you Michael Jordan.

Learn to develop the real qualities of the great, not just their external quirkiness. The wrapping only matters when the gift inside is already great in its own right.

### ❖ Develop real qualities; content over style.

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*Language notes:* न हि गोधा सर्पन्ती सर्पणादहिर्भवति = न हि गोधा सर्पन्ती सर्पणात्-अहिः-भवति = *na hi godhā sarpanī sarpanāt-ahih-bhavati* | *godhā* = kind of lizard, iguana. *sarpanī* = while slithering. *ahih* = snake, a dangerous large snake. *bhavati* = becomes. *sṛi* = to slither; स् not to be confused with *shri* श्री (*śri*) which is erroneously written as *sri* without the diacritic marks.

## PERCHED EAGLE DOES NOT MOVE

*agachchan vainatéyo 'pi*

अगच्छन् वैनतेयोऽपि

*Garuḍa*, son of *Vanitā*, is the king of the birds, akin to an eagle. It has golden wings, and hence is also called *Suparṇa*. Because of his speed, Lord *Viṣṇu* requested him to be his transport.

But even the fast *Garuḍa* would not have moved a single step, if it actually does not move, that is, while it is perched. It does not matter how fast you are, what talents and strengths you have, unless you use them. On the other hand, an ant moves all the time. Small as it maybe, “a moving ant can cover miles of distance, but a sitting eagle would not have moved even a foot.”<sup>1</sup> If you do not use your power and ability, then you will not achieve anything, or impress anyone. “Even the mighty, without power is insulted. See how people trample the ash (of the formerly burning coal) with impunity.”<sup>2</sup> In *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Rāma* prayed to the sea for three days to give way to him, but the sea did not. *Rāma* told *Lakṣmana* that while mercy suits the powerful, no one acknowledges unless you express your power.

Unless you take the first step, the journey does not begin. No amount of wishing or planning will take you any closer to success, unless you take the first step. As soon as the hare dozed off, the tortoise effectively started to win. Edison said that success is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration. Sweat it out. Work on your plan once you have planned your work.

### ❖ Use your powers. Take initiative.

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*Language notes:* अगच्छन् वैनतेयोऽपि पदमेकं न गच्छति ॥ = *agachchhan vainatéyo 'pi padamékam na gachchhati.* | *agachchhan* = while not going, *vainatéyo 'pi* = *vainatéyah* (eagle) + *api* (also). *padamékam* = *padam* (step) + *ékam* (one). *na* = not. *gachchhati* = goes.

<sup>1</sup> गच्छत् पिपीलिका याति योजनानां शतान्यपि । अगच्छन् वैनतेयोऽपि पदमेकं न गच्छति ॥

*gachchat pipīlikā yāti, yojanānām shatānyapi | agachchhan vainatéyo 'pi padamékam na gachchhati ||*

<sup>2</sup> बलवानपि निस्तेजा: कस्य नाभिभवास्पदम् । निःशंकं दोयते लोकैः पश्य भस्मचये पदम् ॥

*balavān\_api nistéjāḥ kasya nābhībhavāspadam | niḥshāṅkam doyaté lokaiḥ pashya bhasmachayé padam || (Hitopadéshah, Suhrida-bhédah 173)*

## BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

*andha-gaja nyāyah*

अन्ध-गज न्यायः

This popular *nyāya* has traveled the world over. Several blind men are feeling an elephant and describing their truths. While the one touching the trunk thought of it as a banana tree trunk, one touching the ears thought of it as a large hand fan, one touching the legs thought of it as a pillar. The one touching the stomach imagined it to be a wall and the one touching the tail said it was a snake. They all were correct, but only partially. And even if they combined their truths together, they would never succeed in getting the whole truth. It was not a wall *and* a snake *and* a fan *and* a pillar. It was an elephant.

If you look at the human body, it is made of various systems like the circulatory, respiratory, skeleton etc. but the body is more than just these systems. And you are more than just the body or your title and position. Get the big picture. *The whole is more than the sum of the parts.*

We usually have only partial truth, even though it appears to be absolute. Others have their own. The big picture is very important to understand the complete truth. People see according to their own capability.

Leaders need to be able to see the big picture and pass on the vision. A true leader is one in whom the team trusts enough to buy in his or her vision, even if they do not see it thus. *When the leader sees an elephant, the team sees it as well, in the eyes of the leader – beyond their wall, pillar, snake and fan.*

### ❖ Keep the big picture in mind.

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*Language notes:* अन्ध-गज न्यायः = *andha-gaja nyāyah* | *andha* = blind. *gaja* = elephant.

## **MĀLATĪ FLOWER, BEE AND GRASS**

*mālatī-gandha-guṇavid*

मालती-गन्ध-गुण-विद्

“The *Mālatī*-flower-fragrance-excellence-knowing-bee is not interested in *darbha* grass.”<sup>1</sup>

Once a bee has known the fragrance of the *Mālatī* flowers, it does not have any more interest in grass blades. Once we know something of better quality, it is difficult to lower our standards. Another popular Hindi verse goes – “As the water of wealth grows, so does the lotus of desires, but when the water of wealth goes down, the lotus of desire does not go down again.”<sup>1</sup>

Think about a Mercedes or a Toyota, a Sony LED TV, a Canon SLR, a Bose speaker or an iPhone. We are talking about a quality in its own class. Once you get a taste of it, you cannot even look at other products.

Raise the bar on your own work. Does it delight your customers as much as a Sony or a Canon? Can you sell your computer program code on the street, if you are not already a product company? Does it have as easy a documentation as that of a DVD player? Or is it infested with ‘customized features’ that only a few in the team know in their head?

We should raise the bar on our quality and standard of work and taste. We should not remain content with hovering over grass leaves; sometimes rise all the way up to the heavenly fragrance of *Mālatī* flowers as well. Then you will not only get a high, you will give a high to your customers as well.

### **❖ Set your standards high.**

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*Language notes:* मालतीगन्धगुणविद्भे न रमते ह्यालि: = मालती-गन्ध-गुणविद्-दर्भे न रमते हि-अलि: = *mālatī-gandha-guṇavid-darbhē na ramaté hi-aliḥ* | *mālatī* = variety of *Jasmine flower*. *gandha* = smell, fragrance. *guṇa* = characteristic. - *vid* = knower. *darbha* = the most common grass in India. *darbhē* = in the grass. *ramatē* = is interested. *aliḥ* = bumble-bee, the big black one, not the little yellow honey bee; (technically, one with a sting like a bee or a scorpion)

<sup>1</sup> बढत-बढत संपत्ति-सलिल मन-सरोज बढि जाय । घटत-घटत पुनि ना घटे बरु समूल कुमलाय ॥ *badhata-badhata sampatti-salila, mana-saroja baḍhi jāya । ghaṭata-ghaṭata puni nā ghaṭé, baru samūla kumalāya ॥*

## LAMP WITHOUT OIL

*asnēha-dīpa nyāyah*

अस्नेह-दीप न्यायः

In the good old days of oil lamps, one would put oil or *ghee* in the lamp. There were earthen utility lamps, and then there were decorative brass or golden lamps, intricately carved. But, no matter which lamp you choose, they all need oil to burn. In that sense they were all the same.

There is a beautiful song from the 1961 Hindi movie *Kābuliwālā*. The movie is based on the famous story of Nobel laureate Rabindranāth Tagore. It is about a dry-fruit seller from Kābul in Calcutta (now known as Kolkata) who misses his little daughter back home. In the song there is a line – “Colorful cups, some of crystal, some of clay; [but] when one is thirsty, they are all the same, whichever has water [that is more important].”<sup>1</sup>

A lamp without oil is useless, no matter how beautiful it is. Its main purpose is to remove darkness with its light. Just being a lamp is not enough. A medicine bottle needs the medicine in it, else it is just a bottle.

The word *snéha* means both ‘oil’ as well as ‘affection’. It is ‘that which reduces friction’. Playing on the pun of the word *snéha*, the maxim also means that just like a lamp is useless without *snéha* (oil), so is a human being without *snéha* (affection, sweet speech). To remove darkness, a bit of oil is needed. To navigate the world full of living creatures, a little bit of love, affection, niceness is required. Good manners, a little caring and some sweet words will take you a long way.

Summarizing the crux of perennial philosophy or *sanātana dharma*, *Manusmṛiti* 4:138 says – “Say what is true, say what is sweet, but do not say what is true but un-sweet, nor say what is sweet but un-true. This is the perennial wisdom.”<sup>2</sup> Many people interpret the third instruction as a sanction to tell sweet lies. However, the fourth instruction clarifies that. What it means is that when you have to convey a situation of harsh truth, you can deliver it sweetly, gently, cushioning the blow. If you cannot find ways even to sweeten the blow that you will deliver, then you are not trying hard. Feel with your heart and you will find a nicer way to communicate. As a leader, you cannot break someone’s heart and still expect him or her to follow you whole-heartedly.

A more down-to-earth message is also that you should not spend all the resources on the lamp, with nothing left for the oil. Invest in the oil of your core quality, rather than just the lamp of presentation. It is like an expensive wrapper with no gift; all dressed up and nowhere to go. See also *Painting without canvas* (*kuḍyam vinā*) on page 100 and *Slithering lizard is not a snake* (*na hi godhā*) on page 4.

## ❖ Sweet interactions. Resource planning.

*Language notes:* अस्नेह-दीप न्यायः = *asnēha-dīpa nyāyah* |

*snéha* = oil/ghee. It also means affection, lubricant, slippery. In both meanings, it makes interaction smooth!

<sup>1</sup> काँच कोई माटी कोई, रंग-बिरंगे प्याले,  
प्यास लगे तो एक बराबर, जिसमें पानी डाले रे  
*kāñch koi māṭī koī, raṅg-biraṅgē pyālē,*  
*pyās lagé to ék barābar jisamé pānī dālē ré*  
(Kābulīwälā, 1961, starring Balrāj Sāhnī )

<sup>2</sup> सत्यं ब्रूयात्प्रियं ब्रूयान्न ब्रूयात्सत्यमप्रियम् ।  
प्रियं च नानुतं ब्रूयादेष धर्मः सनातनः ॥  
*satyam brūyat\_priyam brūyanna brūyāt\_satyam\_apriyam* ।  
*priyam cha nānṛitam brūyādēsha dharmah sanātanaḥ* ॥

## GREATER GOOD

*tyajédékan*

त्यजेदेकं

“Abandon one for the sake of the family...”

This maxim is one fourth phrase of a very popular shloka, which has appeared in many quotation collections, ‘*subhāshita-saigraha*’, and has been quoted in *Pañchatantra* and *Hitopadésha* as well. And yet, it is completely misunderstood. Let us see the misunderstandings and the context of this important shloka.

The original full shloka from *Vidura Nīti* translated without interpretation is – ‘Abandon one person for the sake of the family, family for the village/town, village for the country and abandon the world for oneself.’<sup>1</sup> The popular *nyāyah* is from *Hitopadésha* where ‘*tyajet kulārthē puruṣham*’ is modified to ‘*tyajédékan kulasyārthé*’. This was the usual practice of authors, when they quoted a prior shloka, they modified it slightly to indicate that this is not the original, but a copy.

In *Mahābhārata*, the wise prime minister *Vidura* (meaning ‘wise’), of the *Kuru* empire, is advising the emperor *Dhṛitarāshṭra* (meaning ‘one who usurps land/country’) to follow the path of *dharma*, right conduct, and not to let unfair things happen due to power-intoxication or familial-attachment. The emperor was literally blind, but metaphorically blind in attachment to his son *Duryodhana* (meaning ‘difficult to fight with’), and lets him get away with some of the most blatant and unfair things he does out of jealousy and ego. *Duryodhana* was not ignorant of the right conduct, but he himself confessed that he had a natural liking for *a-dharma*, even though knowing well that he was doing wrong.

This is the 17th shloka in the 5th chapter of *Vidura Nīti*, which consists of eight chapters from *Udyoga Parva* of *Mahābhārata*. *Maharshi Vēda Vyāsa* was one of the greatest minds of his time, and prime-minister *Vidura* one of the wisest characters of his epic. So we must use caution before jumping to wrong conclusions from his words.

There are three common misunderstanding regarding this shloka.

**Misunderstanding #1.** This justifies mass killing in any movement, like that done by revolutionaries or terrorists in the name of greater good.

Such a misinterpretation was done in 2009 when Naxal leader Ravi Sharma was caught in Hazārībāg, India.

**Explanation:** While it is true that wars by their very nature lead to some casualty, and all involved parties are ready for that, genocide was never a prerequisite to save a society. What *Vidura* is saying is to be looked again in the proper context and intent.

What *Vidura* is hinting to the emperor is to save his and the his dynasty's good name and abandon one, the interests of one – *Duryodhana*, his eldest son. For the sake of the country abandon the selfish and *a-dharmic* interests of the *Kaurava* family, 100 *Kaurava*-s. For, if this war happens, it will lead to the destruction of the whole empire; many great warriors, administrators and wise men will die. This will not be in any one's interest.

*Duryodhana* is bringing ill fame to the dynasty, and *Vidura* is referring to abandoning the interest of one (*Duryodhana*) for the sake of the interest of saving the dynasty from ill repute. Throughout *Mahābhārata*, *Vidura* advises *Dhṛitarāshṭra* to abandon his attachment to his son, and rather follow *dharma* (the right conduct), and the emperor keeps saying – “What you say, wise *Vidura*, of *dharma* and *nīti* is correct and I like it, but when I think of *Duryodhana*, I forget your advice.”

**Misunderstanding #2.** The sacrifice of the [good of] smaller unit must be done to be able to get the good of the larger unit. This makes it a prerequisite to the greater good, which is not so.

**Explanation:** This confusion comes because ‘*tyajét*’ means ‘do renounce/abandon’ like “Do abandon one person for the family, one family for the village...” as an imperative dictate. This was direct advice to the king. Else, it has to be taken as the last choice. See *Disease is better than death* (*maraṇād\_varam-vyādhih*) on page 97.

For example, in case of a physical danger, a father may put his life at stake to save his family. We send soldiers to the border to save the rest of the society. The *Pāṇḍava*-s had stayed at the house of a *brāhmaṇa* who had to send his son to *Bakāsura rākṣhasa* (demon) as his food. The accepted practice in the village was to send one member of a family by rotation. This was to save the whole family, and the village. The story of the lion and the hare, where the hare pushes the lion in the well, also had the same basis. The animals sent one animal to the lion everyday, so he spared the others from unnecessary killing.

If there is any way to save the smaller unit, it should be saved. And the smaller is not to be sacrificed to increase the profit, but to check the death, of the larger unit. For example, companies lay off some employees so as to stay afloat and save others and its own identity (avoid bankruptcy). But they do so in dire times. Dire times call for dire measures.

Another way to understand this essence, from nature, is evident from the largest bat cave in the world - Bracken bat cave in San Antonio, USA. There are over 20 million bats in Bracken bat cave. It takes them an hour to come out of the cave for hunting. So they have to start an hour before dusk. Over 5000 blinded bats gush out of the cave per second, in what still is daylight. This is a feast time for the hawks outside. Every day the colony loses some bats to these predators. Should the colony stay inside for the fear of these predators? No, they all go out forming vortexes, and they will lose some of the bats on the outer fringes, but from the standpoint of the entire colony, that sacrifice is a necessary evil. The sacrifice of the weak and unlucky is a small price to pay for the survival of the colony.

**Misunderstanding #3.** Giving it a spiritual spin, the last part is translated as “abandon the [attachment to this material] world for your own *moksha*”, that is, leave worldly attachment, only then you will be able to achieve salvation.

**Explanation:** The assumption that this is spiritual advice is also wrong. This is a practical advice given to the king who has asked for it, and the context is also that. *Duryodhana* had refused to give half the kingdom back to the *Pāñdava*-s when they returned from the exile, into which *Duryodhana* himself had tricked them. When they agreed to settle for mere five villages (worth of tax), *Duryodhana* said he would not give land even as much as the point of a needle.

What *Vidura* means here particularly to the emperor is that to be *dharmic* and fair, if it takes you ‘to give up the whole kingdom’ (earth) to the *Pāñdava*-s, so be it. The emperor should do it because the sin of this *a-dharmic* act (injustice to the *Pāñdava*-s) will only go to him, for he is the emperor in charge right now. *Duryodhana*, his son, should be controlled. Because of the parental love and the blind emperor’s hidden desire to see his son as the emperor, *Duryodhana* was not controlled at all. This is a warning to all over-pampering parents, figurative or literal.

We have to read the ancient works in context. When it is against our beliefs or understanding we have to try to give them the benefit of doubt. Maybe they were right at least in their time and space. But what *Vidura* says here, is right even today.

That was an exceptionally long but important discussion highlighting the dangers of misinterpreting ancient works. Now, let us get back to the wisdom at hand.

Align yourself with the larger goals of the team and the company. Do not be content or focused only on your own selfish goals. “Did I get the raise, the promotion, the pet projects? Does not matter what those who report to me think, or if the short-term tactics employed will start to crumble by next year or quarter.” That is how the politics seems to work in most countries or companies.

When you meet the bigger goals, the smaller ones will also benefit. However, even more important is never to sacrifice the larger, better goals for your own *selfish, petty objectives*. Not only will it become obvious very soon, it would not serve the larger entity. You, being a part of the larger entity, will also be affected by it.

### ❖ Choose larger goals over petty selfish interests.

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*Language notes:* त्यजेदेकं कुलस्यार्थं = त्यजेत्-एकं कुलस्य-अर्थं = *tyajét-ékaṁ kulasya-arthé* | *tyajet* = *abandon*. *ékaṁ* = *one*. *arthé* = *in purpose*. *kulasya* = *of family*. *grāmasya* = *of village*. *kulam* = *family*. *grāmam* = [*abandon*] *village*. *jana-padasya* = *of the nation*. *ātmārthé* = *for purpose of [saving] self*. *prithivīm* = *earth*.

<sup>1</sup> त्यजेत् कुलार्थं पुरुषं ग्रामस्यार्थं कुलं त्यजेत् ।  
ग्रामं जनपदस्यार्थं आत्मार्थं पृथिवीं त्यजेत् ॥  
*tyajet kulārthé puruṣam, grāmasyārthé kulam tyajét;*  
*grāmam jana-padasyārthé, ātmārthé pṛithivīm tyajét*

## THRESHOLD LAMP

*déhalī-dīpa- nyāyah*

देहली-दीप न्यायः

SELCO is an important player in rural electrification in Karṇāṭaka and Gujārāt. Harīsh Handé, a colleague of mine from IIT Kharagpur, made a life-choice by starting SELCO to bust three myths – the poor cannot afford technology, the poor cannot maintain technology, and you cannot sustain while serving the poor. SELCO serves people with less than a dollar a day income, and is socially and financially sustainable. Its customer base in Karnataka is well over 120,000 which includes poor daily-wage workers, and the Dalai Lama is also on their happy customer list. Harīsh and SELCO have received the Ashden Award twice among other awards, from famous personalities like Al Gore, Bill Clinton and Prince Charles.

They go home-to-hut, installing the entire kit which includes a solar panel, a rechargeable battery and lamps. The clients get loans from banks, for they cannot afford even the already low prices. One client wanted light in two rooms, but did not have money for two separate kits. His daughter could study in the kids' room while his wife could do sewing in the 'master' bedroom. The two small rooms of the house shared a wall. So, the technician at hand cut out a small hole in the common wall and installed the lamp right in between, lighting both for the price of one!

That is the threshold lamp maxim. A lamp placed on the threshold, lights up the inside as well as outside.

Today, people want everything individually. Transport, movies, exercise machines are just few examples of what was earlier shared communally, resulting in less production and overall consumption. Another important aspect is the modern practice of a TV in each room. It signifies the capacity to splurge, but disconnects the family members. You do not know what your kids are watching. Share and use wisely!

### ❖ Use resources wisely and creatively.

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*Language notes:* देहली-दीप न्यायः = *déhalī-dīpa- nyāyah* | *déhalī* = threshold, the door frame. *dīpa* = lamp.

## WORTHINESS TO UNDERTAKE

*adhikāra nyāyah*

अधिकार न्यायः

From Vedic times, *yajña* (ritual of acknowledging higher powers) have been held important. Later, the word got its narrow meaning of a sacrifice. For any important purpose, start of a project, or a vow, a *yajña* was performed. *Yajña*-s were performed before coronation, for religious merit to go to heaven, for getting children, or for social harmony.

The question comes as to who has the worthiness, and hence right, to conduct a *yajña*? While the actual act of the ritual is secondary and performed by a priest, the *yajamāna* (sponsor of the *yajña*) must at least have a desire for the fruits of the *yajña*, for example, going to heaven. The idea is that one who does not even desire something, should not be entrusted to do it (or oversee its execution).

For a project, we need the resources, skilled employees, but the most important aspect is someone who is passionate about the project and wants to see it to fruition as if having a personal stake. The skills can be hired or acquired through training.

Hire for attitude, train for skills! Promote or choose someone to the lead position only if that person has intense desire and passion for the project or product, not just for the position or promotion or seniority level. It is the passion, energy and dedication of the leader that pulls the rest of the team through. The leader may not always have all the technical details. But, does he or she feel strongly to see the project succeed? In slow or tough times (which will be there in most cases), it is the passion and determined desire of the leader that will pull everyone through.

### ❖ Lead with passion.

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*Language notes:* अधिकार न्यायः = *adhikāra nyāyah* | *adhikāra* = right, control, authority, worthiness.

## PLANTING A MANGO TREE

*āmré phalārthé nimité*

आम्रे फलार्थे निमिते

“In the sowing [of a mango tree] for obtaining the mango fruit, shade, fragrance etc. are also obtained as by-products.”

We will enjoy the mango fruit – king of fruits and fruit of kings – when the season comes, but we also enjoy the shade, leaves, fragrance and the cuckoo’s song.

When we do a good project for a certain result, there are many other good by-products obtained. To this effect, there is an important statement in *Āpastamba’s Dharma-Sūtra* “By following *dharma*, wealth is subsequently produced.”<sup>1</sup> So, even though *dharma* (moral and legal system) is made for a fair, civil society, following *dharma* will also produce prosperity for the whole society.

We buy a laptop to connect to the internet and check emails, but we can also use it to watch movies, edit photos, explore facebook and play games. When transportation is improved, it helps the daily office commuter, goods can be transported to farther places faster, people can move to suburbs. We exercise to reduce weight, but it also helps us feel great, be in good health and sleep better and makes us more ‘eligible’.

For any action, project or deed there can be many outcomes. For great projects, the beneficial fall-out is much more.

### ❖ Good brings more good.

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*Language notes:* आम्रे फलार्थे निमिते छाया गन्ध इत्यनूत्पद्यते = आम्रे फल-अर्थे निमिते छाया गन्ध इटि-अन्-उत्पद्यते = *āmré phalārthé nimité chhāyā gandha iti anu-utpadyaté*. | *āmra* = mango. *phalārthé* = for the purpose of the fruit(*phala*). *chhāyā* = shadow. *gandha* = fragrance. *nimita* = thrown, sowed in ground.

<sup>1</sup> तद्यथाम्रे ... एवं धर्मं चर्यमाणमर्था अनूत्पद्यन्ते – *tadyathāmré ...éam dharmam charyamāṇamarthā anūtpadyantे*

# UNTIMELY DONE IS NOT EVEN DONE

*akālē kṛitam*

अकाले कृतम्

Disasters like the Bhuj (2001) or Lātūr (1993) earthquakes, Bihār or Karṇāṭaka floods (2008-9), Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), Hurricane Katrina (2005) or the Chilé mine disaster (2010) to name a few, make it amply clear that in times of need, the need is for timely deed. The rescue, aid and rehabilitation, all need to happen before it is too late for the victims. Something done late is as good as not done at all. Incidentally, the World Bank approved \$220 million of loan for the Bihār flood of 2008 on 12th January 2011. A full three years later. What timing! *While the grass grows, the horse starves.*

An ideal charity is one “that is given to a worthy and needy person who cannot return favor and is given in the right place and time”<sup>1</sup> (*Bhagavat Gītā* 17:20). Who has the need, where is the need and when is the need – are all critical to helping.

Timely effort is essential. You have to reach the market before time. You have to reach the bus stop on time to catch the morning school or office bus. If you are late, you might as well have slept off a little longer that day! Plan out beforehand, or else plan to work overtime, but there is not much point to reach when the party is all over.

Help an employee succeed before he or she fails. Set them up for success. Do not wait until the yearly review, when it is too late to improve. It is not much help to give incentives after the employee resigns, or trying to fix performance after you get fired.

## ❖ Do not delay. Timing is of essence.

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*Language notes:* अकाले कृतमकृतं स्यात् = अकाले कृतं-अकृतं स्यात् = *akālē kritam-akṛitam syāt*. | *akālē* = untimely. *kṛitam* = done. *akṛitam* = not done. *syāt* = is (perhaps, maybe)

<sup>1</sup> दातव्यमिति यदानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।

देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्वानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥

*dātavyamiti yaddānam dīyaté'anupakāriṇé ।*

*dészé kale cha pātré cha taddānam sāttvikam smṛitam ॥*

## SLAYING OF DEVADATTA'S KILLER

*deva\_datta-hanṭi-hata nyāyah*

देवदत्त-हन्ति-हत न्यायः

“The slaying of *Dévadatta*’s killer does not bring back *Dévadatta*.<sup>1</sup>”

While in legal and emotional discussions we would say it does bring justice to criminals, the point being made here is subtle.

We have two related interpretations of this one. One, from *Devdatta*’s point of view, killing his killer gives no benefit. It is a reactive and not a proactive step. It would be better if situations leading to crime were averted to begin with. Crimes can happen for survival, because of marked disparity and resulting discontent in society. They can also be encouraged due to insufficient police and legal system. But the most important factor is not taking care of the people properly. If people are happy and engaged gainfully, crime goes down. So try to create an environment where people do not want to commit crime, and tendencies are caught early on.

The other point to note is that killing *Devadatta*’s killer, did not bring *Devadatta* back to life. He still lost his life. So, when we fail (not being able to protect *Devadatta*), causing others to fail (taking his killer’s life) will not make us succeed (make *Devadatta* alive).

The full version of this maxim appears in *Patañjali*’s *Mahābhāṣya*, the most authoritative commentary on *Pāṇini*’s monumental grammar work *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. It appears as the fourth comment on *sūtra* 1.1.57. “Why does the inapplicability of this rule not allow applicability of the other? Because, failure of one does not mean success of another. *Devadatta*’s killer’s murder will not bring back *Devadatta*.<sup>1</sup>”<sup>1</sup>

*Jack Assim* was always jealous of his neighbor who was more prosperous than him. So Jack prayed to god. God finally appeared and said, “Ask for anything, but your neighbor will get double of it.” So Jack asked to be blinded in one eye. Great way to be a winner, Jack!

Do not be that *Jack Assim*. Do not measure your success by others’ failures. Do not try to pull down your competition and consider that as your victory. Rather rise up by your own good, try to do a good job and excel. One has to succeed on one’s own merit, not on the demerit of

others. Failure of Google search would not make Yahoo! or Bing search any better.

Focus your energies on your own success, with your own merit.

❖ **Do not measure your success by others' failure.**

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*Language notes:* देवदत्त-हन्तृ-हत न्यायः = *déva\_datta-hantri-hata nyāyah* |  
*déva\_datta-hantri* = *déva\_datta's killer*. *hata* = *killed, struck*.

। न ह्यन्यस्यासिद्धत्वादन्यस्य प्रादुर्भावो भवति ।

न हि देवदत्तस्य हन्तृ हते देवदत्तस्य प्रादुर्भावो भवति ॥

*na hi-anyasya-asiddhatvāt-anyasya prādurbhāvo bhavati |*

*na hi déva\_dattasya hantri haté déva\_dattasya prādurbhāvo bhavati ||*

## IF YOU DO NOT LISTEN, SOMEONE ELSE WILL

*na hi kvachid\_ashravaṇam*

न हि क्वचिदश्रवणम्

“Surely, being not heard in one place is not adequate to avoid being heard in another place.”

You cannot assume “If I do not help, care or listen then they do not have any option.” If not you, someone else may and can help, or rescue.

Just because you put earplugs and refuse to acknowledge something, does not mean no one can hear it or knows about it. It is ever so true in the age of connected world of internet! Keep your act together, gone are the days of solitary dictatorship. If you do not cater to the employees’ needs and professional growth, consider it one problem less; the headcount will reduce in favor of another company that cares!

In 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, the USA came to rescue. In January 2011, when Hosni Mubārak decided to block the entire internet for the whole of Egypt, news still poured out – including pictures of political and social unrest, the clashes of security and people – which is creating waves as of the writing of this book. Who will come to help overtly or covertly, is a political game soon to reveal its new rules.

Global companies should be sensitive to local traditions. In India, celebrating *Diwālī* at the office may involve a *swastika*. The head office in the USA or in Europe should not jump out of their skin. It is as harmless in the Indian context as breaking a coconut or lighting a lamp at important functions and ceremonies. Just because the *Swastika* is a literal taboo in West, does not mean it is not being ‘heard’ and respected elsewhere!

### ❖ If you do not care, someone else will.

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*Language notes:* न हि क्वचिदश्रवणमन्यत्र श्रुतं निवारयितुमुत्सहते = न हि क्वचित्-अश्रवणम्-अन्यत्र श्रुतं निवारयितुम्-उत्सहते = *na hi kvachit-ashravaṇam-anyatra shrutam nivārayitum-utsahaté* | *kvachit* = somewhere. *ashravaṇam* = unhearing, not giving attention. *anyatra* = elsewhere. *shrutam* = being heard. *nivārayitum* = for the purpose of avoiding. *utsahaté* = is able to, is adequate.

## CLOSER IS STRONGER

*antaranga-bahiraṅgayoḥ*

अन्तरंग-बहिरंगयोः

“Among the internal and external [factors], the internal is stronger.”

Internal factors far outweigh external ones. Tiny bacteria inside your body can exert more influence than an elephant outside. Diarrhea, dengue fever, malaria, polio, small pox – are all caused by organisms that you cannot even see with the naked eye! Our internal emotions influence us much more than external news. Those who are close, internal to our circle/system, influence us more strongly than external but logical reasons. Men can take on the entire world, but are helpless in front of the wife or girlfriend!

As managers or leaders, be close to the people of the team, to be able to influence them most. Hold regular one-on-one meetings. Know about their work progress. Have general interest in their personal life, their worries, what is bothering them. Connect to employees as people, not just as an ID number. Know when they need help, so you can help them when needed, not when it is too late. Set them for success, not failure.

Be close to your people to influence them appropriately. Else, other teams, or even worse, other companies may influence them more and pull them away!

### ❖ Inspire the team from within.

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*Language notes:* अन्तरंगबहिरंगयोरन्तरंग बलीयः = अन्तरंग-बहिरंगयोः-अन्तरंग बलीयः = *antaranga-bahiraṅgayoḥ antaranga baliyāḥ* | *antaḥ* = inside. *aṅga* = part, body. *antarāṅga* = intimate, internal. *bahiḥ + aṅga* = outside + body. *baliyāḥ* = more powerful.

## CHANTING UNBORN SON'S NAME

*ajāta-putra-nāma*

अजात-पुत्र-नाम

In the USA, you have to name the baby before it leaves the hospital, in three days, since the Social Security Office has to be notified. In Indian tradition, the child is named only on the 11th day after birth. One of the reasons for this ancient practice was the high mortality rate in childbirth, as was all over the world. Whoever survived, lived long, whoever was biologically weak was eliminated by nature early on. Sad but true.

So, it was indeed foolish to not just name the child, who is not yet born, but to announce it to all, and chant it ecstatically. *There are many a slip between the cup and the lip!* Do not count your chickens before the eggs are hatched.

At work, we have projects with deadlines. We have celebratory parties after a successful launch. Do not go gaga even before things have actually succeeded. During that time, focus on the health of the upcoming ‘baby’. Are we on track, time and budget? Bug resolution, manufacturing parts, economy, volcano ash, nation-wide internet shutdown – many factors can take the fizz out of the party.

US president George Bush II declared complete victory in Iraq war in May 2003 while aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln. There are legal implications to declaring a war officially ended. Under the Geneva Convention, once war is declared over, the victorious army must release prisoners-of-war and halt operations targeting specific leaders. We know how soon the USA retreated out of Iraq!

Have patience. Have focus. There will be enough time to celebrate.

❖ **It is not done till it is done.**

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*Language notes:* अजातपुत्रनामोल्कीर्तन न्यायः = अजात-पुत्र-नाम-उत्कीर्तन न्यायः = *ajāta-putra-nāma-utkīrtana nyāyah* | *ajāta* = *a+jāta* = not+born. *putra* = child, son. *nāma* = name. *utkīrtana* = chanting with ecstasy.

## NECKLACE AROUND THE NECK

*kaṇṭha-chāmīkara nyāyah*

कण्ठ-चामीकर न्यायः

While a bangle in the hand does not need any mirror to be seen, a necklace around the neck surely needs external help to be admired and appreciated. We may forget we have it around our neck, or we are simply not reminded of its beauty and it may slip our mind. We cannot see our own necklace around the neck; someone has to point it out.

Similarly, many of us do not know our true worth, our strengths (and weaknesses). Others are true mirror of our self. They can see us as a separate entity, without the subjective baggage we carry about ourselves. Use that as feedback to realize your strong and weak points.

This is used when someone does not realize one's own worth – like our hidden talents, true potential – which a guru, mentor or coach would. The same happened with *Hanumān* in the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. He was born with great powers and as a child he disrupted the hermitage of the *rishi*-s with his mischiefs. Unable to take away his powers, the *rishi*-s cursed him to forget his powers till someone reminds him. And he did. Until at the critical moment of searching for *Sītā*, *Jāmbavān* reminded *Hanumān* of his powers – “O hero of the *vānara* world, best among the knower of sciences and scriptures, *Hanumān*, why are you sitting alone, why are you not talking?”<sup>1</sup>

Then of course, *Hanumān* jumped over the ocean, went to *Lankā* and found *Sītā* and the whole nine yards.

Compare with *No need of mirror for bangles in hand (na hi kara-kaṅkaṇa-darshanāya)* on page 89.

### ❖ Know your true worth.

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*Language notes:* कण्ठ-चामीकर न्यायः = *kaṇṭha-chāmīkara nyāyah*. | *kaṇṭha* = throat. *chāmīkara* = gold [necklace].

<sup>1</sup> वीर वानरलोकस्य सर्वशास्त्रविदां वर ।

तूष्णीमेकान्तमाश्रित्य हनूमन् किं न जल्पसि ॥

*vīra vānara-lokasya sarva-shāstra-vidām vara;  
tūṣṇīm-ekāntam-āshritya hanūman kim na jalpasi.*

## HORSE-RIDERS, DO NOT FORGET YOUR HORSES

*ashvārūḍhāḥ katham chāshvān*

अश्वारूढा: कथं चाश्वान्

“How can intelligent people mounted on horses forget their horses?”

How ridiculous would that be? At least the sober ones cannot make the excuse of having forgotten. If you are driving at night, how can you forget that you are driving and not have your lights on? Similarly, how can a doctor not practice health wisdom; or a lawyer break laws? This is used to say that people, who make rules, should not forget them, or break them. What you advice others, you must follow yourselves as well.

*Practice what you preach.*

When you make rules or set expectations and guidelines, your first obligation is to follow them yourselves. You can only influence people through example, not by just preaching. If you are playing Solitaire in the office, do not expect your employees to be working hard either!

For leaders, the principle of ‘setting a good example’ is doubly applicable. *The burden of leading is in following your own advice.*

As all good parents know or should know that children learn by imitating. Do not worry that your children are not listening to you, be scared that they are watching you. Just making laws will not work; you have to set an example by following them yourself, as a parent, as a leader.

### ❖ Do not forget your own rules.

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*Language notes:* अश्वारूढा: कथं चाश्वान्विस्मरेयुः सचेतना: = अश्व-आरूढा: कथं च-अश्वान् विस्मरेयुः सचेतना: = *ashva-ārūḍhāḥ katham cha-ashvān vismaréyuh sachétanāḥ* | *sachétanāḥ* = intelligent. *ashvārūḍhāḥ* = horse-mounted. *katham* = how come? *ashvān* = horse (accusative case). *vismaréyuh* = forget

## BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

*andhasya-éva-andha\_lagnasya*

अन्धस्येवान्ध-लग्रस्य

“A blind man’s association with another blind man leads to falling at every step.”

Even the *Kaṭha Upaniṣhad* (2.5) warns of this, saying that “those unawakened people who only run after desire-gratification, endlessly wander, never finding a way out of the labyrinth of cycles of birth after birth, just like a blind led by another blind.”<sup>1</sup> So, if sense-gratification is your guide, you will never find your way out.

Teams are made for cooperation, complementing the weakness of one by the strength of another. But if both lack in a given area, it will remain their weakness, it will not become a strength. Pairing two blinds, does not help any more than one blind on his own – as far as seeing is concerned. If one deaf cannot hear a sound, two deaf people would not make the situation any better. Two weak arguments do not make a strong one. See *Holding on to grass blades* (*kāsha-kushāvalamban*) on page 107.

When pairing, do it in a way that they complement each other.

When building teams, it is a good idea to spread the talent a bit, so all teams benefit. When pairing someone with a mentor, make sure the mentor has the needed qualities and knowledge to mentor! Otherwise, both will be wandering in the dark labyrinths, knocking each other down!

### ❖ Two ignorants do not make a wise.

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*Language notes:* अन्धस्येवान्धलग्रस्य विनिपातः पदे पदे = अन्धस्य-एव-अन्ध-लग्रस्य  
विनिपातः पदे पदे = *andhasya-éva-andha\_lagnasya vinipātah padé padé* |  
*andhasya* = of the blind person. *andha-lagna* = blind-association. *vinipātah* = falls. *padé-padé* = in every step (pada).

<sup>1</sup> अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः: *andhēnaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ*

## STRAIGHT PATH AND CROOKED PATH

*riju-mārgēṇa sidhyataḥ*

ऋजु-मार्गेण सिध्यतः

“The unsuitability of accomplishing by complicated or crooked means, that which is achievable by simple or honest means.”

The word ‘*riju*’ means ‘simple’, as in easy. It also means ‘simple-hearted’, as in honest. The word *vakra* means ‘with bends, winding, crooked’. So we have to understand this at two levels.

When it is possible to do something simply and/or easily then it is not appropriate to do it in a more complicated and/or difficult way. Why catch the nose from behind the back? Why spend the extra time, energy and resource to do something with more difficulty or complication than necessary? Such complicated methods are only suitable to employ when the motive is to make some good amount of resource disappear without trace or reason. This wastage does not even get caught easily compared to the blatant ones that disappear in scams and scandals.

Compare this to the maxim of not going to the jungle for honey collection when it is available on a nearby *arka* tree. See *Honey on tree* (*arké chén\_madhu vindeta*) on page 70.

The second way to look at this is that when it is possible to do something honestly, it is not appropriate to do it by dishonest means. In general, we are guided by the ‘honesty’ thing. Whenever we do something dishonest, it keeps nagging us in the back of our mind. When someone starts a venture with the goal of ‘making lot of money’, it is a wrong goal. If the goal was just to make money, then we could employ any method, even illegal or unethical ones, even one for which we have no passion. But the general goodness in most of us makes us not take the blatantly dishonest path. Our goal should be ‘What good will come out of this venture for the customer, the people and the society?’ If there is a worthwhile answer to that question, then money will surely come with a little business sense.

The 100,000 *shloka* epic of *Mahābhārata* is summarized in 4 *shloka*-s at the end of the epic itself, and one of the four *shloka*-s has *Vēda Vyāsa*

saying – “With arms up in the air, I call out to people but no one listens. From following *dharma* (right conduct) you can get not only *mokṣha* (salvation) but also *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (desires), then why not follow *dharma*?<sup>1</sup> See a similar statement from earlier *Dharma Sūtra* by Āpastamba under ‘Planting a mango tree’ maxim. Think of this from the society’s broader perspective, not individual narrow point of view. If everyone follows right conduct, things will be better for everyone.

So why does dishonesty start? Blame it on the *śadripu* (six enemies) within us – *kāma* (desire, lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (pride) and *matsara* (jealousy). Greed – desire to have more than one deserves. Jealousy – comparison with others and getting discontent. Among people who are not fighting for mere survival, this is how it starts. This is how *Rāvaṇa* became what he became at the behest of his mother, who compared him with his cousin *Kubéra*, the celestial treasurer. Then he did penance for 10,000 years to get his almost invincible boon and created a menace that the universe had not seen before. He made the beings howl in terror and hence *Shiva* gave him the name *Rāvaṇa* – the one who made them cry.

### ❖ Follow simplicity and honesty.

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*Language notes:* क्रृजुमार्गेण सिध्यतोऽर्थस्य वक्रेण साधनायोगः = क्रृजु-मार्गेण सिध्यतः-अर्थस्य वक्रेण साधन-अयोगः = *rīju-mārgēṇa sidhyataḥ-arthasya vakrēṇa sādhana-*  
*ayogah* | *rīju* = simple, straight. *mārgēṇa* = by path (*mārga*). *sidhyataḥ* = achievable. *vakréṇa* = by crooked (*vakra*), winding path. *sādhana* = means. *ayoga* = not suitable.

<sup>1</sup> ऊर्ध्वबाहुविरीम्येष न च कश्चिच्छृणोति मे ।

धर्मादर्थश्च कामश्च स किमर्थं न सेव्यते ॥

*ūrdhvabāhur\_viraumyésha na cha kashchich\_chhriṇoti mé,*  
*dharmādarthashcha kāmashcha sa kimartham na sévyaté.*  
*viraumi* = I cry, yell, announce.

## FROG IN THE WELL

*kūpa-maṇḍūka nyāyah*

कूप-मण्डूक न्यायः

There lived a frog in a well. He was born there and had never seen anything outside the well. One day an outside frog fell in the well. When the conversation began, the outside frog told that he came from a large lake (some version say ocean). The well-frog asked ‘What is a lake?’ ‘A big water body’. ‘How big?’ ‘Very big.’ The well-frog puffed up and said – ‘Bigger than this?’ ‘Much bigger.’ The well-frog puffed up even more and said ‘Bigger than even this?’ While this kept going on and on, the well-frog finally burst trying to puff more and more. He just could not believe that there could be anything larger than the well.

Another variation of this story is that the frog in the well called the outside frog a liar and beat him up.

Broaden your horizons. It is okay not to know everything, but not to acknowledge it is worse. Keep your skills updated. Attend latest seminars about new products and trends. Know what is happening within your domain. Imagine how you would feel if your doctor did not keep abreast of all the new developments? How confident would you feel about his or her services? Would you recommend such a doctor to others?

Every year, go outside your well and visit a *new* place. Read more. Listen more. Rise above your ego and ignorance.

Get out of the well. See the lake, or the ocean.

### ❖ Broaden your horizons.

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*Language notes:* कूप-मण्डूक न्यायः = *kūpa-maṇḍūka nyāyah* | *kūpa* = well.  
*maṇḍūka* = frog.

## BUCKETS OF A WATER WHEEL

*kūpa-yantra-ghaṭikā nyāyah*

कूप-यन्त्र-घटिका न्यायः

At least as far back as the start of the Common Era, a wonderful water-wheel device was made in India for irrigation. It had an ox moving the machine, just like an oil-extraction device. The ox's movement moved a smaller Ferris wheel kind of mechanism, with buckets instead of seats. At any given time you would find some buckets full of water, some half full, some empty, some emptying, some getting filled.

This is the depiction of life. At any given time, we see people of all levels and states of physical, mental, financial health, sorrow and joy. And with time, a given bucket undergoes the increase and decrease of water. Similarly, a given person also undergoes ups and downs in life. These buckets are wonderful snapshots of life around us. We should not be perturbed too much by the downs, as long as we do our best in a given situation. Just like the good times passed away, so will the bad.

This is also referenced in the classic Sanskrit drama *Mṛichchhakaṭikam* (The Clay Toy Cart) 10:60 where at the end, the protagonist summarizes the events of the play by quoting this *nyāyah*.

Another version simply says *ghaṭi-yantra nyāyah*. In *Prabandha-Chintā-Mani*, 'O wealth-blinded-stupid person, why do you laugh at someone fallen in trouble? Wealth is not permanent, why is it surprising? Do you not see the buckets of a water-wheel, the empty ones are getting filled and the full ones are getting emptied!'<sup>1</sup>

❖ **Ups and downs are part of life, endure.**

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*Language notes:* कूप-यन्त्र-घटिका न्यायः = *kūpa-yantra-ghaṭikā nyāyah* | *kūpa* = a water well. *yantra* = instrument, machine. *ghaṭikā* = small vessel.

<sup>1</sup> आपदूर्तं हससि किं द्रविणान्धमूढः, लक्ष्मीः स्थिरा न भवतीति किमत्र चित्रम् ।

किं त्वं न पश्यसि घटीजलयन्त्रचक्रे, रिक्ता भवन्ति भरिता भरिताश्च रिक्ताः ॥

*āpad\_gatam hasasi kim dravīṇāndha-mūḍha lakṣhmīḥ sthīrā na bhavatīti  
kimatra chitram; kim tvam na pashyasi ghaṭi-jala-yantra-chakré riktā bhavanti  
bharitā bharitāścha riktāḥ.*

## TARGET-MISSING MARKSMAN

*aparāt-hi-iṣhoḥ-iva dhānuṣhkasya*

अपराद्वेषोरिव धानुष्कस्य

“Empty boastings of an archer whose arrows always miss the mark.”

“The chatter of a talkative person who knows not the matter, is useless like the swagger of an archer who misses his mark.” (*Māgha*)

The loudest chatterers are usually the ones who are not proficient in their expected domain, and want to cover up. Rather than covering up, maybe we should find our true skills and spend energies there. If we are in the wrong side of the town for some reason, we should at least not boast about our own shortcomings as strengths. Rather, we should try to improve upon them. Falsehood does not last long. And when the water-balloon of fakeness bursts, it wets our own head. Humility itself is the best cover for shortcomings. People do not mind a nice person with some flaws, but they do dislike a constipated ‘expert’. *Pride goes forth on horseback, grand and gay; but comes back on foot, and begs its way.*

Do a job so good that other people talk about it! Use that free publicity. Let our actions speak for themselves. Usually they speak louder than words anyways.

### ❖ Let your work do the talking.

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*Language notes:* अपराद्वेषोरिव धानुष्कस्य कण्ठाडम्बरः = अपरात्-हि-इषुः-इव

धानुष्कस्य कण्ठ-आडम्बरः = *aparāt-hi-iṣhoḥ-iva dhānuṣhkasya kaṇṭha-āḍambaraḥ*  
| *iṣhu* = arrow. *dhānuṣhka* = archer. *kaṇṭha* = throat. *āḍambara* = show off.

## GOURD IN WATER

*jala-tumbikā nyāyah*

जल-तुम्बिका न्यायः

The entire class of gourds – bitter, bottle or ridge – floats on water. Gourds grow on climbers/creepers, which either climb up or creep on the ground. The heavier ones grow on creepers on the ground. Sometimes mud may stick to them and even dry up, as they lie on the ground. If such a gourd is directly put in water for cleaning, it would initially sink due to the weight of the mud. As the mud slowly dissolves in the water, the gourd once again floats to the surface.

This is the opinion held regarding *ātmā* (soul) as well. The *ātmā* itself is pure. If impurities in the form of attachment fetter the *ātmā*, it gets trapped in the cycle of births. When true knowledge washes away the attachment, the *ātmā* rises freely, to achieve *mokṣha*. Truth *does* set you free.

Even if you are not on the ‘Spirituality Express’, genuine knowledge about yourself is still essential to realize, process and act upon. Know your limits, weaknesses and strengths, stamina for failure, willingness to execute, resources at disposal, support system – know all these and then you can rise above your situation and come out successful with the realistic plan and its manageable execution. *Vidura* calls this *ātmā-jñāna*<sup>1</sup> and lists this as the first quality of a wise person.

When you get convinced after a few material successes, then you may want to take this further and delve deeper into yourself for the perennial quest of “Who am I?” and make this human birth worthwhile! After all, it is sheer luck that we beat great odds and chanced upon this human birth. Do not waste it. See *Blind catching the duck (andhaka-vartakiya)* on page 38.

### ❖ Unfetter and rise.

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*Language notes:* जल-तुम्बिका न्यायः = *jala-tumbikā nyāyah* | *jala* = water.  
*tumbikā* = gourd.

<sup>1</sup> आत्मज्ञानं समारंभस्तितिथा धर्मनित्यता । यमर्थान्नापकर्षन्ति स वै पण्डित उच्यते ॥  
*ātmā-jñānam samārambhas\_titikṣhā dharma-nityatā;*  
*yam\_arthān\_nāpakarṣanti sa vai paṇḍita uchyate.* (*Vidura Nīti* 1:20)

## WATER-PURIFYING KATAKA POWDER

*jala-kataka-réṇu nyāyah*

जल-कतक-रेणु न्यायः

“As the *kataka* seed powder purifies the water.”

Before the advent of modern impurities and modern purifiers that do ‘reverse osmosis’ and ‘ionization’ and what not, water was purified using simple, available, natural ways – filtering through thin cloth, use of alum crystals, and use of the seeds of *kataka* plant (*Strychnos potatorum*). Even a recent WHO report mentions this practice in India as a “low cost solution for poor communities of Africa.” Such seed extracts act as a particulate, colloidal and soluble polymeric coagulant as well as a coagulant aid.

The maxim is traditionally used in two ways. One, just like the *kataka* seeds remove the impurities of the water, true knowledge removes the impurity of our ignorance and makes our mind clear. See *Gourd in water* (*jala-tumbikā*) on page 37.

Two, as *Manusmṛiti* 6:67 says “Even though the *Kataka* tree’s fruit is a water-purifier, just taking its name does not clean the water.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly merely knowing or talking of *dharma* will not do, one has to practice it. Similar to *Mere resolve would not help* (*ékākini pratijñā*) on page 51.

Check periodically if your thoughts are clear or muddy. Take time out of the regular rut to introspect. Clear your mind, your thoughts, your attitude. More reading or knowing would not help much unless you start practicing what you already know.

### ❖ Purify your thoughts.

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*Language notes:* जल-कतक-रेणु न्यायः = *jala-kataka-réṇu nyāyah* | *kataka* = a plant whose seeds when rubbed on the inside walls of pots, cause impurities in water to precipitate, like alum crystals.

<sup>1</sup> फलं कतकवृक्षस्य यद्यप्यम्बुप्रसादकम् ।

न नामग्रहणादेव तस्य वारि प्रसीदिति ॥

*phalam kataka-vṛikṣhasya yadyapyambu-prasādakam,  
na nāma-grahaṇādēva tasya vāri prasīdati*

## MILK AND WATER

*kṣhīra-nīra nyāyah*

धीर-नीर न्यायः

This refers to a completely homogeneous mixing, a harmonious living. This is also used in examples of figures of speech (*alankāra*) where comparison is made between two things. The other examples of lesser and lesser homogeneity are ‘sesame and rice grains’ (*tila-tandula*) with similar sizes but easily identifiable by color; and ‘man and lion’ (*nara-simha*) where they are totally distinguishable and similar only in an abstract quality of bravery.

When the Zoroastrians, who were being persecuted in Iran in the 8th century, landed in Gujarat, the king Jādī Rāṇā, consulted his prime minister. The prime minister brought a glass of milk and another of water, and poured the water in milk, indicating that they are welcome if they can mingle in the society like water in milk. They can keep their faith but need to adopt the local dress and language. These are the present day Pārsī-s of India. Another version goes that the prime minister brought a glass full of milk, indicating that their society was already full. The Zoroastrian leader added some sugar, indicating that there is always space for people who can live harmoniously and sweetly like the sugar.

The other common use of this (possibly only in vernaculars) is about the mythical ability of the swan to separate milk from water, and signifies perfect justice or discernment – separately the false from the truth.

Seek harmony, not confrontation; seek cooperation, not competition. Add energies for a common purpose of growing, rather than waste it in fighting. Peaceful living is the greatest boon. All great human progress has happened in times of peace. Only the science of war has progressed in difficult times.

### ❖ Prosper with harmonious living.

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*Language notes:* धीर-नीर न्यायः = *kṣhīra-nīra nyāyah* | *kṣhīra* = milk. *nīra* = water.

## COCONUT-ISLAND PEOPLE

*na hi nārikēla-dvīpa-vāsinah*

न हि नारिकेल-द्वीप-वासिनः

“The people of *Coconut Island* get no understanding (or visions) of the hump when they hear the unfamiliar word *cow*.”

A tourist had wandered off into a remote village. There he found he had run out of money. He asked someone for an ATM machine. No one knew. He said, ‘Debit card, you know, to get cash?’ And no one was any wiser. Mentioning further strange words related to an ATM did not add anything to the knowledge base of the villagers.

When one has no idea of a thing, mentioning of one aspect does not give any more information on other aspects. Hint to the wise is enough. But that too works when something is of common, familiar or known background.

In his memoirs from his India visit around 630 CE, the Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang refers to some islanders north of *Sumātrā* island, maybe the Anḍamān and Nicobār Islands, who lived only on coconuts. The reference seems to be to these island people. *Prashastapāda* mentions them in *Vaishēshika-bhāṣhya* and says that the people of southern India are as unaware of camels as these islanders of cows.

Be on the same page with your audience, team and people. Take them from the known to the unknown. Else, you can keep babbling about the unknown and they will wonder where you lost your marbles.

### ❖ Communicate effectively.

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*Language notes:* न हि नारिकेल-द्वीप-वासिनः अप्रसिद्ध-गो-श्रवणात्कुदादिमर्थ-प्रतिपत्तिर्भवति = *na hi nārikēla-dvīpa-vāsinah aprasiddha-go-shravaṇāt-kakudādi\_mat-artha-pratipattiḥ bhavati* | *na* = not. *hi* = surely. *nārikēla* = coconut. *dvīpa-vāsinah* = island-dwellers. *aprasiddha* = not famous. *go* = cow. *shravaṇāt* = upon hearing. *kakudādimat* = of awareness (*mat*) about bovine hump (*kakuda*) etc. (*ādi*). *artha* = meaning. *pratipatti* = acquiring, gaining, knowledge. *bhavati* = happens.

## FAR AND AWAY TREES

*dūrastha-vanaspati nyāyah*

दूरस्थ-वनस्पति न्यायः

From a distance, things are never clear. When seen from far away, two nearby forest trees may seem as one large tree. Only by closer examination do we realize that they are two trees.

During an initial high-level planning, a lot of details are missed. What seems as a single task is made up of many sub-tasks. The devil is in the details. Be aware that as details pour in, plans will need to be refined. Keep the flexibility for that.

When watching the trees from a moving window of a train, know that the parallax error can trick your eyes. Things may seem different, the forest may seem moving, but it is actually the train that is moving. This parallax error happens with motion only when things are at different distances. So keep in mind that the further you are from the exact details of the problem at hand, the more prone you are to making the wrong decision or conclusion. Do not let that trick your vision.

Be careful not to jump to ‘definite’ conclusions on topics that have not yet been examined closely. There is a difference between logical conclusion and guessed assumption.

### ❖ Things appear differently from a distance.

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*Language notes:* दूरस्थ-वनस्पति न्यायः = *dūrastha-vanaspati nyāyah* | *dūra-stha* = far-situated. *vanaspati* = tree. Specifically these are large forest trees that bear fruits but no flowers.

## GRASS, FIRE-STICKS AND GEM

*triṇāraṇi-maṇi nyāyāḥ*

तृणारणि-मणि न्यायः

“The maxim of grass straw, ‘*araṇi*’ wood and gem.”

Remember how, they made fire through friction by churning one stick in another, at camps in the wild? Or in the kids’ animation movie *Madagascar*, where Melman the giraffe tries his best but fails, and when he gives up he gets lucky in lighting the fire! Those sticks are made of ‘*araṇi*’ wood. Compared to other sticks they generate fire easily. That is why it is considered that fire is ‘hiding’ in them, as a latent force. The ‘fire-in-wood’ metaphor is also used to refer to hidden talent as well as to the invisible divine in us.

The three substances are at three degrees of potential. Understand the difference. The gem glows by itself, its light does not go away, and it needs nothing external. It shines from within. Its shine never goes away, it may be covered in dirt, you wipe it clean and it shines again. These are rare. Catch them if you find them and ensure that they have no reason to leave.

The ‘*araṇi*’ wood has great potential. It is latent though. It can light up and create the fire needed on its own, but needs a lot of churning, hard work. Its latent potential has to be honed; the talent has to be awokened. Like the hero who forgets, it needs reminding of its own powers. See *Necklace around the neck (kaṇṭha-chāmīkara)* on page 23. But still, it has the potential of producing light on its own once the threshold is reached.

Lastly, the grass needs an external source of fire to light up. No amount of friction within the grass will produce the fire from within. No amount of internal ‘churning’ can create the magic spark. It is just not there. You will need external factors to motivate, train and guide the grass to be productive. But, once it gets some help, it burns nicely, giving a good amount of fire, heat and light.

People too have different potentials – some have it visible and inherent, some dormant but which can be activated in proper conditions, and some can light up in proper company.

The gem is your super-star, the *arani* a self-starter and the grass a ‘team player’! They all have their places in the giant machinery of the company. Recognize them and handle them accordingly. Do not ignore this fact; nor use it to search only for *gems*. There should be appropriate amount of all three types. Different people will have different motivating buttons.

### ❖ People have different potentials.

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*Language notes:* तृणारणिमणि न्यायः = तृण-अरणि-मणि न्यायः = *triṇa-arañi-maṇi nyāyah* | *triṇa* = [blade of] grass. *araṇi* = fire sticks that produce fire upon rubbing. *maṇi* = gem.

## BLIND CATCHING THE DUCK

*andhaka-vartakīya nyāyah*

अन्धक-वर्तकीय न्यायः

Have you ever chased a bird, even one that cannot fly, like a hen or a duck? It is not an easy task. How fast and unpredictable it runs! It is a pastime sport in many rural traditions. Now imagine a *blind* person catching one. How do you explain that? It has to be *sheer luck*. Right time, right place, right height and closing the hands at the right moment. Too many parameters in this mathematical model to solve easily.

Now, imagine how you, the soul, got birth in this human form. You could have easily been born as another living form. We humans are not even 0.0001% of the entire animal population, not counting the plants. It is sheer chance that our soul got this body. On top of that, to be born in a decent family, being healthy, able to read, buy a book, and afford to ponder over such esoteric issues as *Attitude Shift*.

It is by pure luck, and if you believe in reincarnation then, by good *karma*-s of past lives, by which in this immense mortal world, one gets born as a human, that too in a good family with good fortune and gets the company of good people. One should realize the value of one's life and all that has enabled one to be where one is. With such odds, is it not a shame if we do *not* try to utilize our full potential. We worry about what we do not have; we do not enjoy what we have and do not try to achieve what we truly can? Whine about what? Sad about what? Jealous of what?

We have got a human body! Ever seen a snake, even a python or a cobra? Deadly? Yes. But the poor thing does not even have an arm or a leg or a voice or opposable thumbs. And yet, it knows, feels, plans, moves about without whining or feeling depressed. Ever seen a majestic eagle? Go check '*The Eagle has landed*' video' on Youtube, what majestic wing-span, what strong legs and claws. But it has no hands or voice. If it gets hurt it cannot call the ambulance. It cannot cook, it has to eat the raw mice. But it never complains.

We are the best of the creation. What have we to complain about? There is a famous Hindi poem by Maithilī Sharan Gupta that goes 'Why are you sad, for you are a (hu)man, get up and do something!'<sup>2</sup>

Do not waste an opportunity when you see it. Utilize it for the greater good, in which also lies your personal good.

What we can learn from this is twofold. On one hand, we should not depend on luck for our future success. On the other hand, we should be thankful, because in our current good situation we are as lucky as ‘a blind person who caught a duck!’ Let us make the best of what we have.

### ❖ Be thankful for your good fortune.

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*Language notes:* अन्धक-वर्तकीय न्यायः = *andhaka-vartakīya nyāyah* | *andhaka* = blind. *vartakā*, *vartakī* = a quail, duck/goose. The Hindi word ‘*batakh*’ for duck comes from this.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytViF4OcxHk>

<sup>2</sup> नर हो, न निराश करो मन को, कुछ काम करो कुछ काम करो  
nar ho na nirāsh karo man ko, kuchh kām karo kuchh kām karo

## REMOVE ILLUSIONS

*adhyāropa\_apavāda nyāyah*

अध्यारोपापवाद न्यायः

“The false projection and removal of the same” or “the snake and rope nyāyah.”

This is a classic example given in spiritual discussions about what is real and what is not. When you see a coil of rope in low light, you suddenly think there is a coiled snake. And you panic in fear. In another moment you realize it is a rope, and the fear is gone.

The question is – Was the rope real or the snake? While there never was a snake, and hence it is false, the *fear* of the imaginary snake was indeed *real*. For a moment while you thought the snake was real, you had a genuine fear. This is used in discussions whether the world we see is real or unreal. And the philosopher says the world we see is as real as the snake!

In the snake and rope illusion the unreal snake is projected upon the real rope. The ‘unmanifest brahman’ is given qualities for the beginner to understand (putting these unreal qualities on the real is *adhyāropa*) the concept and at later stage the false impositions are removed (*apavāda*). All the formful gods and representations of divine are only to appreciate the unmanifest, the one without any qualities of this mortal world. And people mistakenly think Hindus worship idols. The statues are a wonderfully personalized visual help for the beginner.

When you have a great vision, it may be difficult for others to see it as clearly as you do. You have to lead them there, from the known to the unknown. Sometimes we have to bring related metaphors to help understand a new concept. Then, once the concept is understood, we need to remove the metaphor, allegory, false projection, and show the real thing. As we grow, we learn the ‘fair truth’ about the ‘tooth fairy’.

❖ Remove illusions. Think clearly.

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*Language notes:* अध्यारोपापवाद न्यायः = अधि-आरोप-अपवाद न्यायः = *adhi-āropa-apavāda nyāyah*

## HOT GOES WITH HOT

*taptam tapténa sambadhyaté*

तसं तसेन सम्बद्धयते

When an ironsmith has to forge two iron pieces together, he heats them both to the same temperature, makes them equally soft and hammers them together. The process does not work if they are at different or low temperatures.

A simple phenomenon from middle school physics is that when two things vibrate at the same frequency, they produce resonance. So much so that soldiers crossing a bridge are asked to break step. If their marching frequency matches the resonant frequency of the bridge it can cause it to sway and break or put undue stress on it.

For two people to synergize, to click together, to gel, they have to be at the same level of excitement and passion. While you will need a diverse set of skills in the team, all need to be at the same frequency on core matters. Also, just like two iron pieces does not gel together till a certain high enough temperature is reached, even for people, a certain amount of passion threshold has to be reached before things happen. Both parties at lukewarm enthusiasm will not make anything happen. You need same frequency and beyond the threshold!

### ❖ Create the right conditions for synergy.

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*Language notes:* तसं तसेन सम्बद्धयते = *taptam tapténa sambadhyaté.* | *tapta* = hot.  
*tapténa* = by hot. *sam-badhyate* = binds completely, properly.

## DESIRING SON, AFTER HUSBAND DIED

*putra-lipsayā*

पुत्र-लिप्सया

“Praying to God for a son when husband is no more.”

This captures a situation where we desire for something but we do not have the basic prerequisite. There are many references to this in indirect ways. One very famous story is that of *Sāvitrī* who knew that the person she wanted to marry, *Satyavāna*, would die in a year. She married him anyways. When the day of his death came, she was with him in the forest as he chopped wood. When *Yama*, the Lord of Death came to take his *ātmā*, she followed him and started talking to him. *Yama* was impressed by her wisdom and granted her three boons, one after the other. She asked for her father-in-law's sight, kingdom and hundred sons for him in the three boons. She kept following him, speaking wise statements to him. *Yama* granted the fourth boon. This time *Sāvitrī* asked for hundred valorous sons for herself from *Satyavāna*. *Yama* granted that as well, in the flow of the conversation. When he saw her following him even after this, he asked her to go back. To which she replied, “O Sir, but how can I get the benefit of your boon of hundred sons, when you are taking my husband away?” Needless to say, the outwitted *Yama* had to return her husband back to life (*Mahābhārata Vana Parva* chapter 293-297). *Sāvitrī* is the epitome of an ideal wife, so supportive of her husband that she will bring him back even from the jaws of death. What a team spirit!

Another saying *Old spinster's request* (*vriddha-kumārī-vākyā nyāyah*) says that a poor, old spinster when given a single boon by Indra, asked to ‘be able to see her many children enjoying lot of milk and ghee sweets in expensive plates.’ This boon would automatically give her a husband, big family, vitality, good health and wealth!

### ❖ First meet the prerequisites.

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*Language notes:* पुत्रलिप्सया देवं भजन्त्या भर्तापि नष्टः = पुत्र-लिप्सया देवं भजन्त्या भर्ता-अपि नष्टः = *putra-lipsayā dévam bhajantyā bhartā-api naṣṭah* | *putra* = son, *offspring*, *lipśā* = deep desire, *dévam* = god, *bhaja* = to pray to, *bhartā* = husband, *naṣṭah* = destroyed, ruined.

## ***GUDA SMEARED ON TONGUE***

*guḍa-jihvikā nyāyah*

गुड-जिह्विका न्यायः

When a child was given bitter *neem* juice, for example, to kill the intestine worms, the father would coat the tongue with *guḍa* or treacle and then make him drink the *neem* juice.

A similar analogy is given in all the collections of children's stories for which India is famous, be it *Pañchatantra*, *Hitopadésha* or *Jātaka* stories. The animal stories were created to act as the *guḍa* for the medicinal wisdom contained in them. Giving a dry lecture bores senior executives even today, what to say of kids in a time when there was no 'competitive pressure in society of college entrance and finding a job.'

All the vast religious 'mythological' scriptures in India – the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇa*-s etc. – are made of fantastic, interesting stories to elucidate higher, subtler, dry truths discovered by seers. Employ this strategy when needed, keep your 'medicine' palatable, and you will find more takers.

There is yet another angle to this maxim, albeit a spiritual one. It also signifies the transitory nature of things. Just as the taste of sugar on the tongue is transitory, and soon it is gone; so is life and its events, the so called permanent reality, they are all transitory. It also reminds me of another 'tongue and sweet' reference by the great statesman *Chāṇakya* who said that "Just like [one is] unable *not* to taste the honey or poison placed on the tongue, so is a government official unable *not* to taste the (government) wealth."<sup>1</sup> (*Arthashastra*, Book 2, chapter 9)

### **❖ Sweeten your advice.**

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*Language notes:* गुड-जिह्विका न्यायः = *guḍa-jihvikā nyāyah* | *guḍa* = jaggery, first stage in preparation of sugar from sugarcane; a natural sugar better than refined crystal sugar. *jihvā* = tongue

<sup>1</sup> यथा ह्यनास्वादयितुं न शक्यं जिह्वतलस्थं मधु वा विषं वा ।

अर्थस्तथा ह्यर्थचरेण राजः स्वल्पोऽप्यनास्वादयितुं न शक्यः ॥

*yathā hyanāsvādayitum na shakyam jihvā-tala-stitham madhu vā viṣham vā;*  
*arthas\_tathā hyartha-charēṇa rājñāḥ svalpo'pyanāsvādayitum na shkayah.*

## UNPROHIBITED IS ALLOWED

*a-niṣhiddham-anumatam*

अनिषिद्धमनुमतम्

Children have a wonderful way of finding loopholes in your parenting rules. ‘Do not put your feet on the chair’ does not mean they would not put them on the sofa. You said chair, not sofa. While this is an example of nit-picking, which kids are great at when they want to get their way, the point is that, if you have not explicitly prohibited something, you do not have objection to it. Lack of disapproval is approval. That which is not prohibited is considered allowed. *Silence is consent.*

Companies have an employee handbook, which helps set some guidelines for corporate culture and expectations. While ‘thou shall not steal’ is an obvious one, ‘thou shall not make personal phone calls even to your own home’ is not obvious. Or, checking your private email. So, unless you mention categorically in the company rules, employees may well logon to Facebook, as long as they are meeting their deadlines.

Similar to the children’s nitpicking, people and employees find creative loopholes in the guidelines or laws. One cannot think of every possible scenario beforehand. Hence, take care in formulating policies and implementing them.

The spirit of the policy should be understood, so that it can be applied properly by employees even before finding loopholes, or by implementers, after a loophole has been found. So spell out what is not acceptable.

### ❖ Spell it out.

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*Language notes:* अनिषिद्धं-अनुमतम् = *a-niṣhiddham-anumatam* | *niṣhédha* = warding off, prohibition. *a-niṣhiddha* = not prohibited. *anu-* = follows; *mati* = opinion, thinking; *anumati* = permission. *anumatam* = permissible.

## AVOID BLIND FOLLOWING

*andha-paramparā nyāyah*

अन्ध-परम्परा न्यायः

Every ‘system’ has a tradition, be it society, country, school or company. And only by following the tradition you become part of the system. But, when we follow some tradition, we should know why we do so. Is the purpose of Thanksgiving holidays to kill turkeys, or that of Diwālī to increase sound pollution? Could they be celebrated without turkey and fire crackers, respectively, if the situation warrants? The Chinese tradition of exotic medicines made from tiger-claws and teeth, has led to near extinction of such animals due to indiscriminate poaching with modern weapons.

In an experiment, five monkeys were kept in a room. In the center was a ladder on whose top were kept some bananas. Whenever a monkey climbed up for a banana, the other monkeys were showered in cold water from an overhead sprinkler. The monkeys who were getting showered would beat up the one climbing up. Soon, no matter who tried to go up, the others beat him up. Then one monkey was replaced. The new monkey was also beaten by others for going up the ladder. Slowly the older monkeys were replaced by newer ones one at a time. And every time the new monkey tried to climb up, the others beat him up. At the end, there were five new monkeys who were never soaked in cold water and yet would beat up anyone going up the ladder. What happened? ‘This is how it is done here!’ – sounds familiar? Of course, it is a story as far as I know, but a very educative one.

Do not be the monkeys. If there is a tradition that does not make sense, challenge it, and learn about it. Stand up and ask. Or else you will be a *Blind following the blind*.

❖ **Know your belief. Stand up and ask.**

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*Language notes:* अन्ध-परम्परा न्यायः = *andha-paramparā nyāyah*. | *andha* = blind. *paramparā* = tradition; that which is passed from one person (generation) to another (*param*).

## ARROW-MAKER'S FOCUS

*iśhukāra nyāyah*

इषुकार न्यायः

In *Mahābhārata*, *Shānti-parva*, chapter 178, the wandering *sādhu* mentions how he learnt from various *guru*-s. A very similar story is also found in the *Bhāgavat Purāṇa* Section 11, Chapter 9. While enumerating the various *guru*-s from which he has learned, the *sādhu* said he learned single-minded focus from an arrow-maker. He was so engrossed in making arrows, that he did not even notice the procession of the king pass by. Indeed, arrow-making was a skilled craft. The outcome of every battle depended on it. It was not your Olympic or hobby archery. A life hung in uncertainty on either side of the arrow.

Nothing of good quality is obtained without focus. It is a different story that experts make tasks look effortless, but they have practiced it to perfection which makes it look easy. The archer *Arjuna* was called *Savyasāchī*, one who could shoot arrows with either hand. Do one important task at a time, do with focus and perfection. No, I am not talking about listening to iPod and walking, those can be done together!

You should be so engrossed in your work that you are not even aware of who is passing by you in the hallway or between the cubicles. Do not see the watch all day – is it time for coffee yet? Lunch yet? Going home yet? Are we there yet? There yet? Well, focus on the present task. Take care of the minutes, and the hours will take care of themselves.

Do not worry about home when you are at the office or about the office when you are home. Give yourself to the moment, be it replying to the email, optimizing the code for the algorithm, buying tomatoes, enjoying the soup or the chocolate or just sitting all by yourself. Do with attention and focus. Students, while studying, should focus on the subject rather than dreaming about the game or the movies. Merely opening the books is not studying. It is the quality of time spent, not just the quantity.

### ❖ Have single-minded attention.

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*Language notes:* इषुकार न्यायः = *iśhukāra nyāyah* | *iśhu* = arrow. *iśhukāra* = arrow maker.

## ARROW'S MOMENTUM

*iśhu-véga-kṣhaya nyāyah*

इषु-वेग-क्षय न्यायः

When an archer shoots an arrow, the arrow loses its momentum with time. Blame it on Newton! The trajectory of any thrown object is parabolic. Hence, when aiming, one has to aim a bit higher than the bull's eye, keeping in account wind velocity, distance etc. in calculation. This is true in almost any situation – physical stamina, mental interest, attention, determination. We always slowdown in speed, interest, energy or enthusiasm as time goes by. By the end of the day, even the body starts to slow down.

This is also one of the reasons, why New Year resolutions last only a few days or at most a few weeks. After that the enthusiasm of the resolution dies out. Next time, do not make a resolution to exercise every day for two hours. That will surely not hold. Or maybe, if you want to work out for fifteen minutes a day, keep the resolution for an hour a day of exercise, and by February you will be doing it for fifteen minutes anyways!

Perseverance is what is at test. And it is one of the most important traits of the wise and successful. Keep at it, do not let the momentum die, remember why you started and feel recharged everyday. If you work for a purpose rather than just desire, then it is easier to ‘work for the cause,’ even when the interest or energy level may have lowered. The wise *Vidura* calls it ‘engaging with purpose rather than mere desire.’

When working on any project, keep this in mind. Prices will go up, budget may shrink and people’s focus and enthusiasm will go down. Time will run out faster, not because the clock goes faster when you are having fun, but that productivity goes down as interest level tapers off. Keep some buffer time and budget. Find ways to recharge and break the monotony. *Engage with a purpose, not mere desire.*

### ❖ Momentum diminishes, plan accordingly.

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*Language notes:* इषु-वेग-क्षय न्यायः = *iśhu-véga-kṣhaya nyāyah*. | *iśhu* = arrow.  
*véga* = speed. *kṣhaya* = reduction, diminishing of.

## BLIND WITH A MIRROR

*andhadarpana nyāyah*

अन्ध-दर्पण न्यायः

It denotes a useless thing, a total waste. A blind person needs a mirror just as much as a bald guy needs a comb, a politician needs honesty, and a *fast* woman needs modesty. This is also as obvious as the *No need of mirror for bangles in hand* maxim.

There is a very popular shloka that says that “One who does not have one’s own intelligence, the sciences cannot help. How can a mirror be of any use to the blind?”<sup>1</sup> External sources are guides, help on the way, like a gas station on the highway, but if you do not have your car, it is of no use. All the books in the world are useless if you cannot even read.

So, when you give gifts, make sure they are suitable for the receiver. When you tell the child to do something, ensure it is age-appropriate and doable for the child’s age.

When you assign people to work, match their skills and aptitude to the work. Mismatch of skills and inclinations lead to frustration of employee and failure of project.

### ❖ Match work with skills; gift with usability.

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*Language notes:* अन्ध-दर्पण न्यायः = *andha-darpana nyāyah*

*andha* = blind. *darpana* = mirror | *yasya* = whose. *nāsti* = na (not) asti (is).

*svayam* = self. *prajñā* = intelligence. *shāstram* = science. *tasya* = that person’s. *karoti* = does. *kim* = what. *lochanābhyaṁ vihīnasya* = to one without (vihīna) eyes (*lochana*). *darpaṇam* = mirror. *kim* = what. *kariṣhyati* = will do.

<sup>1</sup> यस्य नास्ति स्वयं प्रज्ञा शास्त्रं तस्य करोति किम् ।  
लोचनाभ्यां विहीनस्य दर्पणं किं करिष्यति ॥

*yasya nāsti svayam prajñā, shāstram tasya karoti kim |*  
*lochanābhyaṁ vihīnasya darpaṇam kim kariṣhyati ॥*

## PUTTING KALASHA ON TOP OF THE TEMPLE

*kalasha-purahsara-prasada*

कलश-पुरःसर-प्रासाद

When a temple is built, it is considered complete only when the *kalasha* is installed on top of the *shikhara*, the spire. But to compare the erection of the entire temple to putting up of just the *kalasha* is not proper. It is like comparing the efforts of one who makes the entire cake, to the one who merely puts the cherry on top or writes ‘Happy Birthday’.

A lot more work goes in making the temple or the cake. The one who puts the final *kalasha* has not actually done the same amount of work as the rest of the temple makers. Still, only after the *kalasha* is installed is it said that the temple is complete.

In a project, or teamwork, different people play different roles. They put in various amounts of work. While everyone’s efforts are commendable, one must still recognize the hard workers, the key workers. The person who organizes the entire event has obviously done much more than the one who merely writes the ‘Name Tag’ labels.

As a manager or lead, know who is putting in what efforts and recognize the same at the critical time, when it matters. Give the proper credit during evaluation of employees.

### ❖ Evaluate appropriately.

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*Language notes:* कलश-पुरःसर-प्रासाद-निर्माण-तुल्यम् = *kalasha-purahsara-prasada-nirmāṇa-tulyam* | *kalasha* = a kind of vase; also put on a temple spire at the end of the construction. *purahsara* = forerunner, preceded by. *prasada* = temple, large building. *nirmāṇa* = construction. *tulyam* = comparable.

## COUNTER-MISSILE

*astram-astréṇa shāmyati*

अस्त्रमस्त्रेण शाम्यति

In the all-time blockbuster Hindi movie *Sholay*, police inspector *Thākur* asks the prison warden for two small-time criminals from the prison to help him take revenge on the local dacoit *Gabbar*. When the jailor asks ‘Why take help from criminals’, he says – “Iron cuts iron.”<sup>1</sup> In *Nītisāra* 8:67 “Poison is countered by poison, missile is countered by missile and an elephant is controlled by another elephant of proven strength.”<sup>2</sup>

A lion was really disturbed by a mouse. The rodent would come out of his hole in the cave at night and nibble at the royal mane, thus making the big cat a fashion disaster. The lion was unable to reach inside the hole that the mouse called home because of its enormous paws. So, he thought, “The fighting forces should be selected based on the enemy. For taking care of this mouse, I should get a cat”. And so he did. Or as the saying goes, *It takes a thief to catch a thief*.

While one should always be fair, honest and all that good stuff, one has to be stern with evil designs. In life and work, you will find people who will not be positively impacted by your niceness. There are those who only understand their own language. Forgiveness does not work on them.

A persistent latecomer to meetings will understand the importance of others’ time when, in a meeting critical to him or her, all others show up late or show lack of interest. Sometimes we need to show the mirror, especially to those who do not come ‘well dressed’ for teamwork.

### ❖ Respond appropriately.

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*Language notes:* अस्त्रम्-अस्त्रेण शाम्यति = *astram-astréṇa shāmyati*. | *astram* = a weapon of throwing. *astréṇa* = by weapon. *sham* = to suppress, control. *shāmyati* = is controlled.

<sup>1</sup> लोहा लोहे को काटता है *lohā lohē ko kāṭatā hai*

<sup>2</sup> विषं विषेण व्यथते वज्रं वज्रेण भिद्यते ।

गजेन्द्रो दृष्टसारेण गजेन्द्रेणैव बध्यते ॥

*viṣham viṣhēṇa vyathaté, vajram vajréṇa bhidyaté ।  
gajéndro dṛiṣṭa-sārēṇa gajéndrēṇaiva badhyaté ॥*

## MERE RESOLVE WOULD NOT HELP

*ékākinī pratijñā*  
एकाकिनी प्रतिज्ञा

Come New Year, and there is a long list of resolutions. Come February and none of them are on the radar. The arrow's momentum diminishes. No matter what, merely making resolution will not help. Even if we take into account the diminished momentum of the arrow, the arrow has to be shot, it has to leave the bow.

You have to work upon your resolutions, or for that matter, your bucket list. Just making it would not work; you have to work on the list, bit by bit. It is like expecting to get well by merely chanting the name of the medicine. See *Water purifying kataka powder (jala-kataka-réṇu nyāyah)* on page 32. Other similar maxims are – “By mere resolve the purpose is not accomplished,”<sup>1</sup> “Tasks get completed by hard work, not just wishes. The animals do not walk into a sleeping lion’s mouth.”<sup>2</sup>

Making great road maps for the next year is fine, but make sure you will work on them as well. For that to happen, make sure the well-defined goals are reachable, doable in time with available skill-set, or in other words SMART<sup>3</sup> goals. What looks good on paper or in a spreadsheet does not matter. What matters is what you actually do.

### ❖ Follow resolve with action.

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*Language notes:* एकाकिनी प्रतिज्ञा हि प्रतिज्ञातं न साधयेत् = *ékākinī pratijñā hi pratijñātam na sādhayét.* | *ékākinī* = alone, mere. *pratijñā* = resolve, vow. *hi* = verily. *pratijñātam* = that for which the resolve was taken, resolution, goal. *na* = not. *sādhayét* = is accomplished.

<sup>1</sup> न हि प्रतिज्ञामात्रेणार्थसिद्धिः: *na hi pratijñā-mātréṇa-artha-siddhiḥ*

<sup>2</sup> उद्यमेन हि सिध्यन्ति कार्याणि न मनोरथैः ।

न हि सुप्रस्य सिंहस्य प्रविशन्ति मुखे मृगाः ॥

*udyaména hi sidhyanti kāryāṇi na mano\_rathaiḥ,*

*na hi suptasya simphasya pravishanti mukhé mṛigāḥ*

<sup>3</sup> Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.

## FINGERTIP-SIZED LAMP

*aṅguli-dīpikayā*

अंगुलि-दीपिकया

Archimedes said, “Give me a place to stand, and I will move the earth.” But that was metaphorically speaking and would need an incredibly long and strong iron beam. Imagine lifting an elephant using a thread!

This maxim refers to an attempt at overcoming pitch darkness with a tiny, fingertip-sized lamp – a weak effort, not fully prepared to deal with the gravity of the situation. It does not mean that one should not try. Rather, it suggests gathering appropriate resources to handle the task. The Rājpūt king Mahārāṇā Pratāp was very brave. When Akbar ousted his father Udai Singh II from Chittor and killed tens of thousands of civilians, Pratāp decided to never surrender, unlike many other Rājpūt kings. In the decisive battle of Haldīghāṭī, even though the Rājpūt army inflicted more damage on the Mughal army, it was heavily outnumbered 1:4 and finally lost the battle. (*Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, James Tod, 1829)

Engage appropriate resources for the task. It is not every day that you get a David who can conquer Goliath. Go by what is achievable realistically. So, either get more ammunition or find a smaller enemy to confront. This applies to both large and small enterprises. One of the challenges of a startup is the inability to muster enough resources for their activities. If your goals must be SMART, then your resource allocation should be *smart* as well.

Weigh the resources appropriately in terms of both quality and quantity. It is not just quantity that matters. Even if you have all the budget you want, you still need good talent to pull it through. Ten donkeys do not add up to an elephant. Surely, a lone ass would be far too insufficient!

### ❖ Allocate appropriate resources.

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*Language notes:* अंगुलि-दीपिकया ध्वान्त-ध्वंस-विधि: = *aṅguli-dīpikayā dhvānta-dhvāmsa-vidhiḥ*. | *aṅguli* = finger. *dīpikayā* = by small lamp (*dīpikā*). *dhvānta* = darkness. *dhvāmsa* = explode, destroy. *vidhi* = way of doing, method, rule.

## KEEP THE ESSENTIAL FIRE BURNING

*agni-hotra nyāyah*

अग्निहोत्र न्यायः

As per the tradition, a householder must perform some rituals, of which *agnihotra* was an important one. There are two types – one to be performed daily and the other for special purposes. It symbolizes the very entity of a household. The household ritual fire was kept burning by performing fire oblations every morning and evening. This tradition must have started when fire was not easily created like today. Fire has always been considered sacred and purifier (*pāvakah*). No matter what the circumstances, the performance of *agnihotra* ritual was never to be broken.

Similarly, one should identify the core necessities and make sure resources, time and energy are there to perform them. For students, it could be studying and doing homework before being exhausted by playing. For parents, it could be to make sure there is enough bread on the table and enough time and energy to spend with the children. In today's mad rush life, maybe taking fifteen minutes to exercise and meditate could be your essential fire.

At work, identify your essential fire, and make sure you have resources for it, no matter where else there is cost cutting. What defines you as a business, as a team? For example, you need some resources to get new customers. And, you surely do not want to lose the existing customers. So, 'good customer service' might be your fire. Even in bad times, you should ensure that you *listen to your customers*, address their issues, heed to their feedback. Never take the words 'delight your customer' lightly. Take it to heart as your essential fire and chant it daily as a morning mantra.

No matter what is the situation, do not compromise on your core values. If you do not stand for something, you will fall for anything. Identify what you stand for.

### ❖ Protect your core values and assets.

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*Language notes:* अग्निहोत्र न्यायः = *agni-hotra nyāyah* | *agni-hotra* = {ritual of} offering oblations to fire.

## BRAND NEW CONCEPT

*ananya-labhyah shabdārthah*

अनन्य-लभ्यः शब्दार्थः

If we know the words *tele* and *vision* we can deduce the meaning of the word *television*, or maybe even look it up in a dictionary. But even though we know the words *table* and *space*, it does not help in knowing the meaning of *tablespace*, which is a technical term from a specific vendor of relational database technology.

The meaning of some words cannot be known from other sources. It has to be known on its own, learned in context of the subject domain. Guessing does not work.

This fine point is one of the reasons why ancient Sanskrit texts are many times erroneously translated. A given word has many meanings. A simple example is a shloka that goes ‘*vinā go-rasam ko raso bhojanānām, vinā go-rasam ko raso bhūpatinām | vinā go-rasam ko raso kāminīnām, vinā go-rasam ko raso pañditānām*’.<sup>1</sup> The same word ‘go-rasam’ is used in four different meaning, all valid ones with no extrapolations. The four meanings of *go* are ‘cow, earth, senses and speech’. And the shloka says that “Without dairy products (milk, *ghee*, cheese etc.) what is the charm of food; without kingdom what is the charm of kings; without healthy senses what is the charm of beautiful maidens; without good speech what is the charm of wisdom?” Without prior knowledge of these meanings, there is no way you can figure out the beauty and wisdom of the shloka.

Ignorant yet arrogant people have found ways to ridicule the *Véda*-s as incomprehensible due to their own lack of understanding of the words, meanings and their context! The *Véda*-s are perhaps the oldest extant record of human composition and are a window in the earliest past of mankind, passed on intact in the form of sound. Just for that, they deserve proper attention and continued support. This many-millennia-old oral tradition may soon die due to the lack of financial support and social respect for those who have preserved them for many hundreds of generations! The full glory of *Véda*-s, even from *non-religious* aspects, is well beyond the scope of this little book. But a simple fact would suffice. The recitation of the *richā*-s has continued without error in oral

transmission across different regions of India. When language changes every few centuries and few hundred miles, how is it possible that allegedly ‘nomadic’ and ‘barbarians’ had a means of ensuring error-free human transmission of *Véda*-s? They had error-correcting code embedded in the compositions!<sup>2</sup> Electronic chip designers and computer scientists may find it interesting!

See *For Greater Good (tyajédékam)* on page 10 for another example of misunderstanding. Due to not considering the context one ends up drawing different *and* wrong conclusions. As long as one draws different conclusions, it is not a problem. When one draws *wrong* conclusions, the problem starts. It is better to remain silent rather than to talk rubbish.

Back to the maxim at hand. Sometimes you cannot explain something with the help of existing ones. It is a brand new concept. Like how do you explain sweet by just using words? You have to simply offer sugar.

Certain duties can be handled based on prior experience. Knowing one programming language helps us learn a new one. Having worked in a newspaper office may help us work at a magazine office. Certain others cannot be learned based on just prior experience. You have to learn them afresh.

Be open-minded. Keep learning. Do not jump to conclusions.

### ❖ Be open-minded.

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*Language notes:* अनन्यलभ्यः शब्दार्थः = *ananya-labhyah shabdārthaḥ*. | *an+anya* = *not+other*. *labhya* = *available*. *shabda* = *word*. *artha* = *meaning*.

<sup>1</sup> विना गो-रसं को रसो भोजनानां, विना गो-रसं को रसो भूपतिनाम् ।

विना गो-रसं को रसो कामिनीनां, विना गो-रसं को रसो पण्डितानाम् ॥

See, <http://blog.practicalsanskrit.com/2010/01/power-of-language.html>

<sup>2</sup> The Vedic *richā*-s are recited in various ways called *pātha*-s. They involve reciting the same line in various increasingly complex patterns. Mastering these patterns ensured catching any error that may creep in. The more complex patterns one had mastered, the more respect one earned.

## DIFFERENT PEOPLE INSPIRE DIFFERENTLY

*na cha sarvatra tulyatvam syāt*

न च सर्वत्र तुल्यत्वं स्यात्

There are times when one size does *not* fit all. A long lecture from the doctor on the perils of sedentary life may not work at all, compared with one disapproving glance from the girlfriend. A teenager may not listen to her parents' advice against drugs, but one pep talk and confidence boost from a close friend is enough to avoid the wrong path.

For the same given action, different people inspire differently. An example is given by *Kumārila* in his *Shloka-vārtika* that when going to battle, the soldiers are inspired by weapons display, the commander inspires by verbal commands and inspiration, and the king inspires merely by his presence. Different punishment for different people for the same crime was on this very principle. “For the same crime if a commoner is fined 1 *pāṇa*, a king should be fined 1000 *pāṇa-s*”<sup>1</sup> (*Manusmṛiti* 8:336) “For stealing, a sane worker be fined 8 times, a merchant 16 times, a soldier or administrator 32 times and a scholar, priest 64 or 128 times.” (*Manusmṛiti* 8:337-338)

Similarly, in an organization different people and positions inspire differently. If a director shows up in a meeting of the foot soldiers, they may get a shot of much needed inspiration in their work. While the team may expect the immediate boss to sit through the entire meetings of a mission-critical project, they would not expect more than a smile and a quick ‘Great job, guys!’ from the Big Boss.

### ❖ Different people, different inspirations.

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*Language notes:* न च सर्वत्र तुल्यत्वं स्यात्-प्रयोजक-कर्मणाम् = *na cha sarvatra tulyatvam syāt prayojaka-karmaṇām.* | *na* = not. *cha* = and. *svartra* = everywhere. *tulyatvam* = comparability. *syāt* = is (maybe, probably). *karmaṇām* = of works. *prayojaka* = [of] agent (one who promotes, instigates, effecting)

<sup>1</sup> कार्षपाणं भवेद्दण्डो यत्रान्यः प्राकृतो जनः ।

तत्र राजा भवेद्दण्डः सहस्रमिति धारणा ॥

*kārṣhāpanam bhaved\_danḍyo yatrānyah prākṛito janah;*  
*tatra rājā bhaved\_danḍyah sahasram\_itи dhāraṇā.* (*Manusmṛiti* 8:336)

## FINGERTIP CANNOT TOUCH ITSELF

*aṅgulyagram na ténaiva*

अंगुल्यग्रं न तेनैव

Forever, people have pointed fingers at others. These days, it is more at the touch screen devices like phones, pads and pods. But, a fingertip cannot touch itself. If someone boasts of going to space without a spacesuit, his fingertip might as well touch itself.

Sometimes, to solve an issue, an external factor may be needed. One cannot solve an issue by remaining an involved party! A pig rolling in the mud cannot see that it is dirty as mud. Some scientists even say that the mind may not be able to understand its own self. This maxim captures a situation of impossibility. Or as the saying goes '*When pigs fly*' or '*When a cat can lick its ears*'.

Seek out help when needed. Just like the eye cannot see itself, the fingertip cannot touch itself or the edge of a knife cannot cut itself, similarly, sometimes we need external source to get the work done. Many a times, we feel hesitant to ask for help – “Maybe it will show that I cannot do it myself. Maybe people will perceive it as my shortcoming or weakness.” No one person knows everything.

Another area where we can use external viewpoint is to know our own improvement points. Use a 360° review to know about your weaknesses and strengths, specially the weaknesses. We must obtain feedback about ourselves, from others, and not guess it on our own.

When communicating, it is a good idea to ask people to rephrase what you told them, to confirm that they understood as you meant it, rather than assuming it.

### ❖ Seek external help and feedback as needed.

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*Language notes:* अंगुल्यग्रं न तेनैवांगुल्यग्रेण स्पृश्यते = अंगुलि-अग्रं न तेन-एव-अंगुलि-अग्रेण स्पृश्यते = *aṅguli-agram na téna-éva-aṅguli-agréna sprishyaté* | *aṅguli* = finger. *agram* = front, tip. *na* = not. *éva* = only. *téna agréna* = by that tip. *sprishyaté* = touches.

## COW-MILK IN DOG-SKIN CONTAINER

*na hi pūtam syāt-go-kṣhīram*

न हि पूतं स्यात्-गो-क्षीरं

“Surely, cow-milk kept in dog-skin container is not considered pure.”

Cow's milk is held in high regard, better than other milks as well. Milk and its derivatives are also used in daily life in prayer ceremonies. Cow is addressed as mother in India. It is illegal to kill a cow. You will find cows on the road in cities, undisturbed, right in the middle of the chaos of blaring horns and smoke.

When I was doing my Masters in Computer Science at the University of Minnesota, some of us international students were invited to a local school to answer any questions children had in their world history class. One question asked to me was, ‘If cows in India are considered sacred, what about American cows?’ I said, ‘Cows are sacred for a reason. If nothing else, they are like our foster mothers, we drink their milk for life.’ But what I came to know almost 15 years later is that even the best American cow breed is actually Indian! I am sure not many of you know of this. But the website of American Brahman Breeders Association (<http://brahman.org>) says (emphasis is mine) –

Originating from a nucleus of approximately 266 bulls and 22 females of several *Bos indicus* (cattle of India) types imported into the United States between 1854 and 1926, today the Brahman breed has achieved acceptance for their environmental **adaptivity, longevity, mothering ability** and *efficient beef production*. *Bos indicus* cattle have been serving man for thousands of years. Throughout their evolution they have **endured** famine, insect pests, diseases and extreme temperature fluctuations. Thus through **natural selection** these cattle came to have the ability to survive and thrive where other types have failed. In their expansion, these cattle have **improved beef production in every country** in which they have been introduced, as they are mated to existing native cattle. While some 30 defined breeds or types of *Bos indicus* cattle have been identified in India, only a few of these breeds were selected to develop the American Brahman.

The first importation of Indian cattle of any notoriety came in 1854, when sugar and cotton farmer, Richard Barrow of St. Francisville, Louisiana, was presented with two bulls by the Government of Great Britain, for his services in teaching cotton and sugar cane production to

British officials establishing these crops in the deltas of India. Their offspring, known as Barrow grade Cattle, would achieve recognition and **their fame would soon spread around the globe**. Later importations would see cattle brought from Brazil, where large numbers of these Indian cattle could be found.

The American Brahman Breeders Association (ABBA) was organized in 1924. J.W. Sartwelle of Houston was the first recording secretary of the Association and it was he who proposed the word “*Brahman*” and so it was adopted as the name of the new beef breed. With strict selection, guided by the standard of excellence developed by founding breeders, the American Brahman has been recognized for its exceptional hardiness and physical stamina, its *ability to profitably produce on marginal lands*, to live twice as long as normally expected, with unequaled performance in weight per day of age. *As consumers shift to lean meat and lower calorie diets, Brahmans are perfectly positioned to fill the demand for a beef product which efficiently converts feed into high-quality beef, while producing a carcass free of excess fat.*

It is important to note that Indian breed of cows have revitalized economies the world over, but in post-colonial India, Jersey cows are considered best. The games powerful economies play! Making the source forget its own good breeds! See *Necklace around the neck (kaṇṭha-chāmikara nyāyah)* on page 23. To add salt to injury, the name of the best *meat* producing breed is Brahman. No matter which way you look at it – *brāhmaṇa* (the scholars and priests) or *brahman* (supreme divine) – it is going to be chopped up for its qualities of ‘hybrid vigor’, ‘gain efficiency’, and ‘high cutability, which results in a high yielding carcass with limited fat.’ The Brahman breed of cow is loved by the beef industry for its easy chop-ability! I hope you have not thrown up yet.

If you look at the photos of the Brahman breed bulls (at the above website), then you will realize why the cow was considered wealth in Vedic times. It is almost twice as large and healthy as the weak ones you see on Indian city streets. One can only imagine what wonderful healthy animals these must have been in ancient times of zero pollution and chemical toxins.

But even the Indian cow’s milk will not be considered pure if it is stored in a vessel made of dog-skin. In olden times, leather bags were made to hold or carry large amounts of water, especially while traveling or for the mobile soldiers. But one should not store milk in it. One should realize the value of milk, and store it properly. Care should be appropriate to the importance of the thing.

Bad company can ruin and malign your qualities. So watch out with whom you associate. Company matters. One should carefully guard one's merits and qualities, for they can be corrupted by association with wrong ideas, persons, and influences.

*An important side note to this is that one should carefully choose the recipient of power or powerful knowledge; else the knowledge and power itself can become corrupted, that is, misused.*

### ❖ Protect and care for your values.

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*Language notes:* न हि पूर्तं स्यादोक्षीरं श्वदृतौ धृतम् = न हि पूर्तं स्यात्-गो-क्षीरं श्व-दृतौ धृतम् = na hi pūtam syāt-go-kṣhīram shva-dṛitau dhṛitam | na = not. hi = surely. pūtam = pure. syāt = is (probably, maybe, perhaps). go = cow. kṣhīram = milk. shva = dog. dṛitau = in leather bag (dṛiti). dhṛitam = held

## CENTRAL LAMP

*antar-dīpikā nyāyah*

अन्तर्दीपिका न्यायः

We combine similar phrases for brevity. For example, ‘For good health you need proper diet, exercise and sleep’. Here, ‘proper’ is applicable for all three – diet, exercise and sleep. That is, it is applied inside, once for each noun. Think of lighting a lamp in the central area of the house (like the front hall) and each room gets the same light.

In *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, on the topic of how to realize the Divine and the greatness of Truth, there is the famous shloka that gives India its national motto – ‘Truth alone triumphs’ (*satyaméva jayatē*). One shloka before it is, “By truth, obtained, by austerity, verily, this, Self, by proper knowledge, by self control, always.”<sup>1</sup> The great philosopher saint *Shaṅkarāchārya* comments on this and says, “Here ‘always’ applies to all, that is, by *always* being truthful, by *always* following austerity, by *always* using proper knowledge, by *always* practicing self-control, one can know the Self.”<sup>2</sup>

For modern application of this, see *Threshold lamp* (*dēhalī-dīpa-nyāyah*) on page 14.

### ❖ Maximize resource usage.

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*Language notes:* अन्तः-दीपिका न्यायः = *antar-dīpikā nyāyah* | *antah* = in-between, inside (intra). *dīpikā* = small lamp (as in *Dīpikā Pādukoṇé*, actress)

<sup>1</sup> सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा हृषे प्रात्मा सम्यग्ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम्

‘By truth, obtained, by austerity, verily, this, Self, by proper knowledge, by self control, always’ (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.5)

<sup>2</sup> नित्यं सर्वदा । नित्यं सत्येन, नित्यं तपसा, नित्यं सम्यग्ज्ञानेन-इति सर्वत्र नित्यशब्दः-अन्तर्दीपिका न्यायेन-अनुपत्तव्यः

*nityam sarvadā. nityam satyéna, nityam tapasā, nityam samyagjñānéná-iti sarvatra nitya-shabdah-antradīpikā nyāyéna-anuṣṭhaktavyah*

## BEGGARS DO NOT BEG FROM BEGGARS

*na hi bhikṣuko bhikṣukāntaram*

न हि भिक्षुको भिक्षुकान्तरम्

“It is not worthy of a beggar to beg among beggars.”

We can understand it in two different ways. Someone who is short of time (begging for time) to help you – do not even bother them for help. First see, if someone who has the time and resource can help you.

The second is that when you need help, first seek those who can actually help in terms of experience, knowledge and power. Do not go to a novice right away.

Even when you have no such person in immediate sight, what good is to beg from another beggar, whether that person lacks in time or resource or knowledge? It would be like a *Blind leading another blind* (*andhasya-éva-andha-lagnasya*) on page 25!

When you do not have something, seek someone who has it. Seeking help from those equally lacking as you, will not solve the problem. Putting ten inept people on a project will not make it work, go find one able person who knows what to do. Even ten asses would not make an elephant, what to say of just one.

### ❖ Seek the resourceful.

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*Language notes:* न हि भिक्षुको भिक्षुकान्तरं याचितुमर्हति = न हि भिक्षुकः भिक्षुक-अन्तरं याचितुम्-अर्हति = *na hi bhikshuko bhikshuka-antaram yāchitum-arhati* | *bhikshukah* = beggar. *bhikshuka-antaram* = among beggar. *yāchitum* = for the purpose of asking. *arhati* = is worthy.

## SENSITIVE LIKE THE EYEBALL

*akṣhi-pātra nyāyah*

अक्षि-पात्र न्यायः

Sometimes (or many times, depending upon whom you ask) due to work-pressure or sensory-distraction, we ignore an injury, headache, pain in the neck and shoulders, or even hunger pangs. But, even an eyebrow-hair or a speck of dust falling in the eye has us jumping up and down. The eyeball is over-sensitive compared with other parts of the body. While the body does this for very good reasons, the maxim captures the essence of someone who is over sensitive, more than the situation demands, most probably just to get undeserved attention. Or as the saying goes, *Squeaky wheel gets the grease*. But it is also the first one to be replaced.

There are such people all around us, whether in office, among friends or relatives who whine a lot. Making a big deal out of every little thing is a way to grab attention. While we may have no recourse against relatives except visiting them less frequently, this attitude can strain work and friendships easily. The squeaky wheel gets the grease, but only for a few times. Then it is replaced. It also means we should not take everything personally either, which tends to generate over-sensitive reactions.

Except for pilgrimage to high altitude mountains in India where porters carry the weak or the disabled, we need to carry our own weight around.

### ❖ Do not be over-sensitive.

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*Language notes:* अक्षि-पात्र न्यायः = *akṣhi-pātra nyāyah* |

*akṣhi* = eye. *pātra* = receptacle, container.

## EVEN THE WEAK CAN STOP THE MIGHTY

*atyanta-balavanto 'pi*

अत्यन्त-बलवन्तोऽपि

“Extremely strong and urban people can also be stopped by weak people when protected by the king”.

Even in olden times people's movement was tracked, especially across country borders for security and tax purposes. The capital city and all important cities had gates that were guarded by strong guards and possibly weak clerks.

The maxim says that even these weak clerks could stop the physically strong and rich urbanites. Because these weak clerks were protected by the king, they represented the state, and the power of the entire state was behind them. Just like the clerk at modern customs and immigration check points. So, it is not just one's own power that matters, it also matters whom you know, and who is willing to extend help to you. Your power is increased to include all their powers.

It matters whom you know (or actually who knows you!). A very similar story is of the *Tīṭibha* bird who forced the ocean to return his eggs, because of his contacts with *Garuḍa* the king of birds, who has direct connection to Lord *Viṣṇu*! See *Tīṭibha bird and the sea* (*Tīṭibha nyāyah*) on page 81.

Edward (Richard Gere) in the Hollywood blockbuster *Pretty Woman* can delay the naval contract in appropriations committee for months just because he knows people. All of politics is a lot of connections and networking. Wrong, but real.

### ❖ Who you know, matters.

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*Language notes:* अत्यन्तबलवन्तोऽपि पौरजानपदा जनाः । दुर्बलैरपि वाध्यन्ते पुरुषैः-

पार्थिवाण्थितैः = *atyanta-balavantah-api paur\_jāna\_padāḥ janāḥ* | *durbalaiḥ-api bādhyanté puruṣhaiḥ pārthiva-āshritaiḥ* | *atyanta* = extremely. *balavantah* = strong. *api* = also. *paur\_jāna\_padāḥ* = people of the city and the republic; citizens. *janāḥ* = people. *pārthiva-āshritaiḥ* = by king-dependent, supported. *durbalaiḥ* = by weak. *puruṣhaiḥ* = by men. *api* = also. *bādhyanté* = are stopped.

## CRYING IN THE FOREST

*aranya-rodana nyāyah*

अरण्य-रोदन न्यायः

*Aranya* is a wonderful word. It means forest, a land that is neither cultivated nor grazed<sup>1</sup>. But there is another powerful meaning. *Ranya* = war, battle. *ranya* = worthy of war. *a-ranya* = not worthy of war, or where there is no war. That is, one where there is peace, internal and external. Or where one can go to have peace. An entire body of scriptures called *Āranyaka* was written by forest-dwelling sages. It is also suitable for those who are retiring from active social life.

Back to the maxim at hand. There are various sayings to this effect. If a peacock dances in the forest, who has seen it? That is, what is the big deal if a peacock danced in the forest. If you have a talent that no one knows about, it is as good as not having it. What good is the money that is not used or given, strength that does not protect someone, ability that is not used appropriately?

When a toddler is in trouble it goes straight to mother, the sure shot solution for every toddling problem. It does not waste time trying to get help from others. What if they don't know how to scare the purple shoe monster, why waste time?

Go where you can get a solution, do not waste time barking up the wrong tree. Know where to complain, which shoulder to sob on. Do not take an HR issue and cry all over the technical forum. Do not complain about your water connection to your telephone operator.

### ❖ Whine where it matters.

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*Language notes:* अरण्य-रोदन न्यायः = *aranya-rodana nyāyah* | *aranya* = forest.  
*rodana* = crying.

<sup>1</sup> रि ऋ॒ verb means 'to go'. *aranyakam* अरण्यम् = *aryaté mrigaiḥ* अर्यते मृगैः = [one that is] wandered-in by animals.

## UNGIVING MERCHANT

*aditsorvanijah*

अदित्सोर्वणिजः

Once there was a merchant who was approached by some people for charity. The merchant neither wanted to give nor did he want to appear a miser. So, he said he did not have money today, why don't they come tomorrow and collect. He even gave a signed chit of paper as an IOU saying, 'Collect the money tomorrow.' And every day he would say, 'But read the chit! Collect it tomorrow.'

Such attitude is bad in many ways. It shows that you do not respect or care for the other person or cause. It also shows that you still want to appear a nice guy, without having to do anything nice. If everyone in the society were to do so, it would not run for long. Do not promise what you do not want to do, and do what you promise. *One who is good at making excuses, is seldom good at anything else.*

You will find some people at work who always make an excuse – for anything! They are more creative at telling you why they cannot help you than to actually help you.

Once when I asked my sixth-grader son about his exams, he said he did not finish the paper fully, for he ran out of time, the pencil lead broke, but he knew the answer. I had to tell him – "I will listen, but no one else will. It does not matter how you lost time sharpening the pencil. You should carry five sharpened pencils for the exams beforehand." In the end, you need to get the results. Else, the line is long in a world that has no time.

The world does not care for your excuses; it wants results.

### ❖ Deliver and delight.

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*Language notes:* अदित्सोर्वणिजः: प्रतिदिनं पत्र-लिखित-श्वस्तन-दिन-भणन न्यायः =  
aditsoh vanijah prati-dinam patram-likhita-shvastana-dina-bhaṇana nyāyah  
aditsoh = aditsat or aditsu = one who is not inclined to give. vanijah =  
merchant; from this comes vānijya = economics. prati-dinam = every-day.  
patram = letter. likhita = [having] written. shvastana = about tomorrow. dina =  
day. bhaṇana = speaking, proclaiming;

## HUNDRED ELEPHANT HERDS ON FINGERTIP

*angulyagré hasti*

अंगुल्यग्रे हस्ति

We all know someone who has the habit of spicing up a conversation with exaggeration. A little bit of it is good, and entertaining. But over doing it starts to smell. Someone showing off how prosperous or strong he is says, he has hundred elephant herds sitting on his fingertip. Not one or two or even three, because I could believe three elephants on the finger tip. Heck, once I myself had five on mine. But no, sir, he has got a full century, hundred herds of tuskers, right here on his finger tip, that too on the pinkie of the left hand. And you scream, “Come on, who do you think I am?” This maxim is used to describe a totally ridiculous situation, or as the younger generation would say ‘ridonculous’. This word was made famous by the electrifying Hollywood movie called *Bolt*.<sup>1</sup> (*Adjective. ‘Significantly more absurd than ridiculous to an almost impossible extreme; without possibility of serious consideration.’ Urban Dictionary*)

Such exaggerating people also happen to work in offices. You know very well when they are shooting off the wrong end. It would be so much better to keep it honest, at least believable. Keep some shred of truth, or else you lose credibility, very fast.

When making gold ornaments, a little bit of impurity has to be mixed to give it shape. This is at most 2 carats in India (or 10 in the USA) out of 24 carats. A little bit of spicing makes food and life interesting. Those water-hole stories are the reason many people go to office in the first place. But do not interchange the proportions. Do not mix gold in common metal and sell it as gold. Keep it believable.

### ❖ Don't be ‘ridonculous’. Keep it credible.

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*Language notes:* अंगुल्यग्रे हस्ति-यूथ-शतमास्ते = *aṅguli-agré hasti-yūtha-shatam-āsté.* | *aṅguli* = finger. *agré* = on the tip. *hasti* = elephant. *yūtha* = herd. *shatam* = hundred.

<sup>1</sup> Check the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4EJZ2nd8Rc>

## FIRE IN ANOTHER HOUSE

*anya-véshma-sthitād\_dhūmāt*  
अन्य-वेशम-स्थितात्-धूमात्

“From the smoke coming from one house, one does not hold the opinion that the fire is in another house.”

Imagine your house catches fire. You call the fire department; you hear the sirens from far away getting louder and louder till they turn with a screech in your alley. And, just as you heave a sigh of relief, they start pouring water on the neighbor’s house, with ladders stretching up and all the high-adrenalin drama! Would you not scream – “Do you not see the smoke coming from *my* house? Why in the world are you dousing a perfectly good house with water and leaving this one ablaze?”

Upon seeing smoke from a house, one does not assume that the fire is in another. In the face of evidence, one does not draw wrong conclusion. *Where there is smoke, there is fire.*

When there is a problem reported, follow the smoke trail. Pinpoint the source of the problem. Do not start barking up the wrong tree and expect that the problem will be solved. Your analytical abilities should be sharp enough to find out which house is burning!

### ❖ Pinpoint the problem.

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*Language notes:* अन्यवेशमस्थितादधूमात्र वेशमान्तरमग्निमत् = अन्य-वेशम-स्थितात्-धूमात् न वेशम-अन्तरं-अग्नि-मत् = *anya-véshma-sthitāt-dhūmāt na veshma-antaram-agni-mat* | *anya* = other. *véshma* = house. *sthita* = situated. *dhūma* = smoke. *na* = not. *veshma-antaram* = house-another. *agni* = fire. *mat* = opinion.

## MONGOOSE ON HOT SURFACE

*ava\_tapté-nakula-sthitam*

अव-तसे-नकुल-स्थितम्

“A mongoose on hot ground.”

It reminds me of a National Geographic film of a desert lizard running on the Saharan sands. Even by 9 in the morning, the sand gets very hot. The animal has to take frequent short breaks to stand on two feet at a time, and then switch to other two feet and run. Front right and rear left up in the air to cool off; then switch the legs – front left and rear right up in the air! Poor lizard.

It denotes a fickle mind or a person who does not stick to one decision. There is another similar maxim ‘a crow at a pilgrim site’<sup>1</sup> where the crow is not able to sit still, hopping from place to place and not able to decide which tourist’s food to snatch or on whose head to drop some dropping.

If you give your word, stick to it. If you need to make a decision, then make it. Do not keep changing your mind all the time. It makes life difficult for others. In the famous dialog from *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, Tuco says, “When you have to shoot, shoot. Don’t talk.”<sup>2</sup>

Do not make decision by indecision.

### ❖ Make up your mind. Decide.

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*Language notes:* अवतसे-नकुल-स्थितम् = *ava\_tapté-nakula-sthitam* | *tapta* = hot.  
*nakula* = mongoose. *sthitam* = situated.

<sup>1</sup> तीर्थ-काक न्यायः *tīrtha-kāka nyāyah* = pilgrimage-crow maxim

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUslGSoEH8I>

## HONEY ON TREE

*arké chén\_madhu vindéta*

अर्के चेन्मधु विन्देत

“If honey should be found [from a honeycomb] on a [nearby] ‘arka’ tree, then why should one wander to the mountain [to some wild tree with honeycomb]?”

Do not touch the nose from the behind the head, when it is possible to do it in a simpler way. Do not adopt a more complicated means when an easy one is available.

A wonderful example of the ‘creativity and simplicity of solution’ is found in Dr. V Rāmachandran, the world famous neurologist known for his mirror-box solution to the phantom limb pain. In his TED talk he jokingly confessed that he could have got a multi-million dollar grant for the research, but he simply did it in a few dollars. The mirror is used by the patient to move the good arm and see its image and dupe the brain in thinking it was moving the phantom arm.

Technology and large budgets sometimes make us think that there are no simple solutions to problems. A lot of money and human resource has to be thrown at any problem. This is very much the tendency in the USA for the latter part of the last century, when opulence set in. The same was happening to the MNCs (multi-national companies) in India before the recent economic crisis. Only now, they are trying to adopt the so-called ‘austerity’ approach, and the focus is on cost-effective methods.

Follow the KISS rule – ‘Keep It Simple, Stupid.’ (And *not*, as someone suggested, ‘Keep It Simply Stupid’)

### ❖ Find simple solutions.

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*Language notes:* अर्के चेन्मधु विन्देत किमर्थं पर्वतं व्रजेत् = arké chénmadhu vindéta  
kim-artham parvatam vrajét | arké = on arka tree. madhu = honey. vindéta = should find (vinda). kim = what, why. artham = purpose. parvatam = mountain. vrajét = should wander

## WHOLE IS MORE THAN THE SUM OF THE PARTS

*avayava-prasiddhēḥ*

अवयव-प्रसिद्धेः

When people come together, they can actually excel more than their individual existence. Small parts make a car, but no single part can claim to transport. An entire team of people can achieve much more than the individual people.

The Sanskrit word ‘*ashva-karṇa*’ (Vatica Robusta) is the name of a tree whose leaves resemble that of a horse ear. Here ‘*ashva-karṇa*’ does not mean horse or ear, but a separate new entity altogether. So the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Sanskrit allows for a compounding called *bahuvrīhi samāsa* where the actual meaning is not just the parts, but a third entity. For example, *nīlakanṭha* (blue-throat) means one who has a blue throat, like a blue-throated robin or Lord *Shiva*.

Have a holistic approach, a perspective. See more than the parts. Do not miss the forest while looking for the trees. While a forest is made of trees, a single tree cannot support a lion population. A single tree cannot even cause rain.

See also, *Blind men and the elephant* (*andha-gaja-nyāyah*) on page 6 and *Brand new concept* (*ananya-labhyah-shabdārtha-nyāyah*) on page 54.

### ❖ Power of coming together.

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*Language notes:* अवयव-प्रसिद्धेः समुदाय-प्रसिद्धिर्बलीयसी = *avayava-prasiddhēḥ samudāya-prasiddhiḥ-balīyasi* | *samudāya-prasiddhiḥ* = group-fame. *balīyasi* = more powerful. *avayava-prasiddhēḥ* = compared to/than (-ēḥ) fame (*prasiddhiḥ*) of parts (*avayava*).

## STONE AND CLAY

*ashma-loṣṭa nyāyah*

अश्म-लोष्ट न्यायः

If I give you a lump of clay and a stone and ask, “Is the clay hard and heavy?” You would say no. But if the stone was replaced with a ball of cotton, your answer will change.

Compared with a ball of cotton a lump of clay is hard and heavy, but the same lump is soft and light compared with a stone. This implies that many things in life are relative. So are our joys and sorrows. We are happy when we get a promotion and buy that new car, however small. And when our colleague gets bigger promotion and a bigger car, our happiness diminishes.

The secret to life’s happiness does not lie in comparison but in being content with what we can get legally and morally. It does *not* mean not putting in proper effort, but not to be miserable if our best efforts fall short of the grand desire we have. Maybe we were just not meant for it, or vice versa.

When two things have only little difference we would say ‘Stone and brick’<sup>1</sup>. The science of brick has a long tradition in India going back to the Sarasvatī-Sindhu (Indus Valley) civilization, where you see its extensive use in wide roads, excellent sewer system and public buildings.

In Hindi there is a saying for ‘very little difference’ *Difference between 19 and 20*<sup>2</sup>. For larger difference one would say *Difference between earth and sky*.<sup>3</sup>

### ❖ It is all relative.

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*Language notes:* अश्म-लोष्ट न्यायः = *ashma-loṣṭa nyāyah* |

*ashma* = stone; *loṣṭa* = lump of clay.

<sup>1</sup> पापाणेष्टका न्यायः *pāṣhānēṣṭakā nyāyah*

<sup>2</sup> उन्नीस-बीस का फर्क *unnīs-bees ka farq*

<sup>3</sup> ज़मीन आसमान का अन्तर *zameen-āsamān kā antar*

## CROW SPOILS THE CURD

*kāka-dadhi-ghātaka nyāyah*

काक-दधि-घातक न्यायः

In villages, curd is churned to make butter and buttermilk. The open courtyard is usually the place of all such domestic action. When someone says to ‘keep the crows off the curd’, it means keep the curd safe, and not just the crows away. It implies to keep anything from falling in the curd, eating it up or tumbling the vessels containing the curd, from other birds, monkeys or running toddlers.

But, it is simply said to watch out for the “crow – the curd spoiler”, all others factors are implied. The intent is to watch out and protect the curd from any harm, crows or pigeons! So, this is used when one specific thing is said, but the general spirit of it is intended.

Incidentally, this situation occurred just a few days back, as I write this page. My wife had put the milk to boil on the stove in the evening. She told me to set an alarm on my cell phone to turn off the stove in five minutes, while she put our four-year-old to bed. I complied to the letter, exact five minutes and the stove was shut off. When she came out later, she asked me if the milk had boiled before I shut it off. It seemed it had just warmed, not boiled. I got a nice lecture on not getting her point to ‘let the milk boil’ before shutting off the stove. I think this happens a lot with inter-gender communication. *Women expect men to get the spirit of the message, and men simply follow it to the letter.*

Understand the spirit of a statement, not just its literal meaning, and do the needful. As we move vertically, it is of even more importance to understand the core meaning of the message or instruction. We cannot nit-pick and try to find faults and say, but you did not say this or that. Understand the intent and act accordingly.

### ❖ Understand the spirit of the message.

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*Language notes:* काक-दधि-घातक न्यायः = *kāka-dadhi-ghātaka nyāyah* | *kāka* = crow. *dadhi* = curd. *ghātaka* = destroyer.

## SEEING ONE, REMEMBERING ANOTHER

*éka-sambandhi-darshané*

एक-सम्बन्धि-दर्शने

This is about associative memory. When we perceive (see, hear, smell, etc.) one thing, it can remind us of another related thing. For example, smelling a fragrance may remind you of someone in college who wore that fragrance and you just could not get the courage to propose!

Dr. V. Rāmachandran, the world famous neurologist and author who worked on phantom limbs, talks about how the processing centers for numbers and colors are close to each other in the brain. At birth they are all connected, and with age they slowly separate. In some people, they remain partially connected even after growing up. These people actually see colors when they hear a number! These are the same ‘artistic’ and creative people who connect seemingly unrelated concepts.

But we are talking about even otherwise normal people, our memories are tagged inside, and when one memory comes up, some other with the same tag may also pop up! Many memory increasing techniques revolve around this concept – create visuals, mnemonics or rhymes that aid in memory.

In high school chemistry, my brother and I developed a little rhyme that enabled us to memorize the entire periodic table of elements! The compact *sūtra* method of ancient Indian works was based on similar principle. The subject was elaborated in the class, the *sūtra* acted as an aid to memory to the whole discussion that went. Most earlier Sanskrit works were set to musical meter (mainly verses called *shloka* or *anuṣṭupa chhanda*) for this purpose of memorization.

### ❖ Memory is associative.

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*Language notes:* एक-सम्बन्धि-दर्शने-ज्ञ्य-सम्बन्धि-स्मरणम् = *éka-sambandhi-darshané-anya-sambandhi-smaraṇam* |

*éka* = one. *sambandhi* = related. *darshané* = in seeing. *anya* = other. *smaraṇam* = remembering.

## CROOK DISGUISED AS COOK

*taskara-kandu nyāyah*

तस्कर-कन्दु न्यायः

A bold thief one day dared to enter the palace. But before he could escape, the guards got a hint and started searching for him. Desperate to save himself, he entered the royal kitchen and disguised himself as the cook. Come morning, he had to make the royal breakfast and needless to say he was caught immediately, for he was a terrible cook. His identity was revealed when he was not able to cook anything properly.

Even when you lie, lie within limits, something that you can deliver to some extent. When people exaggerate, they forget the limits and start claiming they have ‘hundred elephant herds on their fingertip’, that too on the pinkie! See *Hundred elephant herds on the fingertip (angulyagré hasti)* on page 67.

You cannot fake where it matters. Unless of course, if you are Sally (Meg Ryan) from *When Harry Met Sally* in the restaurant!

Take up something within your capabilities, something that you can deliver. Do not even claim something you cannot deliver. Sooner or later, it will be caught. Then you will be worse than where you started; unless of course, if your field is politics! Then all is fair and square.

### ❖ You cannot fake where it matters.

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*Language notes:* तस्करकन्दु न्यायः = *taskara-kandu nyāyah* | *taskara* = thief;  
*kandu* = cook

## YOU COOK IN SPITE OF BEGGARS' BEGGING

*na hi bhikṣukāḥ santi*

न हि भिक्षुकाः सन्तीति

“It is not that because beggars are there people do not put cooking vessels on fire nor is it that because animals are there people do not sow barley seeds.”

One should not avoid work due to potential obstacles or troubles. There is no path without obstacles, but that should never be an excuse not to take up on the journey. Even if you see a path that has no obstacles now, once you start the journey you will start seeing them. Who has not ventured to pluck a rose because of the thorns around it? And who has stopped eating just because it may give them indigestion?

One of the earliest usage of this is seen in *Mahābhāṣya – Patañjali*'s commentary of *Pāṇini*'s masterpiece work of grammar, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. In a context of several exceptions to the rule, he says that “Just because exceptions are there does not mean rules and definitions should not be made. Who ever stopped cooking because beggars might come begging. And whoever stopped farming because animals might come eat the harvest.” (*sūtra* 1.1.39 *vārtika* 16)

This is doubly important in work and business. The stakes are higher, risks are higher, the obstacles and future unknown. Yet, you have to start. You cannot wait for the clouds to disperse, the economy to improve, and all the stars to line up nicely for you.

### ❖ You cannot ‘not start’ because of potential obstacles.

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*Language notes:* न हि भिक्षुकाः सन्तीति स्थाल्यो नाधिश्रियन्ते न च मृगाः सन्तीति यवा  
नोप्यन्ते = *na hi bhikṣukāḥ santi-iti sthālyah na adhi-shriyanté, na cha mṛigāḥ*  
*santi iti yavā na upyanté | na* = not. *hi* = verily. *bhikṣukāḥ* = beggars. *santi* =  
*are. iti* = hence. *sthāla* = cooking vessel. *adhishrī* = to put in fire, i.e. to put the  
vessel on fire for cooking. *cha* = and. *mṛigāḥ* = animals. *yavāḥ* = barley. *upyati*  
= sows.

## BLIND HITTING THE PILLAR

*na hyésha sthāñoraparādhah*

न ह्येष स्थाणोरपराधः

“It is not this pillar’s fault if the blind did not see it.”

There was a drunk who went home pretty late. But instead of the house, he started to knock on an electricity pole and yelling, ‘Open the door.’ A passerby, seeing that reason would not work with the drunk, said, ‘It seems, there is no one at home.’ To which the drunk retorted, ‘Do not give me that excuse. Can you not see the upstairs’ lights are on?’

It is not the pillar’s fault, if the drunk thought of it as his house. Do not blame others for your shortcoming.

There is another Hindi saying, “Not knowing how to dance, she blames the stage.”<sup>1</sup>

Do not blame external factors for your internal shortcomings.

### ❖ Do not blame others for your fault.

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*Language notes:* न ह्येष स्थाणोरपराधो यदेनमन्थो न पश्यति = न हि एषः स्थाणोः-  
अपराधः यत्-एनम्-अन्थः न पश्यति = *na hi-éshah̄ sthāñoh̄-aparādhah̄ yat-énam-andhah na pashyati* | *na* = not. *hi* = surely. *éshah̄* = this (very close). *sthāñoh̄* = of pillar, post (*sthāñu*). *aparādhah̄* = crime. *yat* = that. *énam* = to it. *andhah̄* = blind. *pashyati* = sees.

<sup>1</sup> नाच न जाने आँगन टेढ़ा *nāch na jānē āṅgan ṭedhā*

## WATERING THE MANGO TREE

*āmra-séka-pitṛi-tarpaṇa nyāyāḥ*

आम्र-सेक-पितृ-तर्पण न्यायः

“In the act of giving libations to ancestors ‘*pitṛi-tarpaṇa*’, the mango tree also gets watered.”

The offering of libations is a ritual that remembers the ancestors. Being connected to your roots, past, tradition is very important. In developing countries with long history of traditions, they are nowadays taught the other way around, in order to be ‘progressive’. This started as a strategy from the Imperialist era of deculturalization of the colonies, of eroding the self-esteem of the colonies. A classic example, among many, is Katherine Mayo who wrote *Mother India* (1927) to degrade India, after a colonial ‘success’ of *The Isles of Fear* (1925) to degrade Philippines, a US colony at the time. And this is how Celtic *All Hallows' Eve* was also turned into a present day mockery of Halloween. On the other hand, in advanced countries with not much history or forgotten history, people are trying to connect back to the past.

It is important to know where you come from, what others have already done, what paths they have crossed and how they did it. It is to honor and remember them that such rituals of *pitṛi-tarpaṇa*, pouring water at the roots of a [mango] tree, feeding the *brāhmaṇa*-s etc. is done. In the act of offering libation, the side effect is that the mango tree gets watered as well, and pious man gets fed.

When new mothers breastfeed their babies, not only are the babies healthier with better immune system, they have less ear infections and are happier with better sleep; even the mother loses pregnancy related body fat much faster. This apparently *new* discovery is being promoted by the Canadian Paediatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the WHO. A recent article by Margaret Boland, MD, in the February 2009 issue of *Paediatric Child Health*, reaffirmed a previous study about breastfeeding (*Paediatric Child Health* 2005;10(3):148 at [www.cps.ca](http://www.cps.ca)). It says that upto the age of six months, infants should be exclusively breastfed, and breastfeeding can continue even up to age of two years. Apart from hundreds of indispensable

benefits to the child for all his/her life, the mother too gets immensely benefitted.

On a side note, it is indeed sad that even for this most natural and ancient phenomenon, people in ‘advanced’ countries first gave up breastfeeding for wrong reasons due to marketing by milk formula companies and other life-style experts and feminists. The same people apparently need ‘scientific’ proof to come back to this most natural and fundamental practice of the class of animals called mammals. In Indian tradition, the child is given the first solid food, *annaprāshana*, only at six months of age.

When we choose our rituals, practices, projects carefully, we can actually reap multiple benefits.

For a long time, the business world held the opinion that employees were an *asset*, a *resource*, just like furniture or equipment. Starting from coal-mining few centuries ago and all the way to a few decades back even in advanced countries like the USA, this was the attitude. Result?

Employees *felt* like a piece of furniture. Now, the focus is on ‘happy employee’. Why? Well, if you focus on keeping the employees happy, challenged and respected, they will give their best in return.

By focusing on one thing – employee care as a human being – you get manifold returns in terms of employee loyalty, productivity and involvement.

### ❖ Added benefits of one act.

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*Language notes:* आम्र-सेक-पितृ-तर्पण न्यायः = āmra-séka-pitṛi-tarpaṇa nyāyah |  
āmra = mango. séka = sprinkling, watering, moistening. pitṛi = father, forefathers, ancestors. tarpaṇa = giving libations to ancestors.

## MAN WITH THREE KIDS

*na hi triputra dviputraḥ*

न हि त्रिपुत्रो द्विपुत्रः

“A man with three kids is not said to be a father of two kids.”

In *Pāṇini*'s *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, comes a *sūtra* (6.4.96) “When not preceded by two prefixes, the second-last vowel of root verb *chhad* is shortened when the affix *gha* is added.” So, when there is only one prefix, the word remains *chhadah*, but when two prefixes are used, it becomes *chhādah* (second-last vowel becomes long). The question is raised that for three prefixes, should the vowel remain short, since three is not equal to two. *Patañjali* explains in his *Mahābhāṣya* “No, it still remains long, because having three prefixes also means it has two. When asked to call [parents] who do not have two kids, one does not bring a those with three kids.”<sup>1</sup>

For example, if a company policy makes someone eligible for a training if they don't have four years of experience, a person with five or six years does not become eligible. ‘Not four’ here means ‘less than four’. The grammar rule itself is irrelevant for the current discussion, but the principle is simple.

This again goes to stress that one should not take things literally but in the sense it is meant. See also, *Crow spoils the curd* (*kāka-dadhi-ghātaka*) on page 73. Many children do this; it is a natural tendency to explore or avoid the main issue. As part of their growing up, with lot of time to figure out how to irritate the parents (who have less and less time every day), children get good at this. New-age parents who believe in ‘the power of discussion’ often end up banging their heads against the fully developed *illogic* of a four-year-old!

### ❖ Avoid illogic. Understand the intent.

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*Language notes:* न हि त्रिपुत्रो द्विपुत्र इति कथ्यते = न हि त्रिपुत्रः द्विपुत्रः इति कथ्यते = *na hi triputraḥ dviputraḥ iti kathyaté* | *na* = not. *hi* = surely. *tri-putraḥ* = one with three sons. *dviputraḥ* = one with two sons. *iti* = thus. *kathyaté* = is said.

<sup>1</sup> छादेर्घेऽद्व्यपसर्गस्य (छ-आदेः, घे, अ-द्वि-उपसर्गस्य) For example, *urash\_chhādah* (उरश्छादः), *prach\_chhādah* (प्रच्छादः), *dantach\_chhādah* (दन्तच्छादः); but *sam\_upach\_chhādah* (समुपच्छादः) and *sam\_upa\_atich\_chhādah* (समुपातिच्छादः).

## **TITTIBHA BIRD AND THE SEA**

*tittibha nyāyah*

टिट्टिभ न्यायः

There was a *Tittibha* bird (*Parra Jacana*) couple that lived near the sea. When it was time to lay eggs, the female asked, “Dear, find me a safe place to lay eggs.” He said, “This is as safe a place as any other.” “But, the waves reach here in high tide.” Upon which the ‘stud of the beach’ said, “Do you think I am any weaker than the sea?” She laughed, but lay her eggs when the time came. The sea having heard the tall claim, swept the eggs away in a bid to test the bird’s strength.

Upon this, the male *Tittibha* went to *Garuḍa*, the king of birds and pleaded injustice, “The sea took my eggs without any fault of mine.” *Garuḍa* then takes the plea to his master, Lord *Vishnu*. And Lord *Vishnu* commanded the sea to give back the eggs, which were taken without any fault of the *Tittibha* bird.

It is similar to the ‘Even the weak can stop the mighty’ (*atyanta-balavanto’pi*). This story is used in *Pañchatantra* and *Hitopadésha* by *Damanaka*, the Jackal minister to drive the point to *Pingalaka*, the Lion king that ‘one should not confront without knowing the true strength of the opponent.’

It matters whom you know, and with networking you can get a lot of things accomplished. Check out the opposition and its reach before confronting.

### **❖ Networking matters.**

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*Language notes:* टिट्टिभ न्यायः = *tittibha nyāyah* | *tittibha* bird = *Parra Jacana*, common in India, known as *tijihari* in Hindi.

## IMAGINARY SWEETS

*āshā-modaka-tripta nyāyah*

आशा-मोदक-तृस न्यायः

A *laddoo* is a small ball made by squeezing *boondī* or *bésan* powder or deep fried flour. A *modaka* is a special dumpling with sweet fillings. It is a favorite of Lord *Ganésha*. Who does not like sweets? Close your eyes and imagine that you are eating the finger-smacking, tongue-tingling, syrup-dripping sweet ‘thang’ called a *gulāb-jāmun*, or your favorite sweet. There! Happy now? Or do you want to eat a *real* one as well?

In *Kathā-Sarit-Sāgara* Chapter 6, there is a story of King *Sātavāhana* and his queen, who were playing in the pool, throwing water at each other. After some time the tired queen said (6:114-115) “O King, with not-water, torture me” Hearing this, the king ordered some *modaka*. The catch here is that *modaka* can also be broken as *mā + udaka* = not water. The queen requested to *not* be tortured with water, the king thought she wanted to be ‘tortured’ *with sweets*<sup>1</sup>. The queen of course taunted about his grammar disabilities.

If you are satisfied with just the hope or wish of the thing, what motivation will you have to really get it? Wishes are not sufficient. You have to follow through and act upon them as well. Well, most of our wishes, at least the ones that are legal and moral!

In *Nyāya-kandalī* comes a *shloka* – “Those who enjoy imaginary sweets and those who eat real sweets, would [they] have comparable experiences of flavor, strength, nutrition value etc?”<sup>2</sup>

### ❖ Wishful thinking is not enough.

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*Language notes:* आशा-मोदक-तृस न्यायः = *āshā-modaka-tripta nyāyah* | *āshā* = hope. *modaka* = a sweet shaped like a ball, *laddū*. *tripta* = content.

<sup>1</sup> सा जलैरभिपञ्चन्तं राजानमसहा सती । अब्रवीन्मोदकैर्देव परिताडय मामिति ॥ तच्छ्रुत्वा मोदकानाजा द्रुतमानाययद्वृहून् । ततो विहस्य सा राजी पुनरेवमभाषत ॥

<sup>2</sup> आशा-मोदक-तृसा ये, ये चोपार्जित-मोदकाः ।

रस-वीर्य-विपाकादि तुल्यं तेषां प्रसन्न्यते ॥

*āshā-modaka-triptā yé, yé chopārjita-modakāḥ;*  
*rasa-vīrya-vipākādi tulyam téshām prasajyaté.*

## CONSULT THE EXPERTS

*aprāpté shāstram\_arthavat*

अप्राप्ते शास्त्रमर्थवत्

“In absence of anything [explicitly defined], do according to the *shāstra*.”

Engineers will know this maxim more aptly as RTFM – ‘Read The Freaking Manual.’ When you are in doubt, in the absence of clarity, check the documentation. Be it an employee handbook, camera manual or a textbook of Java, or ask someone who knows the field. Do according to what the experts of the field have to say. If you have a policy or legal doubt, consult someone who knows the *shāstra*. The word *shāstra* comes from *shās* – ‘to rule’. It is the authoritative word, final word in a given field. It is the body of knowledge, what we today call ‘science’.

The importance of science has always been stressed by people of action. It is misunderstanding and undue shift in later times that we are unaware of this stress and think of *shāstra* as mere ‘scriptures’ of spiritual domain only. The opening *shloka* of the very practical *Hitopadésha* says “The time of the wise passes by entertaining with arts and sciences, and that of the fool by troubles, sleep or fighting.”<sup>1</sup> “One who does not have own intelligence, the sciences cannot help. How can a mirror be of any use to the blind?” See *Blind with a mirror (andha-darpaṇa nyāyah)* on page 48.

In the absence of clarity, look for what has already been done, said, documented. It could be that the answer has already been found and sitting in the manuals. Or, if you are at the cutting edge of your field, the previous giants could have some tips in terms of what not to do, or how they thought, what they tried to gain success when they were stuck.

### ❖ Read the freaking manual.

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*Language notes:* अप्राप्ते शास्त्रं-अर्थवत् = *aprāpté shāstram\_arthavat* | *aprāpté* = in absence of having (*prāpta*). *shāstra* = science.

<sup>1</sup> काव्यशास्त्रविनोदेन कालो गच्छति धीमताम् ।

व्यसनेन च मूर्खणां निद्रया कलहेत वा ॥  
kāvya-shāstra-vinodéna kālo gachchhati dhīmatām;  
vyasanéna cha mūrkhāñām nidrayā kalahéna vā.

## HEARTLESS WORDS, HEARTLESS REPLIES

*ahṛidaya-vachasām*

अहृदय-वचसाम्

“When you ask insincerely, you will get answers insincerely.”

As you sow, so shall you reap. When you seek help, form your question properly, sincerely. Do your homework, background research. Ask like you mean it, not just for the sake of asking.

In *Worthiness to undertake* (*adhikāra nyāyah*) on page 15, we saw the question was raised whether one, who does not even have the passion or interest (sincerity of intention), should have the right to undertake a project? In the *guru-shishya* (preceptor-disciple) tradition, the *guru* wants to ensure whether the disciple has earned the right to knowledge. Sincerity is what is being tested here. It is tested by teachers of classical arts, modern sports coaches or venture capitalists alike by giving you a tough time in the beginning.

And you cannot fake sincerity.

### ❖ Be sincere in your query.

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*Language notes:* अहृदय-वचसाम्-अहृदयम्-उत्तरम् = *a\_hṛidaya-vachasām-ahṛidayam-uttaram* | *hṛidaya* = heart. *a-hṛidayam* = heartless, insincere, rude, harsh. *vachasām* = to speech, spoken words. *uttaram* = reply.

## MORE WORK, MORE RESULT

*karma\_bhūyas\_tvāt-phala\_bhūyas\_tvam*

कर्मभूयस्त्वात्फलभूयस्त्वम्

“From abundance of effort, comes abundance of results.”

The more effort you put, the more success you will get. Hard work brings results. Do not slack in putting in hard work. The more you exercise, the fitter you get. Just like practice makes perfect, effort makes result. Even when you fail a few times, learn from the failure, try differently, but do not give up. The more lottery tickets you buy, your chance of winning gets better; similarly the more work you put in, the chances of your success get better.

A man prayed to God daily for letting him win the lottery.

‘God, please let me win the lottery today.’ Nothing happened.

Next day, ‘God let me win the lottery, I had to sell the car.’ Nothing.

Next day, ‘Let me win it today, I had to sell the house.’ Nothing.

Next day, ‘Come on, at least today? Even my wife left me.’

This time God replied, ‘Would you at least buy the lottery ticket?’

And unlike lottery, putting hard word has much more probability to give you great results. And in the short or long run, the house does not win, you do, when you put in hard work.

Of course, this should not mean, you kill the team with 20 hours a day work! Effort has to be thoughtful and balanced.

### ❖ Abundance of effort gives abundance of results.

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*Language notes:* कर्म-भूयः-त्वात्-फल-भूयः-त्वम् = karma\_bhūyas\_tvāt-phala\_bhūyas\_tvam | karma = action, work, effort. bhūyah = abundance. -tvāt = from. phala = fruit, result.

## FUEL OVER, FIRE OUT

*dagdhéndhana-vahni nyāyah*

दग्धेन्धन-वह्नि न्यायः

“When the fuel has finished, the fire goes out.”

This maxim can be understood in two ways. Do not spend all the fuel that the fire goes out. Keep some fuel for continued use. Moderate consumption, steady and spread out expenses. Do not indulge in pleasure fulfillment or consumption so much that you have no energy, money or ability left for the essentials. Keep the essential fire burning. Keep your resources, passion, and enthusiasm going at a steady pace. Moderation is the key.

A related thought that comes to my mind is that of overcoming desire by fulfilling it more. We think that the fire of desires will extinguish after we fulfill the desire. After eating we do not feel hungry. A patient went to the doctor and said, “Doc, I do not feel hungry after eating, nor can I go to sleep after waking up. Give me some medicine, I must be ill.’ The doctor, not to be outsmarted, gave some tablets with the instructions to ‘take one tablet in the night after sleeping and one in the morning before waking up.’

But the catch is that this calming is only for a short time. Just as fire increases with added fuel, so does desire increase with fulfillment. Calmed for the time being, they come back with more force. That is how habits get formed. Even with age, you may not be able to eat sweets or pursue some other pleasures of the body, but the desire does not die by itself. It becomes even stronger due to lack of fulfillment. When we get over something, it is not by over consumption, but by the realization that it is never going to end, and maybe there is something else to try. Think of any addiction, if it was done slowly, in moderation it would not damage the body and mind. Done rampantly, it kills. Just like a controlled fire is useful and an uncontrolled fire burns the house. “Help yourself with your own efforts, don’t cause self-destruction. Your [controlled] self [mind] is the best friend and your [uncontrolled] self [mind] is the worst enemy.” (*Bhagavat Gītā* 6:5)<sup>1</sup>. The way to overcome addiction is not to feed it more and more.

In *Mahābhārata*, the wise prime-minister *Vidura* warns, “Do not try to win sleep by [over] sleeping, drinking habit by alcohol, women by sex, or fire by more fuel.”<sup>2</sup> The idea is that over doing these things will not help you get over the habit, they will only get stronger. You cannot beat the drinking habit by drinking more, or extinguish the fire by giving it more fuel. And do not think of overwhelming the fulfillment of carnal cravings of a curvaceous cutie, for she can take many times more than you can give.

All these addictions will end only by awakened thought, a desire to improve and quit, not just by fueling it more. Without the inner awakening it will not happen.

### ❖ Do not spend all your fuel.

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*Language notes:* दग्ध-इन्धन-वह्नि न्यायः = *dagdha-indhana-vahni nyāyah* |  
*dagdha* = burnt. *indhana* = fuel. *vahni* = fire.

<sup>1</sup> उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।

आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥

*uddharéd\_ātmanāt\_ātmānam nātmānam\_avasādayét* ।

*ātmaiva hyātmano bandura\_ātmaiva ripur\_ātmanah* ॥ (*Bhagavat Gītā* 6:5)

<sup>2</sup> न स्वप्नेन जयेन्निद्रां न कामेन जयेत् न्यियः ।

नेन्धनेन जयेदग्धिं न पानेन सुरां जयेत् ॥

*na svapnēna jayen\_nidrām na kāmēna jayét strīyah* ।

*nēndhanēna jayéd\_agnim na pānēna surām jayét* ॥

(*Mahābhārata*, *Udyoga-parva*, 39.81, *Vidura Nīti* 7.81)

## MORE WORTHY FIRST

*abhyarhitam pūrvam*

अभ्यर्हितं पूर्वम्

In Sanskrit grammar, there is a whole section on compounding of words called *samāsa*. One of them is a *dvandva-samāsa* where two equally important words of similar types (nouns, adjectives etc) are put together, mostly in a sense of ‘and’. For example, ‘*mātā-pitā*’ – mother-father.

*Pāṇini*’s grammar *sūtra* ‘*alpa-ach-taram*’ (2.2.34) says that ‘the word with lesser vowels/syllables should come first in such *dvandva* compounding, for example, *lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa*. Then what about *mātā-pitā*, which has same number of vowels? *Patañjali* explains in his commentary *Mahābhāṣya*, that in such situations, the more important/reverential word should come first. So, *mātā* (mother) comes first. You will see this in many such terms like – *Rādhā-Krishṇa*, *Sitā-Rāma*. There are, of course, many other rules that describe the full gamut, but for our purpose, this is enough.

When evaluating similar situations, similar in all other aspects, let the more worthy come first.

When we have many tasks, we prioritize them based on many factors. A common one is ‘the low hanging fruits’, that is, that which takes less effort. *Vidura* says the same thing – “Those [projects] with small root (effort) and great fruits (results), the wise starts them quickly and doesn’t let them get hindered.”<sup>1</sup>

But, what to do when you find two tasks of similar effort and result? Then you should start that in which you have more faith, interest and liking. The one for which you have more passion. Home is where the heart is.

### ❖ First things first.

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*Language notes:* अभि-अर्हितं पूर्वम् = *abh-arhitam pūrvam*  
abhi-arhitam = more worthy, pūrvam = before.

<sup>1</sup> कांश्चिदर्थान् नरः प्राज्ञो लघुमूलान् महाफलान् । क्षिप्रमारभते कर्तुं न विघ्नयति तादृशान् ॥  
*kāshchidarthaḥ naraḥ prājño laghumūlān mahā-phalān | kṣipram\_ārabhaté kartum na vighnayati tādṛishān ॥* (*Mahābhārata, Udyoga, 34:22, VN 2:22*)

## NO NEED OF MIRROR FOR BANGLES IN HAND

*na hi kara-kaṅkāṇa-darśanāya*

न हि कर-कंकण-दर्शनाय

Which husband has not suffered from the ‘Just another minute, honey!’ while getting ready to go out? If you are lucky, this one minute extends only to an hour. *For what* is this time required? Matching colors, the makeup, how does the hair look from behind, from 27-degree angle on the right side? But never much on ‘how does this watch or bangle look on my hand.’ Why? Because you can see it even without the mirror.

There is a popular Hindi saying, “What is [need of] a mirror for the bangle in hand, and what is the big deal about Persian for the learned.”<sup>1</sup>

At times, we make an excuse for not doing something – ‘Is it really needed? When is it needed? Am I the right person to do it?’ While these are good questions to ask, it is not good to use them as an excuse not to do something, something that is obviously our responsibility and expected of us. It does not delight the other. Do not spend time in front of the mirror to check the bangles; you can do that in the car as well!

Requiring proof for the redundant is seen a lot in government offices. All over India, you can get a home cooking gas connection by showing your address proof and identity card. Only Tamil Nādu and Karṇāṭaka require a ration card as well (As of writing this book). A ration card also establishes your domicile in a state, so does an address proof. If I can prove my residence, is it not obvious that I live there?

The obvious does not need a proof.

### ❖ Do the obvious without excuses.

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*Language notes:* न हि करकंकणदर्शनायादर्शपेक्षा = न हि कर-कंकण-दर्शनाय-आदर्श-अपेक्षा = *na hi kara-kaṅkāṇa-darśanāya- ādarsha-apékṣhā* | *na* = not. *hi* = surely. *kara* = hand. *kaṅkāṇa* = bangle. *darśanāya* = for viewing (*darshana*). *ādarsha* = mirror. *apékṣhā* = expectation.

<sup>1</sup> हाथ कंगन को आरसी क्या, पढ़े-लिखे को फारसी क्या *hāth kangan ko ārasī kyā, padhē likhē ko fārasī kyā*

## WALKERS DO NOT CRAWL

*na hi padbhyaṁ palāyitum pārayamāṇah*

न हि पद्भ्यां पलायितुं पारयमाणः

“It does not suit the one who is able to flee on feet, to run on knees.”

An old lady in Chilé was bedridden for some time. One night, she felt tremors and having experienced it in her childhood, she knew it was an earthquake coming. After some time when the villagers were all awake and rushed out of their houses they wanted to make sure the old lady was out of the house as well. To their surprise, they found the lady way outside the village in the open ground. Such was the power of fear of death.

Now imagine, you being fully able-bodied, capable of walking and running on your feet, crawling out on your knees in such a situation! People would simply say, ‘You can walk and run on feet, why can you not *think* on your feet as well?’

This statement is put forward by the great philosopher *Shankaracharya* on the topic of trying to achieve salvation, *nirvāna, mokṣha*. He says that if you are able to run to *mokṣha* by doing selfless acts, why would you crawl by doing less? The actual discussion is detailed, but that is a good paraphrasing.

The point is, when you have more powerful, easy, fast ways to handle a situation why would you struggle using less powerful ways? Why would you run for your life on knees?

Know your abilities, and use them to the maximum. Do not underutilize your resources, people, brain, abilities. What you do not use, you lose.

### ❖ Utilize your talents to the maximum.

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*Language notes:* न हि पद्भ्यां पलायितुं पारयमाणो जानुभ्यां रहितुर्मर्हति = *na hi padbhyaṁ palāyitum pārayamāṇah jānubhyāṁ raṇhitum-arhati* | *na* = not. *hi* = surely. *padbhyaṁ* = by two feet (*pada*). *palāyitum* = for escaping. *pārayamāṇah* = able. *jānubhyāṁ* = by two knees (*jānu*) . *raṇhitum* = for fast (*raṇhita*) escape. *arhati* = deserves.

## HITTING THE SKY WITH FIST

*ākāsha-muṣṭi-hanana nyāyah*

आकाश-मुष्टि-हनन न्यायः

Have you ever tried that? It is a great workout! But achieves nothing much. This is used to denote a wasted effort, or trying to do something that would not bear any result. This maxim indicates a situation where lot of work has been done with no result.

Identify projects that will get somewhere, and do something that will bear useful fruits. Merely faking to be busy, as if hitting the sky with fists, would not help much.

There are few more similar ones. ‘Churning the water’<sup>1</sup> also means wasted effort. ‘Grinding the flour’<sup>2</sup> and ‘Threshing the rice’<sup>3</sup> refer to redoing an already done task, and hence wasted repeat effort.

Be reasonable. Be realistic. Be productive.

### ❖ Do not waste your energy in useless endeavors.

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*Language notes:* आकाश-मुष्टि-हनन न्यायः = *ākāsha-muṣṭi-hanana nyāyah* |  
*ākāsha* = sky. *muṣṭi* = fist. *hanana* = hitting.

<sup>1</sup> जल-मन्थन न्यायः: *jala-manthana nyāyah*

<sup>2</sup> पिष्ट-पेषण न्यायः: *pīṣṭa-pēṣhaṇa nyāyah*

<sup>3</sup> तुष-कण्डन न्यायः: *tuṣha-kaṇḍana nyāyah*

## DO NOT ANTAGONIZE THE HOST

*upajīvyā-virodha*

उपजीव्यविरोध

“The unworthiness of opposing the ‘host’ (support system).”

There is a popular Hindi saying, “Do not be enemy with the crocodile while you are in the water.”<sup>1</sup> This is at a survival level. People with communist leanings were targeted in the USA, and those with capitalist leanings were unsafe in the former USSR. It is foolish to assume that while you cry foul against the king, you should be allowed to live happily by the same king. We may think that we have freedom of speech, but it is usually only till the system is not threatened. The great statesman *Chāṇakya*'s father *Chāṇaka* spoke against the corruption in royal treasury and was duly persecuted by the royalty! WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange went against the ‘system’ and finally had some charges against him and was caught by police. A Canadian professor even suggested that he be eliminated! Imagine, a professor saying that! So, do not make the system your enemy and still expect it to support you.

Metaphorically, it is not good to go against that upon which you depend, for safety, livelihood or any other help. Do not ruin your own support base. If for some real reason you do have to, then consider that source of support no more. Or as Alex the lion warns Marty the zebra in *Madagascar*, “*Do not bite the hand that feeds.*”

### ❖ Do not ruin your own support system.

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*Language notes:* उपजीव्यविरोधस्यायुक्तत्वम् = उपजीव्य-विरोधस्य-अयुक्तत्वम् = *upa\_jīvyā-virodhasya-ayuktatvam* | *upajīvyā* = upon which one lives off, depends; *host* as in a symbiotic or parasitic relationship; *that upon whom one depends for livelihood*. *virodha* = opposition. *ayuktatvam* = unworthiness.

<sup>1</sup> जल में रह कर मगर से बैर *jal mé.n rah kar magar sé bair*

## FINGERNAILS AND AXE

*kuṭhārachchhedyatām*

कुठारच्छेद्यताम्

“It is not wise to chop with the fingernails, what needs to be chopped with an axe.”

You are in the wild. The campfire needs more wood. Your friend picks up an axe. But you just sharpen your fingernails – ‘Giant trees, here I come to chop you off, to make a fire!’ Do not under-provision a task or project. Unless you are ready to assign proper resources, there is no point vesting/wasting time in a project. It will not succeed.

As a *nīti* dictum, this has another implication. Those that know only the language of an axe would not heed to your nails. In Hindi,, the saying goes “Those who understand only the language of the kick on the behind, do not listen to your talk.”<sup>1</sup>

The reply to an enemy or an opponent has to appropriately measured and delivered. Proper sternness, strictness should be used where needed. Else it does not take much for the discipline to vanish.

### ❖ Use appropriate resources.

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*Language notes:* कुठारच्छेद्यतां कुर्यात्नखच्छेदं न पण्डितः = कुठारः-छेद्यतां कुर्यात्-नखः-छेदं न पण्डितः = *kuṭhārah-chhedyatām kuryāt-nakhaḥ-chhedyam na paṇḍitah* | *kuṭhāraḥ* = axe. *chhedyatām* = one should chop. *kuryāt* = one should do. *nakhaḥ-chhedyam* = nail-chopping. *na* = not. *paṇḍitah* = wise.

<sup>1</sup> लातों के भूत वातों से नहीं मानते *lāto.n* के *bhoot*, *bāto.n* से *nahī.n* *mānaté*

## SEEKING ASTROLOGER AFTER TONSURING

*kṛita-kṣhaurasya nakṣhatra-parīkṣhā*

कृत-क्षौरस्य नक्षत्र-परीक्षा

Tonsuring of the head is a religious ritual performed at certain auspicious occasions. The reason for giving away the hair are symbolic. Hair has been associated with strength, charm, spell and sensuality. Samson was strong with his uncut hair. Long serpentine braids of the damsel have been stinging the lover's bosom like a poisonous cobra from time immemorial. Women are supposed to be weaving the fate of men when they braid their hair. In some societies, it has caused extreme oppression of women up until a few decades ago. Even the US granted them suffrage only in 1920! Can you imagine, not even a century ago! The streets were electrified by Edison's lamp, a gramophone and a movie entertained people, Einstein got the Nobel prize the next year, and women were still not allowed to vote!

Back to the hair. One checks the stars and consults the astrologer *before* the actual ritual. There is nothing to be gained by doing the research after the ritual has already been performed.

What is the point of doing the background check after hiring someone? Do all your checking *before* you hire. Do all the planning *before* you start. Check out the groom *before* the wedding takes place.

A similar maxim goes “after shaving the head, looking for an auspicious time for the shaving.”<sup>1</sup> Another one goes “what is the point of asking the right time for a task already done.”<sup>2</sup>

### ❖ Check your facts beforehand.

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*Language notes:* कृत-क्षौरस्य नक्षत्र-परीक्षा = *kṛita-kṣhaurasya nakṣhatra-parīkṣhā*  
| *kṛita* = done. *kṛita-kṣhaura* = one whose tonsuring of the head has been done.  
*nakṣhatra* = constellation, here means checking for astrologically good time for tonsuring. *parīkṣhā* = examination.

<sup>1</sup> मुण्डित-शिरो-नक्षत्र-अन्वेषणम् *muṇḍita-shiro-nakṣhatra-anvēṣhaṇam*

<sup>2</sup> कृते कार्ये कि मुहूर्तप्रश्नेन *kṛité kāryé kim muhūrta-prashnénā*

## KILLING A BUFFALO FOR ITS SKIN

*charma-tantau mahiṣhīm hanti*

चर्मतन्तौ महिषीं हन्ति

While both the skin and the intestine of such large animals were important for leather products and bowstrings, one did not go around killing a buffalo or other such animals for it. Such large animals when alive, have many other uses. One does not kill a buffalo for the small gain of skin and sinew and make the bigger loss of the use of a living buffalo. The skin and sinew are gains even in the event of death, not instead of living.

This captures a “Penny wise, pound foolish” situation. Or in Hindi “Gold coins are freely distributed, but coal is under permit.”<sup>1</sup> Another Sanskrit maxim goes “Interest as expected, but principal destroyed.”<sup>2</sup>

Understand the difference between the two, and proper investing, whether of money or of time and effort.

### ❖ Pursue larger profits.

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*Language notes:* चर्मतन्तौ महिषीं हन्ति = *charma-tantau mahiṣhīm hanti* | *charma* = skin, *tanta* = intestine, *mahiṣhīm* = buffalo.

<sup>1</sup> अशर्फ़ियाँ लुटें, कोयलों पर मुहर *asharfiyā.n luqé.n, koyalo.n par muhar*

<sup>2</sup> वृद्धिमिष्टवतः मूलमपि नष्टम् *vṛiddhim\_iṣṭavataḥ mūlam\_api té naṣṭam*

## LOTUS IN THE SKY

*na hi bhūmāvambhoruham sat*

न हि भूमावम्भोरुहं सत्

“Even with bad eyes, a lotus on land does not appear to be in the sky.”

Someone who has bad eyesight and lost his or her glasses may think the flower is a rose and not a lotus, or that it is a big water monster with fangs going to eat him. But, even with bad eyesight, one would not say that the thing on earth is in the sky. No one has that bad an eye or is that gullible. A bad eye maybe an excuse to not recognize the lotus as a lotus, but it is not good enough an excuse to say that the flower is in sky.

In situations of ignorance or lack of knowledge, people tend to cover up, spice up a bit, make an excuse. If you cannot accept your lack of knowledge and end up making an excuse or a cover up, keep it credible. And do not try to cover up a major blunder like mixing up sky and earth by blaming it on a bad eye. If you have to make an excuse, at least keep it believable.

Only by accepting that we may not know something, we can open doors for some new learning. And only by leaving the habit of covering up, of making an excuse, can we step towards some real success. One who is good at making excuses is seldom good at anything else.

### ❖ Keep your excuses real and credible.

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*Language notes:* न हि भूमावम्भोरुहं सदिति दुष्टाक्षस्यापि नभसि तदवभासते = न हि भूमौ-अम्भोरुहं सत्-इति दुष्ट-अक्षस्य-अपि नभसि तत्-अवभासते = *na hi bhūmau-ambhoruham sat-iti duṣṭa-akṣasya-api nabhasi tat-avabhāsaté* | *na* = not. *hi* = surely. *bhūmau* = in *bhūmi*, earth. *ambha-ruham* = growing out of water = lotus. *duṣṭa* = bad. *akṣha* = eye. *nabhasi* = in sky. *avabhāsaté* = appears.

## DISEASE IS BETTER THAN DEATH

*maraṇādvaram vyādhiḥ*

मरणाद्वरं व्याधिः

With disease there is still a hope of some cure, but no one has found a cure of death. A similar saying goes – “A doubtful situation is preferable to a certain defeat.”<sup>1</sup>

If you are not strong, literally or figuratively, avoid direct confrontation that will result in total and complete defeat, removing all doubts about your possible victory.

Leave some room for ‘benefit of doubt.’ A doubtful situation is better than a resounding defeat. A stalemate is better than a checkmate in chess. And in cricket, a drawn match is surely better than a defeat by an inning! You may get another chance to prove your worth and keep your face, if you avoid situation of total defeat. That is the reason why laws are strict about removing life support from terminally ill patients. It is better to be ill than to be dead. With illness, there is still hope for a cure, with death it is all over.

### ❖ Avoid clear failure.

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*Language notes:* मरणात्-वरं व्याधिः = *maraṇāt-varaṇ vyādhiḥ | vyādhiḥ = disease. varaṇ = better. maraṇāt = than dying.*

<sup>1</sup> अत्यन्त-पराजयात्-वरं संशयोऽपि *atyanta-parājayāt-varam samshayah-api'*

## PIERCING HUNDRED LOTUS-LEAVES

*utpal-a-shata-patra-vyatibhēda-vat*

उत्पल-शत-पत्र-व्यतिभेदवत्

“Like the simultaneous piercing of a bundle of hundred lotus-leaves.”

Lotus leaves are very soft. Softer than the already-soft stems of lotus. A bundle of hundred lotus leaves can be pierced with a sharp needle in no time, almost instantaneously, and yet the actual process is linear. An example, which is important from another aspect as well, in *Shlokavārtika* says, “You say the example of lamp and light as an instance of simultaneity of cause and effect, but still there is a finite little time, just like piercing hundred lotus leaves.” This also means that even then it was understood that light has a finite speed, just as it was known that sunlight takes about 8 minutes to reach the Earth.

There is linearity even in parallel processing. We have only one mind and all important tasks are done linearly. They may appear being done in parallel because sub-task execution is inter-meshed. Just like a single CPU only does things linearly, even though the computer appears to be doing many things at the same time.

Focus on one major project at a time. It needs your full attention. Even when you think you can juggle many things.

### ❖ One at a time.

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*Language notes:* उत्पल-शत-पत्र-व्यतिभेद-वत् = *utpal\_a\_shata\_patra\_vyatibhēda-vat*  
| *utpal* = lotus. *shata* = hundred. *patra* = leaf. *vyatibhēda* = (*vi-ati-bhēda*)  
simultaneous piercing

## LOCAL CHANGE, GLOBAL DEFINITION

*éka-désha-vikritam-ananya\_vat*

एक-देश-विकृतमनन्यवत्

“A minor change in one aspect does not change the overall whole.”

For example, if someone loses an arm in an accident, it does not make him something else, the person is still the person. Cutting the tail of a dog does not make it a horse or monkey.

My first legal contract signed in the US was a rental agreement to live in an independent house with five others, rather than in a dorm. This was when I had gone to do my Masters in Computer Science way back in 1990. The contract said that “if any particular section of the contract becomes inapplicable due to any reason, it will not invalidate any other section. The rest of the contract will remain enforceable as is.” Back then, I had to ask the student legal advisor at the University, but now I know what they meant!

Know what is of local significance and what is of global impact. Just one mistake in one area or aspect does not mean nothing good is left or everything is over. Whether you are looking for a prospective bride or groom, or the prospective director or programmer, one fault in one area should not invalidate them from the selection process altogether. Maybe he cannot dance all that great or she cannot cook like a pro, but do not hold it against them altogether. They might prove to be a great spouse! Or employee.

### ❖ Ignore the minor flaws.

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*Language notes:* एक-देश-विकृतम्-अन्-अन्यवत् = *éka-désha-vikritam-ananya\_vat* | *éka* = one. *désha* = local region. *vikritam* = disfigured. *an* = not. *anyavat* = like other.

# PAINTING WITHOUT CANVAS

*kuḍyam vinā chitra-karméva*

कुड्यं विना चित्रकर्मेव

“Painting without a wall or canvas.” An impossibility.

Everything needs a support, a foundation to build upon. Everything has a cause; except for the Supreme Divine.

Many such examples are used to denote such impossibility, “It is not worthwhile to discuss whether a sky-flower has pollen or not.”<sup>1</sup>

The Special is required for the sustenance of the Common. ‘Body without the *ātmā* (soul)<sup>2</sup> or ‘Painting without a canvas’ or ‘Mural without a wall’ or ‘Shadow without the post’<sup>3</sup> are not possible. The last one is a reference to the afternoon shadow of a post in an open ground. Only the Supreme Divine is said to make ‘*chitra* without *bhitti*’ (picture without wall) i.e. impossible things. All human efforts have to fall in the reasonable and possible range.

## ❖ Everything needs a base, a foundation.

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*Language notes:* कुड्यं विना चित्र-कर्म-इव = *kuḍyam vinā chitra-karma-iva* |  
kuḍyam = a wall. In Hindi, *khuḍdi* means a mud plastered hut. vinā = without.  
*chitra* = picture.

<sup>1</sup> न हि नभःकुसुमस्य सौरभासौरभविचारो युक्तः: *na hi nabhah-kusumasya saurabha-asaurabha-vichārah yuktaḥ*

<sup>2</sup> आत्मना विना देहं *ātmanā vinā déham*

<sup>3</sup> स्थाणु विना छाया *sthāṇu vinā chhāyā*

## FINDING ONE, LOSING ANOTHER

*ékam-anusandhit*

एकमनुसन्धित्

“While looking for one thing, he loses another.”

Have you ever been in a rush in the morning, get out of the house, only to realize that you have forgotten the car keys. You rush back in, put your office/laptop bag by the door, find the keys, and rush out, beat the traffic and are in office just in time. Only to find that you forgot your office bag at home while picking up the keys.

When you are looking for something, be careful not to lose what you already have. Else you would not be any better than before.

When debating an issue, do not make a new argument that may actually invalidate your previously won argument. In trying to win new grounds, do not lose the ones already won.

### ❖ Do not lose what you already have.

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*Language notes:* एकमनुसन्धित्सतोऽपरं प्रच्यवते = एकं-अनुसन्धित्-सतः:-अपरं प्रच्यवते = *ékam-anusandhit-sataḥ-aparam prachyavaté* | *ékam* = one. *anusandhit* = discovered, found. *aparam* = other. *prachyavana* = fall, ruin.

## HALF OLD

*ardha-jaratiya nyāyah*

अर्ध-जरतीय न्यायः

Sometimes things are in black. Sometimes things are in white.  
Sometimes they are just gray!

You cannot have half a chicken to cook and leave the other half to lay eggs. Even though the census may say that there are 2.35 children per adult, you can only have 2 or 3 children, not 2.35 children. A person is either old or not old. How can someone be half old? Or someone saying they are half-dead. How can someone be *half* dead?

This is used to denote a dilemma, neither here nor there. Sometimes you cannot take a thing partially. You have to take it fully. It has to be black or white. One day you could not drive a car because of being too young. The next day you are all of a sudden eligible to make as many road-kills as you like. What happened? How can you be an adult overnight; or eligible to drive, drink, vote etc.? But that is how it is.

Something could be this or not this – a situation of dilemma; undecided. A woman who has some black and some gray hair is neither old nor young!

A man had two wives, one much younger than the other. When he started to become ‘half-old’, his younger wife would pluck out his gray hair so he could look young like her. His older wife would pluck out his black hair, so he would be more like of her age. His inability to decide whether he was young or old, led him to become bald very quickly!

❖ Decide – by decision, not indecision.

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*Language notes:* अर्ध-जरतीय न्यायः = *ardha-jaratiya nyāyah* | *ardha* = *half*. *jarā* = *old age*.

## MANGO AND KOVIDĀRA

āmrān-priṣṭah

आम्रान्पृष्ठः

“When asked about mango, he spoke of *kovidāra*.”

Mango is an earthly tree; *kovidāra* is a mythical, heavenly tree – nothing in common. When I ask about mango, he talks about *kovidāra*. When asked about why the economy is doing bad, or why so many scandals are coming out, governments want to talk about terrorism, Julian Assange, an old arch-enemy, stars in the sky – everything and anything but the lack of leadership, foresight and hard work on part of those who are accountable. Politics is the best place to practice this mango-*kovidāra* maxim.

The strategy of diverting the topic, avoiding answering is not good for healthy conversations and endeavors. The other person immediately knows there is something fishy and you start to lose credibility. This is one of the four steps of the master-strategy of not doing what you are supposed to do. I like to call it as the ‘*ABCD plan of not doing*’ – Avoid, Bluff, Confuse, Distract. But it surely does not develop any credibility.

### ❖ Do not avoid it, answer it.

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*Language notes:* आम्रान्पृष्ठः कोविदारानाच्छे = आम्रान्-पृष्ठः कोविदारान्-आच्छे =  
āmrān-priṣṭah kovidārān-āchaṣṭé | āmra = mango. kovidāra = one of the  
trees of paradise, like kalpataru. chaṣṭa = spoken. āchaṣṭé = speaks

## FANGLESS SNAKE

*utkhāta-damṣṭroraga nyāyah*

उत्खात-दंष्ट्रोरग न्यायः

Sanskrit makes words so wonderfully, so organically. Snake is also called ‘ura-ga’, where *ura* means chest, -*ga* means goes, so *uraga* is one that moves about on its chest – a snake. How beautiful!

This maxim is used to describe a powerless position. A rubber stamp, a banana republic. People are scared of the snake for its fangs; without it they have no reason to fear it. You should always have your fangs, even shine them publicly sometimes, and hopefully you will never need to use them. This is the reason countries have military parades and airshows on Independence Day or Republic day or have naval exercises – to shine the might in public.

A saint was passing by a village. The villagers warned him of a deadly cobra that lived nearby on the path that he was taking to the forest. The saint was not worried. When the cobra came up, the saint scolded him for being so evil, scaring and harming people, ‘Such acts will only take you to hell. Never ever bite anyone.’ The cobra, realizing his mistake, promised to comply. A few months later the saint passed by the same path and thought of checking on the cobra. To his dismay he found a very weak, wounded cobra, almost ready to die, or should I say *half-dead*. Upon asking, the cobra said that the kids and people were not afraid of him any more and hurt him and ridiculed him like this. This is the prize he got for being nice. To this the saint said, “I told you not to bite, I did not tell you not to hiss and scare.” If you do not even show your power, you will not impress anyone. People are scared of the burning coal, but trample the cold ash with impunity. See *Perched eagles does not move (agachchhan vainatéyo 'pi)* on page 5.

Do not be powerless. You do not have to abuse it, just show it sometimes.

❖ **Sometimes, display your power.**

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*Language notes:* उत्खात-दंष्ट्र-उरग न्यायः = *utkhāta-damṣṭra-uraga nyāyah* |  
*utkhāta* = extracted, removed. *damṣṭra* = fang. *uraga* = snake, one that goes (-*ga*) on its chest (*ura*).

## CROW'S EYEBALL

*kākākṣhi-golaka nyāyah*

काक-अक्षि-गोलक न्यायः

In *Rāmāyaṇa*, during their exile in the forest, *Rāma* and *Sītā* were resting one afternoon. The son of *Indra*, disguised as a crow, attacked *Sītā*. An angry *Rāma* shot a grass blade, converted to a *Brahmāstra* – the deadly missile. The crow went to everyone for protection but no one would dare confront *Rāma*'s wrath! When the crow finally came to *Rāma* as a refugee, *Rāma* said that to honor the *Brahmāstra*, he cannot let it go waste. He asked the crow where to let the weapon hit. So the crow agreed to lose his right eye in lieu of his life (*Sundara-kāṇḍa* 38.35). Since then it is held that a crow has only one eye, but it moves it quickly between the two eye sockets. An interesting story for the awkward head movement of the crow.

This maxim captures instances of pun, where one word maybe used in different places with different meanings. Also, used when the same thing can be used for multiple purposes. Reminds me of the Coke bottle in the hilarious comedy flick *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. A bushmen tribe chances upon a glass Coke bottle thrown from a helicopter, and all of a sudden everyone finds a different use for it. Someone uses it as a whistle, some one as a rolling pin, someone as a pestle to break nuts. And of course with that introduction of the foreign object starts discontent and infighting and the entire storyline!

### ❖ Find multiple uses of resources.

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*Language notes:* काक-अक्षि-गोलक न्यायः = *kaka-akṣhi-golaka nyāyah*. | *kaka* = crow. *akṣhi* = eye. *golaka* = orb (eyeball)

## WIFE IN LABOR, HUSBAND EATS PAIN KILLER

*kācin niṣhādī putram prasūtē*  
काचिन्नि॒षादी पुत्रं प्रसूते

“The woman was in labor and husband drank the painkiller medicine.”

A tribal woman was in labor pain. Her husband, waiting outside the hut, could not handle the tension anymore. Out of sympathy for her, he drank her astringent painkiller medicine lying there. Needless to say, the woman did not benefit from his *sacrifice*.

There are some situations where the doer alone gets the results. To remain healthy, *you* have to exercise, eat healthy, sleep properly. You cannot outsource *these* to someone else on your behalf while *you* indulge in life or over-work at office. You cannot pass the examination if I study. That happens only in the Hindi blockbuster *3 Idiots* where Phungsuk Wangdu passes the college exam and Raṇachhod Chānchad gets the degree!

Same thing goes for good deeds, meditating, praying, forgiving and repenting. The one who wants the benefit has to do the deeds. If you do wrong deeds, and someone else repents, it does not help you, because it did not *change* you. *My* cholesterol cannot go down because of *your* good eating habits and exercise.

A similar saying goes “the sage mediates and the fool is liberated”, implying the ridiculous assumption that someone else can benefit from the effort done by someone else.

To benefit, *you* have to work. You cannot outsource everything. If that were to be true, then can you also outsource having fun? Let someone else go on your vacation time, enjoy dinner and wine with your family, and you can keep working. Would that de-stress you, rejuvenate you or entertain you? *You* have to do, what *you* have to do.

### ❖ To get the result, *you* have to work.

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*Language notes:* काचिन्-निषादी पुत्रं प्रसूते कश्चिन्-निषादस्तु कपायपायी = *kāchid-niṣhādī putram prasūtē kashchin-niṣhādah-tu kaṣhāya-pāyī* | *niṣhādī* = tribal woman. *prasūtē* = gives birth. *kaṣhāya* = a healing medicine.

## HOLDING ON TO GRASS BLADES

*kāsha-kushāvalambana nyāyah*

काश-कुशावलम्बन न्यायः

A person fell in the river and was taken in the fast current. He desperately tried to grab something, and got hold of a grass blade on the bank. As that blade broke, he grabbed another grass blade. But taking support of grass blades could not help him stop. What he needed was a strong tree branch or something. *Kāsha* and *Kusha*, both types of grass, are equally weak to hold a man.

When a person gives a weak argument and then to support it, gives yet another weak argument, you use this maxim. Five weak arguments are not going to make one strong argument. You can see that when someone makes an excuse for not being able to come to your party or why they could not finish the work – one after the other, very creative but equally weak excuses! None convincing though.

- ❖ Two weak arguments do not make a strong one.

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*Language notes:* काश-कुश-अवलम्बन न्यायः = *kāsha-kusha-avalambana nyāyah* |  
*kāsha, kusha* = varieties of grasses. *avalambana* = support.

## TOLL BOOTH IN THE MORNING

*ghaṭṭa-kuṭī-prabhāta nyāyah*

घट्ट-कुटी-प्रभात न्यायः

“The merchant and the toll booth in the morning.”

The practice of customs and toll booths at the border is very old. The desert township of Jaisalmér in western Rājasthān thrived on this tradition. The merchant caravans from Persia and beyond, going to Delhi had to pay toll at the oasis of Jaisalmér. Even within the Indian subcontinent, the borders between kingdoms had such tolls, like countries in Europe.

A merchant with a cart laden with goods, wanted to cut corners and not pay the city’s ‘entry taxes’. When he was some good distance from the toll booth, he decided to get off the road, take some side path and avoid the booth altogether. All night he wandered around in his cart to go undetected. Then he lost his way and, hungry and tired, wandered in the darkness. Early in the morning when he approached the road again, he was right there at the toll booth that he was avoiding the whole night.

This maxim is used when someone takes great pains to avoid something and ends up facing it anyways. When the ‘shortcut’ turns out to be longer than before.

There is a Hindi saying “*Four* went to become *Six*, but ended up becoming *Two*”<sup>1</sup>

### ❖ The shortcut is through it.

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*Language notes:* घट्ट-कुटी-प्रभात न्यायः = *ghaṭṭa-kuṭī-prabhāta nyāyah* | *ghaṭṭa* = a landing place, toll collector, *ghāṭa*. *kuṭī* = hut, booth. *prabhāta* = morning.

<sup>1</sup> चौबेजी चले छब्बेजी बनने, द्वैबेजी ही रह गए chaubé jī chalé chhabbé jī banané, dūbéjī hī rah gayé

## SPINNING WHEEL

*chakra-bhramaṇa nyāyah*

चक्र-भ्रमण न्यायः

This refers to the potter's wheel. Before the fancy electric ones came by for urbanites to do pottery as a hobby, the potter's wheel was a heavy device that was set in motion and would keep spinning for some time on its own momentum.

Actions have different gestation period, before they start giving results. Some give instant results. You jump off the balcony and you die. Others take time to ripen. You study the whole year and then pass the exam. Someone drinks a lot in his youth. Nothing seems to be happening because of his body's ability to handle the abuse of alcohol. When the first signs of liver trouble appear, he stops drinking. But the damage that has been done due to years of drinking, they keep showing. Nothing can stop those. The result of that action, karma, has started to show.

This momentum can be of good *karma* or bad *karma*. At least a decade or two ago, children everywhere, specially in India, got a lot of physical activity because there was not much sedentary entertainment available. This youth, when it came to workforce and had sedentary jobs, survived for a long time before developing the cursed signs of digital development – pain of the back, neck, head, wrists and eyes. The exercise of their active childhood saw them through for many years. But the newer generations in India – that grew up with sedentary entertainment of TV, DVD, video games, cell phones, and internet – develop these physical problems much sooner. Back pain is common in the younger IT and BPO crowd. Many actions have results that are delayed and then show up for a long time, like medicine in a slow-release capsule.

Realize that your actions may not impact your right now, but you will not be able to escape their consequences.

### ❖ Results may be delayed.

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*Language notes:* चक्र-भ्रमण न्यायः = *chakra-bhramaṇa nyāyah* | *chakra* = wheel.  
*bhramaṇa* = movement (*spinning*).

## DIGGING A WATER CHANNEL

*kulyā-praṇayana nyāyah*

कुल्या-प्रणयन न्यायः

Majority of India still lives in villages. The country has built many dams for power generation as well as irrigation. The Rājasthān canal is one such example which takes the river water all the way up to Jaisalmér in the middle of the desert. It surely made a successful agriculture district out of Shrī Gaṅgānagar in Rājasthān. But irrigation canals were built long before the modern engineering marvels. Canals were dug from rivers, or from a well that was common to nearby farms in a hamlet, called a *ḍhāṇī*. An ox could be moving the water-wheel machine that would pour out water from the well to the outside. From here, canals were dug leading the water to the nearby fields. The farmer's family would be living on the farm itself.

When a water channel is dug for irrigation of the field, the water that comes, finds many more uses apart from irrigation. It is used for drinking, washing, cleaning among others things. It is somewhat similar to *Planting a mango tree* (*āmré phalārthē*) on page 16, where a mango tree is sowed for the fruits, but one gets shadow and fragrance as well.

### ❖ Added benefits, multi-usability.

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*Language notes:* कुल्या-प्रणयन न्यायः = *kulyā-praṇayana nyāyah* | *kulyā* = a water course, channel dug to bring river water to the farm for irrigation. *praṇayana* = bringing forward, conveying.

## FISH EATS FISH

*mātsya nyāyah*

मात्स्य न्यायः

This refers to the classical ‘Fish eats fish’ saying. It has been used very commonly in literature. It appears in *Kāmandakīya-Niīsāra* (2:40), *Kathā-Sarit-Sāgara* (102:63) and *Manusmṛiti* (7:20). Its most common direct and indirect use is to say that “In this world, where the fish-eat-fish maxim applies, if the king is not effective and does not give proper punishment, the weak are tortured by the strong.” Quite true in our times as well!

Total lack of competition is not good for anyone. Bad for consumer, bad for the sole monopoly holder because innovation dies without challenges of competition. So, if you are the big fish, do not eat the smaller fish, let it survive, it is good for the ecosystem. Cooperate rather than compete. Make alliances and flourish together.

But, be aware that the *world* still maybe following the fish-eat-fish maxim. So be aware of the bigger fish, lest they eat you up!

❖ **Watch out, competition is tough.**

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*Language notes:* मात्स्य न्यायः = *mātsya nyāyah* | *matsya* = fish. *mātsya* = of fish.

## BOOKWORM EATING BOOK

*ghuṇākṣhara nyāyah*

घुणाक्षर न्यायः

My first Sanskrit book, apart from school textbooks, was a 1917 print copy of *Hitopadésha* given by my grandfather. Getting a book, any book, or even his attention was a great prize, what to say of a Sanskrit book from his prized collection. Despite all care, bookworms had started to work on its corners. But this first book was in such simple Sanskrit and filled with so many wise *shloka*-s and great stories that it changed my view of Sanskrit forever. Ever since that 9th grade chance meeting of *Hitopadésha*, I have pursued this serious hobby with passion and delight.

There are millions of Sanskrit manuscripts simply going uncared for in India – either not even cataloged or not yet taken care of. Such manuscripts are at genuine risk of being lost forever. While many manuscripts during the British India period have been taken abroad, and many more were burnt previously in *Nālandā* library (similar to the Alexandria library in Egypt) by Muslim invaders, there still are so many more manuscripts that we are unable to handle it!

Sometimes in very old books eaten by bookworms or silverfish, you find some letter formation in the way the pests ate it. This does not mean that the worm knows how to write, or that there is some cosmic design being revealed in it. It is mere coincidence. Do not read too much in such ‘omens’; read the book!

Sometimes things are just coincidental.

❖ Focus on your *karma*, not cosmic drama.

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*Language notes:* घुण-अक्षर न्यायः = *ghuṇa-akṣhara nyāyah* | *ghuṇa* = book worm, termite. *akṣhara* = letter; that which does not break down any more.

## GINGER MERCHANT AND SHIP-WORRY

*kim-ārdraka-vanijah*

किमार्द्रक-वणिजः

“What does a ginger merchant have to do with worrying about the ship.”

What does a ginger merchant, who has a local producer and local client, have anything to worry about the arrival of the ship? This is used to denote a totally irrelevant thing, an irrelevant logic.

Do not worry yourself with irrelevant issues; focus on your current work at hand. Do not worry about everything at once; wait till they at least come in visible range. It is easy to get overwhelmed with all the worries of the world. As the great Urdū poet *Gālib* said – “I slog my mind in the worries of the world, what am I in front of this great calamity?”<sup>1</sup>

And even for relevant things, worrying won’t help anything except your blood pressure to rise. Concern and planning are different than worrying. In Sanskrit worry is called *chintā*, and a pyre to burn the dead is called *chitā*. “The difference between the two is only a dot (the half nasal ‘n’), but while the latter (*chitā*, pyre) burns the dead, the former (*chintā*, worry) burns the living!”<sup>2</sup> *Chāṇakya* says, “Worry ages people, standing ages a horse, carnal neglect ages women and sunlight ages clothes.”<sup>3</sup> When *Yaksha* asks *Yudhiṣṭhīra* what is more than grass leaves, he replies “Worries.” (*Mahābhārata Vana Parva*, 313:60)

### ❖ Do not worry about irrelevant things.

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*Language notes:* किमार्द्रकवणिजो वहित्रचिन्तया = किम्-आर्द्रक-वणिजः वहित्र-चिन्तया = *kim-ārdraka-vanijah vahitra-chintayā* | *kim* = what. *ārdraka* = ginger. *vanija* = merchant. *vahitra* = ship. *chintayā* = by worry (*chintā*).

<sup>1</sup> फिक्रे-दुनिया में सर खपाता हूँ, मैं कहाँ और ये वबाल कहाँ *fikré-duniyā me.n sar khapātā hoo.n, mai.n kahā.n aur yé vabāl kahā.n*

<sup>2</sup> चिन्ता चिता समाप्रोक्ता, बिन्दुमात्रं विशेषतः। सजीवं दहते चिन्ता निर्जीवं दहते चिता ॥ *chintā chitā samāproktā, bindu-mātram vishéshataḥ | sajīvam dahaté chintā nirjīvam dahaté chitā ||*

<sup>3</sup> चिन्ता जरा मनुष्याणामनध्वा वाजिनां जरा । असम्भोगो जरा स्त्रीणां वस्त्राणामातपो जरा ॥ *chintā jarā manushyāñām\_anadhvā vājinām jarā | asambhogo jarā strīñām vastrāñām\_ātapo jarā ||*

## CONFESSING THIEF

*taskarasya purastāt*

तस्करस्य पुरस्तात्

“After the gold was found tucked in his side, the thief agreed for a strip search.”

Trying to come clean after being caught! The thieves of those times were apparently novices compared with modern politicians. Modern politicians don't accept any wrong doing even after being caught red, blue and black handed! Be it Bill Clinton with Monica Lewinsky, George Bush 2 with WMD and Iraq, Kalmadi with Commonwealth Games, New Delhi in 2010 or India politician A. Rājā with 2G scam of about US \$38 billion!

It is bad to do wrong, worse to get caught and worst to not even accept when caught! Confession gets you some pardon. Accepting your fault is one of the most important step forward. Else you can play the blame-game till the cows come home. Try not to make a mistake to begin with. But if you do, accept it, take corrective action and move on. Everyone will like you for it. Because you will save them from your blame-game and hunt for scapegoat.

Unless of course you make a habit out of it. While it is great to learn from mistakes, do not make it the only way to learn! There are more channels of knowledge. Join some classes.

### ❖ Accept your mistakes on your own.

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*Language notes:* तस्करस्य पुरस्तात्कक्षे सुवर्णमुपेत्य सर्वांगोद्घाटनम् = तस्करस्य पुरस्तात्-कक्षे सुवर्णम्-उपेत्य सर्व-अंग-उद्घाटनम् = *taskarasya purastāt-kakṣhé suvarṇam-upétya sarva-aṅga-udghāṭanam* | *taskara* = theif. *purastāt* = before, earlier. *suvarṇam* = gold. *upétya* = having approached, found. *kakṣhé* = in the armpit (side). *sarva* = all. *aṅga* = [body] part. *udghāṭanam* = exposing.

## BURNT SEEDS

*dagdhabīja nyāyah*

दग्ध-बीज न्यायः

This is used to indicate a situation where the seeds have burnt and hence no future germination is possible. When the very source of something is destroyed, nothing can be expected.

In the context of spirituality it means when the ‘*karma-bīja*’, seed of action, is burnt, there are no more rebirths. When we work without selfish interest, we are no longer attached to the results. This frees us from the bondage of further births, reasons to come back in the mortal world. Ever wonder why people can always *give* the best advice?

Because they are not attached to the results of their advice, for the results will affect *you*. Keep a third-party, impartial and objective guide as well.

In material world, avoid total burn-out that there is no more creativity or productivity left. Don’t burn the very source of your productivity.

Other similar maxims about seeds are – “The rule of non-germination of grain spoilt by oil”<sup>1</sup> or “Praying for germination of mice-eaten seeds.”<sup>2</sup>

### ❖ Burnt seeds do not germinate.

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*Language notes:* दग्ध-बीज न्यायः = *dagdha-bīja nyāyah* | *dagdha* = burnt. *bīja* = seed.

<sup>1</sup> तैल-कलुषित-शालि-बीजात्-अंकुर-अन्-उदय-नियमः *taila-kaluṣhita-shāli-bījāt-ankura-an\_udaya-niyamah*

<sup>2</sup> मूषिक-भक्षित-बीजादौ-अङ्कुरादि-जनन-प्रार्थना *mūṣhika-bhakṣhita-bījādau-ankura-ādi-janana-prārthanā*

## THOUSAND-FOLD RETURN

*dattam-ékadha*

दत्तमेकधा

This captures the best situation any financial investor would want! Same is true if you invest in your team. Pick a project where you invest once, and keep getting returns. Make people and teams and projects self-sufficient, self-reliant, then you do not have to keep on managing them. You put your effort once, then it is on its own, giving you returns.

Many a times, we want to remain indispensable by not sharing knowledge. This ties down both parties. Teams without a ‘backup’ of an employee suffer, because the employee also cannot take any time off due to remaining ‘indispensable’. Just as systems and infrastructure have backup, so should critical members.

During my consulting career in the US, at one very large Fortune 100 company, I came across an employee who was responsible for a certain COBOL computer code. In the times of client-server and relational databases, not many knew COBOL. His code had no comments and was cryptic on purpose. And, every other day, a nightly job would fail at 3AM or so, he would get an alert on his pager, and he would end up running the job manually. The next day, he would come to the office around 11AM and whine, how these difficult program keeps failing, and only he can handle it, his sacrifice of personal life for the company, blah, blah, blah. When people came to know that he was doing all this only for his job *security*, very soon, he had all the time to sleep in the nights!

When you build the team properly, you invest your time once, and then it cruises smoothly on its own. Make yourself dispensable in the good way, *make yourself redundant*, that was my consulting *mantra*. This gives you time for other opportunities to pursue and grow, while previous efforts of building a good team or infrastructure keep giving returns.

### ❖ Invest properly where returns are high.

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*Language notes:* दत्तमेकधा सहस्रगुणमुपलभ्यते = दत्तम्-एकधा सहस्र-गुणम्-उपलभ्यते = *dattam-ékadha sahasra-gunam-uplabhyaté* | *dattam* = given. *ékadha* = once, together, in one shot, not again and again. *sahasra* = thousand. *guṇam* = multiplied. *uplabhyaté* = gains.

## LIKE A LAMP

*pradīpavat*

प्रदीपवत्

When a lamp is lighted, it lights all the walls, corners and the ceiling. When one dancer performs, the entire audience gets entertained. One fragrance stick burns and makes the entire room fragrant. Similarly, the *shāstra* (science, knowledge) of one place is for the benefit all others. That is, even if a truth is discovered in one place, it will set (light up) people free everywhere. Jonas Salk discovered the polio vaccine in 1955 in the USA, but it has helped eradicate the disease from the whole world. Science is universal. Einstein discovered relativity, and now thanks to him, every country can have a nuclear bomb in three shades of colors and four flavors! Wherever the lamp of science is lighted up, it shines everywhere. No matter where in the room the lamp is lighted, the entire room brightens up.

The wisdom expressed in Sanskrit literature is ancient, was expressed in India but is useful for anyone who cares to seek. The spiritual light that shone in India thousands of years ago, still shows the path to anyone who wants to wake up and walk.

The importance of *shāstra*, science, is thus exalted in *Hitopadésha* – “It removes many doubts, and shows the meaning of the un-obvious, surely science is the eye of everyone, one without it is truly blind.”<sup>1</sup>

### ❖ Find fundamental solutions.

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*Language notes:* प्रदीपवत् = *pradīpavat* | *padīpa* = lamp. –vat = like

<sup>1</sup> अनेक संशयोच्छ्रेदि परोक्षार्थस्य दर्शकम् ।

सर्वस्य लोचनं शास्त्रं यस्य नास्ति अन्धैव सः ॥

*anēka saṁshayochchhēdi parokṣhārthasya darshakam,  
sarvasya lochanam shāstram, yasya nāsti andhaiva sah*

## RAIN ON BARREN LAND

*ūṣhara-vṛiṣṭi nyāyah*

ऊषर-वृष्टि न्यायः

Rain on saline (barren) land, like a marsh of *Kutchh* in Gujarat, is of no use for agriculture, since the land cannot grow anything due to high salinity. This maxim implies a wasted effort, like giving to the ungrateful, or comb to a bald, mirror to a blind. See *Blind with a mirror* (*andha-darpaṇa-nyāyah*) on page 48. Another one goes, “Rain over ocean, food to the full-bellied, charity to the rich and lamp in daytime are wasted.”<sup>1</sup>

Match the skills with the requirements. Do not let talent go waste on useless efforts that cannot bear fruits.

### ❖ Avoid wasted efforts.

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*Language notes:* ऊषर-वृष्टि-न्यायः = *ūṣhara-vṛiṣṭi nyāyah* |

*ūṣhara*= barren, saline, not fit for vegetation growth. *vṛiṣṭi* = rain.

<sup>1</sup> वृथा वृष्टिः समुद्रेषु वृथा तृसेषु भोजनम् ।

वृथा दानं धनाढ्येषु वृथा दीपो दिवापि च ॥

*vṛithā vṛiṣṭih samudrēṣhu, vṛithā ṛiptēṣhu bhojanam,*  
*vṛithā dānam dhanāḍhyēṣhu, vṛithā dīpo divāpi cha.*

## LINE OF SHEEP

*gaḍdarikā-pravāha nyāyah*

गड्डरिका-प्रवाह न्यायः

“Flow of the line of sheep.”

The Hindi word *gaḍariyā* for a shepherd comes from *gaḍdarikā*. When a shepherd takes hundreds of sheep to graze to the outside of the village or the mountain, he does not control each sheep. He just walks in the front, (sometimes with an assistant at the back) and all the sheep simply follow. The way it happens is that each sheep simply follows the one ahead of it. Among cows also, this is observed, and if the leading cow of an unwatched herd does not remember the way back home, the entire herd can land up somewhere else. This is what is called the *Sheep mentality*.

While it is good to conform to the system, the organization, you should think outside the herd as well. Without thinking outside the herd, you cannot find new pastures. Knowledge will never become wisdom. New frontiers can be conquered only by thinking outside the herd, the proverbial ‘box’.

### ❖ Think outside the herd.

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*Language notes:* गड्डरिका-प्रवाह न्यायः = *gaḍdarikā-pravāha nyāyah* | *gaddarikā* = line of sheep. *pravāha* = flow.

## CROWD WITH UMBRELLAS

*chattri nyāyah*

छत्रि न्यायः

When some people in a crowd have the umbrellas open and up, it seems everyone is covered. Remember the Hindi movie *Guru* based on the life of self-made billionaire Dhirubhai Ambani? If you haven't seen it, go see it. It had a shot of a huge crowd of people covered in umbrellas. It is not that everyone had an umbrella open, but some did, and all got covered.

This maxim is used when the actions of a few benefit many, and you get benefited by the actions of others. In the present day of *Kali-yuga*, societies remain livable for two reasons – not everyone turns evil, and at least a few people do good altruistic deeds. The society at large benefits from the great deeds of a few leaders, from the vision of a few thinkers, or the passion of a few simply extraordinary people. The opposite is equally true as well.

### ❖ You can benefit from the others' actions.

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*Language notes:* छत्रि न्यायः = *chattri nyāyah* | *chattri* = umbrella.

## RICE STALK AND GRAINS

*dhānya-palāla nyāyah*

धान्य-पलाल न्यायः

When you get the rice stalk, you get all the rice grains on it.

There are four different words to refer to rice. The one still in the field is called *shasya*. It is the same as in *shasya-shyāmalā-mātaram* from India's national song *Vandé Mātaram*. The one removed from the plant but still with husk is called *dhānya*. The one with husk removed and stored in the house is *tandula*. The one cooked and ready to eat is called *anna* (or in vernacular *bhāta*).

The idea here is that when you harvest the rice, you do not go plucking each grain individually, you simply pluck the stalk. When you have got hold of the stalk, you have got hold of all the grains.

Conquer the king, and you have conquered the subjects. This is how the British took over India, by defeating the royalty. In the Indian society, the four classes had their rights and responsibilities cut out, and as long as the ruler did his job properly, people did not mind who the ruler was. The modern day ‘mind your own business’ has its practical implementations in India from a very long time. In a way, this was also the cause of much of India’s problem. What helped it survive, its flexibility, also led to its subjugation! As per *Chāṇakya*, the victorious king should not interfere with the way of the life of the conquered, but simply collect the tax. If you accomplish a matter, you also get all that it sustains. Buying a company also gets you all of its assets.

Look for that root cause, which when solved will solve many other dependent problems as well. Find the pattern, analyze the situation and go for the common issue.

### ❖ Resolve the common dependency.

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*Language notes:* धान्य-पलाल न्यायः = *dhānya-palāla nyāyah* |

# CUCUMBERS DROWNING IN WATER

*ambuni majjantyalābūni*

अम्बुनि मज्जन्त्यलावूनि

“When cucumbers sink in water and stones float.”

In the epic *Mahābhārata*, *Sabhā-parva* 66.11 *Yudhiṣṭhīra*, the eldest *Pāṇḍava*, starts losing to *Duryodhana* in the game of dice. *Shakuni*, maternal uncle of *Duryodhana*, was a master cheater at the game. He had special biased dice made from his father’s bones! As the bets kept increasing, *Yudhiṣṭhīra* had nothing left. All the kingdom and its treasures were lost to *Shakuni*’s cheating throw.

*Yudhiṣṭhīra* had lost himself as well in the bet! *Shakuni* suggested he still had his brothers and wife *Draupadī*. When the *Pāṇḍava* king bet and lost his brothers and even *Draupadī*, prime minister *Vidura*, who had been trying to persuade everyone to stop this vile game, could not stop from exclaiming – ‘Even if bottle-gourds may sink and stones float, and boats drown in water forever, this foolish son of *Dhṛitarāshṭra* cannot listen to my medicinal advice.’ He uses the word ‘*shilāḥ*’ instead of ‘*grāvāñah*.<sup>1</sup>

This is used to describe an impossible situation. Or ‘*When the pigs fly*.’

## ❖ The impossibility.

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*Language notes:* अम्बुनि मज्जन्त्यलावूनि ग्रावाणः प्लवन्ते = *ambuni majjanti-alābūni grāvāñah plavanté* | *ambuni* = in water (*ambu*). *majjanti* = sink (plural). *alābūni* = bottle-gourds (*kakadū*). *grāvāñā* = stone for pressing soma-rasa; in Hindi ‘*sila-batṭā*'; a stone. *plavanté* = they swim.

<sup>1</sup> मज्जन्त्यलावूनि शिला: प्लवन्ते, मुहून्ति नावोऽम्भसि शश्वदेव।

मूढो राजा धृतराष्ट्रस्य पुत्रो, न मे वाचः पथ्यरूपाः शृणोति ॥

*majjantyalābūni shilāḥ plavanté;*  
*muhyanti nāvo 'mbhasi shashvadéva;*  
*mūḍho rājā dhṛitarāshṭrasya putro*  
*na mé vāchah pathya-rūpāḥ shriṇotī.*

## KADAMBA BUDS

*kadamba-koraka nyāyah*

कदम्ब-कोरक न्यायः

The [simultaneous blossoming of] the buds of *kadamba* tree (*Anthocephalus indicus* or *Anthocephalus cadamba*).

*Kadamba* is an Indian tree fondly respected in literature and society. With many medicinal uses, it is found everywhere, but is losing its value in the modern ‘progress’. It is difficult to appreciate a tree when you live in multi-story urban apartment complexes. *Kadamba* has amazing orange or yellow flowers, that inflorescence in clusters in a compact bud formation and look like a disco crystal ball in shape. Its botanical name ‘anthocephalus’ means ‘flower-head’. From the flowers, a spirit called ‘*kādambara*’ is formed.

Cuckoo is called *kādambarī* for its sweet sound. *Kādambarī* is also the famous prose work of *Bāṇa* (7th century CE) that started the trend of full prose writing in India. *Kadamba* is beloved to Goddess *Pārvatī*. In *Tripurasundarī Aṣṭhakam* (‘Eight verses praising The Beauty of the Three Worlds’) we find many references of *Kadamba* forests and trees being dear to *Pārvatī*. *Krishna* too loved to play around in *Kadamba* groves.

It is believed that all the hundreds of bud-lets in one orb of the *Kadamba* flower blossom simultaneously, specially at the thunderclap of rain-laden clouds. In *Nyāya-mañjarī* and *Bhāṣhā-parichchhēda* it is used to describe how sound travels – ‘Just like waves on water and the blossoming of *Kadamba* budlets [in all directions, so also sound travels].’

It captures two aspects – simultaneity and multifaceted-ness of result. When a single action may give multiple results; or when the results start to show simultaneously as the efforts begin. And I think the trivia about the flower is interesting!

### ❖ Simultaneous results.

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Language notes: कदम्ब-कोरक न्यायः = *kadamba-koraka nyāyah* | koraka = bud.

## ATE GARLIC, DID NOT CURE

*bhakṣhité'pi lashuné*

भक्षितेऽपि लशुने

“Even after eating garlic, the sickness was not cured.”

Garlic’s medicinal properties have been commonplace knowledge for a long time in India, and have been supported by modern medicinal research as well. Someone in the USA even tried to patent garlic and turmeric products. This forced the Indian government to start a project of making public and digital, all the traditional scientific knowledge scattered in Indian literature, so frivolous patents claims cannot be made. Same thing with the knowledge base on Yoga.

The capsules with garlic extract are no match to eating the actual fresh garlic. But if you have ever eaten raw garlic, you would know that it keeps everyone a mile away. So much so that shopkeepers, truck-drivers and many others keep a string of chili, lemon and garlic hanging from their shop, truck or other ‘office’ space to ward off ‘evil eyes’.

Its stink and known property of being a stimulant caused it to be prohibited for the *brāhmaṇa*-s – those whose mission is to focus on knowledge and not be distracted by worldly pleasures.

So imagine someone eats raw garlic, the taste, the odor, the running away of dear ones, breaking the prohibition for medical reasons, all the trouble and even then, the disease is not cured. In Hindi, there is a saying ‘Snake was killed and stick was unbroken’<sup>1</sup> which signifies double profit! Here, the situation is that of double loss – “Ate garlic and still was not cured.”

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*Language notes:* भक्षितेऽपि लशुने न शान्तो व्याधिः = भक्षिते-अपि लशुने न शान्तः

व्याधिः = *bhakṣhité-api* *lashuné na shāntah vyādhiḥ* | *bhakṣita* = *eating*.

*bhakṣitē* = in the event of eating. *api* = also, *lashuna* = *garlic*, *lahsun* in Hindi. *shāntah* = calmed down, cured. *vyādhiḥ* = sickness.

<sup>1</sup> साँप भी मर गया और लाठी भी नहीं टूटी *sā.np bhī mar gayā aur lāṭhī bhī nahi.n tūṭī*

## SESAME AND RICE

*tila-taṇḍula nyāyah*

तिल-तण्डुल न्यायः

Similar to *Milk and water* (*kṣhīra-nīra nyāyah*) maxim on page 33, which denotes fully homogeneous mixing, this maxim denotes a situation where the mixing is great, of similar types, except for one minor fact. They are easily noticeable. When you see milk and water mixed together, you do not even know there is water. When you see rice and sesame, you can immediately see the black and white grains, but it is difficult to separate them completely.

In figure of speech, there are three levels. He fought *like* a lion. He fought *as if he was* a lion. He *was* a lion in the battlefield. The distinction blurs successively. This is what is expressed in the ‘man-lion’, ‘sesame-rice’ and ‘milk-water’ *nyāyah*-s. These figures of speech are called *utprekṣhā*, *upamā* and *rūpaka* respectively.

There are four different words to refer to rice. See *Rice stalk and grains* (*dhānya-palāla nyāyah*) on page 121.

The third level of ‘mixing’ is purely of abstract characteristic and not of physical form, as in ‘man-lion’ maxim (*nara-siṃha nyāyah*), where only the strength is matching but not the form.

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*Language notes:* तिल-तण्डुल न्यायः = *tila-taṇḍula nyāyah* |

*tila* = sesame seed. *taṇḍula* = rice grain removed from its husk but not cooked.

## AVOIDING ONE, HITTING ANOTHER

*ékām-asiddhim pariharataḥ*

एकामसिद्धिं परिहरतः

“When trying to avoid one obstacle, one bumps into another.”

This is used to denote a rather pathetic situation. Where misfortune keeps you company. You try to avoid one trouble, and that attempt makes you get into another. There are humorous and hazardous incidents of this maxim. In Hindi, we have, “Fallen from the sky, stuck in the palm tree.”<sup>1</sup> In English we say, *Out of the frying pan into the fire*.

### ❖ Navigate obstacles carefully.

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*Language notes:* एकामसिद्धिं परिहरतो द्वितीयापद्यते = एकाम्-असिद्धि परिहरतः

द्वितीय-आपद्यते = *ékām-asiddhiḥ pariharataḥ dvitīya-āpadyatē*. | *pariharataḥ* = avoiding. *ékām* = one. *asiddhim* = failure. *dvitīyā* = second. *āpadyatē* = befalls.

<sup>1</sup> आकाश से गिरा, खजूर में अटका *ākāsh sé girā, khajūr méin atakā*

## TWO FRUITS ON ONE STALK

*éka-vṛinta-gata*

एक-वृन्त-गत फल-द्वय

When grapes or cherries are ready to be plucked, they are not plucked one at a time; rather a bunch is plucked at the base. One stalk and many fruits. When there is a task common to many other tasks, doing the common one, enables all others in one go. One does not have to do it multiple times.

When prioritizing tasks, identify the ones that are common to many queues, upon which many other tasks depend. Finishing these will free up others to proceed.

### ❖ One effort, many results.

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*Language notes:* एक-वृन्त-गत-फल-द्वय न्यायः = *éka-vṛinta\_gata-phala\_dvaya nyāyah* | *éka* = one. *vṛinta-gata* = under one stalk (*vṛinta*). *phala* = fruit. *dvayam* = two.

## BETTER BEG, THAN GO HUNGRY

*upavāsādvaram bhikṣhā*

उपवासाद्वरं भिक्षा

Here fasting is not the one that you do on your own accord. Here *upavāsa* means ‘going hungry’. Go for the lesser evil. It does not mean to not have self-respect. It is simply a *nīti* point that says to survive rather than to die. For if you are alive, you can hope to make things better. If you are dead, the game is over. See *Disease is better than death (maraṇādvaram vyādhi)* on page 97.

When faced with two bad situations, choose the *Lesser of the two evils*.

### ❖ Choose lesser of the two evils.

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*Language notes:* उपवासात्-वरं भिक्षा = *upavāsāt-varam bhikṣhā* | *upavāsa* = going hungry. *varam* = better. *bhikṣhā* = alms, begging.

## FULL BELLY

*udaré bhṛitē kosho bhṛitah*

उदरे भृते कोशो भृतः

When the belly is full, the treasury is full.

This is a great attitude for the saints, those beyond the household life, but all others should work for more than just a hand to mouth survival. A saint will be praised for this; all others will be called ‘lazy, unmotivated sloths’.

### ❖ Have ambitions bigger than your belly.

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*Language notes:* उदरे भृतः कोशः भृतः = *udaré bhṛitē kosho bhṛitah* | *udara* = belly. *bhṛitah* = fed, taken care of, full. *kosha* = treasury.

## CHILD'S FIRE-PLAY BURNT THE VILLAGE

*bālasya pradīpa-kalikā-krīḍayaiva*  
बालस्य प्रदीपकलिकाक्रीडयैव

“The child playing with the lamp-wick burnt down the whole village.”

This signifies how a silly mistake took down the entire village. Modern examples of this are seen in California forest fires started by some happy camper (or unhappy arsonist). This is used for situation where seemingly small and harmless action can result in a huge disaster. Do not make silly mistakes that can cost you everything. And watch out for others' apparently silly mistake that can cause you lot of pain.

### ❖ Avoid silly mistakes that can ruin you.

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*Language notes:* बालस्य प्रदीप-कलिका-क्रीडया-एव नगर-दाहः = *bālasya pradīpa-kalikā-krīḍayā-éva nagara-dāhah* | *bālasya* = of boy, child (*bālah*). *pradīpa-kalikā* = wick (*kalikā*, bud) of the lamp (*pradīpa*). *krīḍayā* = by [his] play. *nagara* = city, settlement. *dāhah* = the burning of.

## BIRD FAR FROM SHORE

*taṭādarshi-shakunta-pota nyāyah*  
तटादर्शि-शकुन्त-पोत न्यायः

When a baby seagull flies off so far away from the shore that it cannot even see the shore, there is a ‘clear and present danger’ of exhaustion. No place to rest the small wings. Keep your flights within limits so they are manageable. Do not stretch the budget so much, that you have nothing left to survive. When extending out on a limb, as they say, do not extend out so much that you lose balance and topple over. Do not bite more than you can chew.

### ❖ Know your limits.

*Language notes:* तट-अदर्शि-शकुन्त-पोत न्यायः = *taṭa-adarshi-shakunta-pota nyāyah* | *taṭa* = shore. *adarshi* = not visible. *shakunta* = a bird specific. *potaḥ* = baby bird.

## GLASS OR CRYSTAL

*chintā-mañī parityajya*

चिन्ता-मणि परित्यज्य

“Leaving aside the crystal, one takes the ordinary glass.”

Similar to ‘Sweet rice-pudding, sour rice-gruel’ maxim (*kṣhīram-vihāya*), this is applied when one leaves the search for true or higher knowledge of *brahman*, and merely enjoys the transitory mortal, material life. The full saying goes – “The one afflicted with loss of appetite rejects the sweet rice pudding and enjoys the sour rice gruel.”<sup>1</sup>

Do not be *Penny wise, pound foolish*.

### ❖ Make the right choice.

---

*Language notes:* चिन्ता-मणि परित्यज्य काच-मणि-ग्रहण न्यायः = *chintā\_maṇī parityajya kācha\_maṇī grahaṇa nyāyah* | *chintāmaṇī* = the gem of thought, a super-gem, the best among gems. *parityajya* = having left. *kācha* = glass. *grahaṇa* = to take.

<sup>1</sup> क्षीरं विहायारोचकग्रस्तस्य सौवीररुचिमनुभवति *kṣhīram vihāya-arochaka-grastasya sauvīra-ruchim-anubhavati*

## THRESHING THE CHAFF

*tuṣha-kaṇḍana nyāyah*

तुष-कण्डन न्यायः

After the chaff is removed from the rice, there is no need to remove it yet again. That work is done. No need to do something that has already been finished. It is like “Grinding the flour”.<sup>1</sup>

Avoid reinventing the wheel, redoing the same thing again and again.

### ❖ Do not re-work on a finished task.

---

*Language notes:* तुष-कण्डन न्यायः = *tuṣha-kaṇḍana nyāyah* | *tuṣha* = chaff of rice or corn. *kaṇḍana* = threshing, act of separating the chaff.

<sup>1</sup> पिष्ट-पेषण न्यायः *piṣṭha-peṣhaṇa nyāyah*

## BLIND AND THE COW'S TAIL

*andha-go-lāngūla nyāyah*

अन्ध-गो-लांगूल न्यायः

Once a blind man was lost, and he asked a kid for directions to go to the next village. The naughty kid told him to hold on to the cow's tail saying it will take him to the village he wants to go. The blind took the advice and held on to the cow's tail. The surprised cow ran all over the village and the blind finally landed up in some thorny bushes.

This maxim is used to describe when some ‘kid’ gives false instruction, and when someone ‘blindly’ follows instructions of a false ‘guru’. Be aware of both aspects – the intention and credibility of instruction giver and the ability and method of the instruction taker.

### ❖ Check your sources of information.

---

*Language notes:* अन्धगोलांगूल न्यायः = *andha-go-lāngūla nyāyah*. | *andha* = blind. *go* = cow. *lāngūla* = hairy tail

## TREACLE ON THE ELBOW

*kaphoṇi-guḍa nyāyah*

कफोणि-गुड न्यायः

If you have some treacle, *guda*, chocolate stuck to your finger, what do you do? Lick it of course! And what do you do if it is on your elbow? Lick it of course! 83% people try to lick their elbow after knowing this. But it is physically and biologically impossible, if you are a normally built, average human being.

Somethings are just out of reach! Almost possible, but a little impossible. Do not sweat over it. Find the chocolate somewhere else. See *Fingertip cannot touch itself* (*aṅgulyagram na ténaiva*) on page 57.

### ❖ Some things are just impossible.

---

*Language notes:* कफोणिगुड न्यायः = *kaphoni-guḍa nyāyah* | *kaphoni* = elbow (from which comes Hindi *kohani*). *guḍa* = treacle.

## GOAT AND THE SWORD

*ajā-kripāṇīya nyāyah*

अजा-कृपाणीय न्यायः

This is a funny maxim that describes when a favorable situation accidentally turns unfavorable. A goat that needed to scratch an itch in its neck, uses the edge of a sword as scratch post! Needless to say, the satisfaction of scratching quickly turned fatal.

Do not scratch the wrong post!

### ❖ Know what you are getting into.

---

*Language notes:* अजा-कृपाणीय न्यायः = *ajā-kripāṇīya nyāyah*. | *ajā* = goat.  
*kripāṇa* = sword

## PIMPLE ON A PIMPLE

*ayam\_aparo gaṇḍasya*

अयमपरो गण्डस्य

This indicates a situation of misfortune after misfortune. This pimple issue is much more understood by teenagers. But, even grown-ups can remember times when one after the other troubles keep piling up. In the morning the alarm does not wake you up because you forgot the cell phone in ‘vibrate mode’. In the rush you miss your morning coffee. Then you get stuck in the traffic already late for the important meeting when the rear tire decides to go flat. Now, the cop wants to give you a ticket for the license plate renewal expired just two days back. And the day has just begun!

### ❖ Trouble after trouble, but keep your cool.

---

*Language notes:* अयमपरो गण्डस्य स्फोटः = अयं अपरः गण्डस्य स्फोटः = *ayam-aparah gaṇḍasya sphoṭah* | *gaṇḍa* = cheek; *sphoṭah* = a boil, pimple [from literal meaning of ‘explosion’ (as in *visphoṭa*)]

## SOUP FOR THE GUESTS

*jāmātrarthaṁ shrapitasya sūpādēḥ*

जामात्रर्थं श्रपितस्य सूपादेः

“The use of the soup etc., prepared for the son-in-law, for offering to other guests.”

A son-in-law’s visit is considered extremely special. When he visits, special dishes are made. Special soup, broth is made. Even though the reason for this extra preparation is the son-in-law, other guests are also served these delicacies. This is an unexpected windfall for the other ‘ordinary’ guests.

### ❖ Added benefits.

---

*Language notes:* जामात्रर्थं श्रपितस्य सूपादेरतिथ्युपकारकत्वम् = जामातृ-अर्थं श्रपितस्य सूपादेः-अतिथि-उपकारकत्वम् = *jāmātri-arthaṁ shrapitasya sūpādēḥ-atithi-upakārakatvam* | *jāmātri* = son in law. *arthaṁ* = for the purpose of. *shrapitāḥ* = cooked. *sūpādēḥ* (*sūpa+ādi*) = of broth etc. *atithi* = guest. *upakāra* = favor, (here) hospitality.

## SNAKE AND MONGOOSE

*ahi-nakula nyāyah*

अहि-नकुल न्यायः

This is used to describe a situation of two born enemies, something irreconcilably opposite. *Hitopadésha* warns that two natural enemies will never be friends, so beware when some such natural foe comes for friendship. “Don’t trust the enemy even after a strong pact. Even water well heated by the fire, extinguishes it.”<sup>1</sup> (*Hitopadésha*, *Mitrālābha* 89)

### ❖ Don’t trust your natural opponent.

---

*Language notes:* अहिनकुल न्यायः = *ahi-nakula nyāyah* | *ahi* = snake. *nakula* = mongoose.

<sup>1</sup> शत्रुणा न हि संदध्यात् संश्लिष्टेनाऽपि संधिना । सुतसमपि पानीयं शमयत्येव पावकम् ॥  
*shatruṇā na hi sandadhyaṭ samśliṣṭenā'pi sandhinā, sutaptam \_api pāniyam shamayatyéva pāvakam.*

## WRITTEN ON STONE

*grāvṇī rékhēva*

ग्राणि रेखेव

“Like the lines on stone.”

Something that cannot be changed at all. *Cast in stone*. The opposite is ‘drawn on sand’. The concept of sand-paintings among native Americans and *maṇḍala-s* among Tibetan monks is to show that you draw elaborate and magnificent colorful drawing to praise the Divine and erase them, denoting the impermanence of the world. Write in stone, all good things people do to you. Write on sand what bad they do to you. Forget and forgive the bad and remember the good.

Have flexibility. Do not have everything cast in stone. But you should know the core values that you would not compromise.

---

*Language notes:* ग्राणि रेखेव = *grāvṇī rékhā-iva* | *grāvan* = stone. *rékhā* = line.

## CAMEL’S THORN-EATING

*uṣṭra-kaṇṭaka-bhakṣhaṇa nyāyah*

उष्ट्र-कण्टक-भक्षण न्यायः

When a camel eats leaves, most of which are thorny in deserts, it eats the small thorns along with it. It cannot and does not sit and remove each thorn one at a time. Those damn un-opposable thumbs! It simply eats the whole foliage without pain. Its tongue, cheeks, food pipe and stomach are built tough for it. But for us humans, it would be a torture of the degree of the *Saw* series of horror movies (*Jolly pit of syringes, anyone?*)

This is used to say that the same thing maybe bad for one but good for another. Hence nothing is good or bad on its own. Joy and sorrow are relative. It also means that people have different nature. One size does *not* fit all. Even when we have general rules, keep provision for exceptions. *One man’s poison is other man’s food*.

---

*Language notes:* उष्ट्र-कण्टक-भक्षण न्यायः = *uṣṭra-kaṇṭaka-bhakṣhaṇa nyāyah* | *uṣṭra* = camel. *kaṇṭaka* = thorn. *bhakṣhaṇa* = eating.

## SEARCHING FOR DARKNESS

*tamodīpa nyāyah*

तमोदीप न्यायः

A person takes a lamp to go searching for darkness. And if you did not know, these special lamps are sold only in specialty stores, and you have to know the secret password to get this infra-red lamp that helps you see darkness. If you thought you had seen the depth of stupidity, you were so wrong. Einstein had doubts about the infinity of the universe but not about the fathomlessness of human stupidity!

---

*Language notes:* तमो-दीप न्यायः = *tamah-dīpa nyāyah* | *tamah* = darkness. *dīpa* = lamp.

## DUSTING THE BLANKET

*kambala-nirṇéjana nyāyah*

कम्बल-निर्णेजन न्यायः

A *kambala* is a winter blanket made of coarse wool. When it is dusted it is usually folded to make it of manageable size and then it is struck to the leg or even an upturned foot. This accomplishes two tasks, it dusts the blanket as well as the foot.

See also, *Planting a mango tree* (*āmré phalārthē nimité*) on page 16, or *Heavy club of a stick* (*puṣṭa-laguda nyāyah*) on page 135. Or as the saying goes, *Killing two birds with one stone*.

---

*Language notes:* कम्बल-निर्णेजन न्यायः = *kambala-nirṇéjana nyāyah*. | *kambala* = blanket. *nirṇéjana* = washing, cleansing.

## HEAVY CLUB OF A STICK

*puṣṭa-laguḍa nyāyah*

पुष्ट-लगुड न्यायः

On Indian roads, when you stroll around a little late in the night, you are most certain to be followed by some barking dogs who are the lions of their streets. You can run for life or stay brave. Or you can take the offensive and throw a stone and miss. If you throw a good hefty stick, you may not only silence the barking dog, you may actually silence a few more around it.

Sometimes, you need to show and even use your power. And it may achieve multiple benefits, not just solve the problem at hand but also set example for others and proactively solving future problems.

---

*Language notes:* पुष्ट-लगुड न्यायः = *puṣṭa-laguḍa nyāyah* | *puṣṭa* = *hefty, healthy*. *laguḍa* = *stick*.

## EXAMINING THE CROW'S TEETH

*kāka-danta-parīkṣhā nyāyah*

काक-दन्त-परीक्षा न्यायः

This is used to indicate a useless exercise, a futile attempt. One should not engage in such projects, works and tactics that waste time, energy and gain nothing. Catching the crow itself will waste a lot of time. Be aware when someone distracts you with such futile efforts.

Most politicians have understood the essence of this maxim very well by experience. That is why anything and everything has a committee appointed right away, even if the issue is recently hot or cold for two millennia. Formation of committees allows for commissioning of commissions, all for the great scientific search for the crow's teeth.

---

*Language notes:* काक-दन्त-परीक्षा न्यायः = *kāka-danta-parīkṣhā nyāyah* | *kāka* = *crow*. *danta* = *dentures, teeth*. *parīkṣhā* = *examination*.

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### Sanskrit transliteration and pronunciation help

<u>Sanskrit</u>	<u>Roman</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Sanskrit</u>	<u>Roman</u>	<u>Examples</u>
<b>Vowels</b>					
अ	a <sup>2</sup>	cup	ट	ṭa	boot
आ	ā <sup>2</sup>	father	ठ	ṭha	boot-house
इ	i	ink	ड	ḍa	wood
ई	ī	feed	ढ	ḍha	wood-house
उ	u	put	ण	ṇa	fund
ऊ	ū	boon	त	ta	like soft French t
ऋ	r̥i <sup>1</sup>	close to 'ri'	थ	tha	thank, through
ॠ	r̥ī <sup>1</sup>	close to 'rī'	द	da	this
ए	é, e	base	ध	dha	with his
ऐ	ai	bitc	न	na	nest
ओ	o	old	प	pa	cup
औ	au	authentic	फ	pha	cup-holder, not 'f'
अं	m̥	samskṛita	ब	ba	club
अः	ḥ	huh	भ	bha	abhor, club-house
<b>Consonants</b>					
क	ka	book	म	ma	mother
ख	kha	book-house	य	ya	yes
ग	ga	dog	र	ra	run
घ	gha	dog-house	ल	la	love
ঢ	ñā	sing	ব	wa/va	water (Labial, not fricative)
চ	cha <sup>1</sup>	bunch	শ	sha <sup>1</sup>	ship
ছ	chha <sup>1</sup>	bunch-hop	ষ	ṣha <sup>1</sup>	should
জ	ja	jump	স	sa	sun
ঝ	jha	page-her	হ	ha	hum
ঞ	ñā	bunch	ঞ	kṣha	book-shelf
			ত্র	tra	soft t + ra
			জ	jña	jña (but also 'gya')

<sup>1</sup>The IAST (International Alphabet for Sanskrit Transliteration) uses śa (ঢ), sa (ণ), r (ঢ়), ca (চ), cha (ছ). This has caused considerable confusion for non-academics. The ś with accent is available in special fonts only. śrī in IAST would be śrī, but people write it commonly as sri (without diacritic marks) and then pronounce it as 'sree' (শ্ৰী) instead of shrī (শ্ৰী). ca is erroneously pronounced as ka rather than ch sound of 'check'. Hence, I have done the modifications for easier reading based on English sounds.

<sup>2</sup>Trailing 'a' should not be mistaken for ā. It is a short vowel.

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Shashikant Joshi obtained his Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science from IIT Kharagpur, India and his Master of Science in Computer Science from University of Minnesota, USA. As an independent consulting 'Solution Provider', he helped many large US clients including GE, Yahoo!, JP Morgan Chase, DHL, Progressive Insurance, AmTrust Bank and others with Oracle database technology solutions. All along, he actively pursued his creative side as well – an audio CD on Hitopadésh; a screenplay for theater in Denver; a monthly cultural magazine in Cleveland; a lively, refined internet community at **PracticalSanskrit.com** blog and Facebook page **Facebook.com/PracticalSanskrit** (Join these today!)

He has addressed students, professionals, managers and executives at educational institutions and corporations on Indian culture, heritage, Sanskrit wisdom, corporate culture and leadership.

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## Notes

I have not grouped the maxims in 'sections' on purpose. In the end, you have to internalize the ideas, arrange them in your own personal unique way. Only then, they become your own. Use these 'Notes' pages to do just that, in your own way of organizing information!

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Shashikant Joshi holds a BTech from IIT Kharagpur, India and an MS from University of Minnesota, USA in Computer Science. An IT veteran, a poet and a Sanskrit enthusiast, he shares his infectious joy of Sanskrit wisdom, both practical and spiritual, through his blog and a rapidly growing Facebook community called Practical Sanskrit. He has addressed students, professionals, managers and executives at educational institutions and corporations on Indian culture, heritage, Sanskrit wisdom, corporate culture and leadership.

