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Becoming a Better Human

Dr. Vibha Jain, Associate Professor Janki Devi Memorial College, Delhi University.

When we think about Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and several other people like them, we often marvel at the goodness inside them. We are astounded by their unselfish desire to only bring happiness to others' lives. We often use them as an idol, someone to look up to, and someone whose qualities we can imbibe. These people, much like us, were not born as "good humans", but underwent suffering and took tiring efforts to make themselves human beings worth admiring.

One such person was a Jain monk, Acharya Shri Shrut Sagar Ji, who stays at Kund Kund Bharti, New Delhi, India. One day, he was posed a very simple yet meaningful question pertaining to all our lives: "What is your purpose in life?". To everyone's surprise, he answered that he wants to be a better human and wants to help others. The reason for the surprise was the deflection from the expected answers like attaining *samadhi* (i.e. leaving one's body at will at the time of death) and *moksha* (or liberation from the cycle of birth and death). His answer caused a sense of unease among his followers: if such a great monk, who spends several hours per day resolving people's problems, still aspired to become a better human, then how does one even begin treading on the path to becoming a good human?

Eventually, over the years we ourselves realized the wisdom in his words. He was so apt in stating his goal as in the process his goal of attaining *samadhi* is inherent. Without becoming a better human, one cannot die peacefully. To die peacefully, and to eventually gain liberation, one needs to constantly strive to be a better human and, in the process, imbibe all the possible good qualities that make us a good human being.

In this article, we aim to focus on telling the readers how to become a better human as learned from a plethora of sources ranging from scriptures, discourses of revered Monks and most important of all, our own experiences. We feel a good human is defined as one who is not involved in the process of hurting any living organism (ranging from plants, and animals, to humans) via his/her thoughts, words, or actions. Further, a good human is one who *only* sees the goodness in others and tries to imbibe the same quality in themselves. Now, the question is how to be a good human!

1. Stop Criticizing: Humans have the tendency to criticize and find faults in others all time. We tried and experimented with the following: We decided not to criticize anyone in the office for six months in any way – not even in our thoughts. It was very difficult initially as all the gossip sessions over coffee or in cabins came to a halt. There was so much energy and time conserved that we ended up devoting the same to more constructive tasks. One credible Jain scholar told us the mechanism behind this – She said that when we criticize others, our aura becomes such that we are prone to be hurt more by the one whom we are criticizing.
2. Live & Let Live: This is one of the most fundamental teachings of Lord Mahavira (the 24th Tirthankara of Jains). When we are in the process of living our life to the fullest, we are so happy and content that we don't hurt anyone in the process. This principle also tells us that we should treat others in the same manner as we wish to be treated. If we want to be appreciated, appreciate others. If we want to be respected, respect others. This is so because the Law of Karma is at work all time. What you give is precisely what you get!

3. Live for a purpose: It is imperative for every human to live a life with purpose. Living a life without a purpose is equivalent to living like animals who cannot think for themselves. It took us a few years of contemplation to derive our life's purpose. Once we got to that, there is no looking back. This is so because once we know what our destination is, we focus all our energies there instead of wasting on every trivial thing. Whether you get a job offer, a lottery, some wealth/loss, or anything, you can just ask if it is in line with your life's purpose and proceed. Having a life with a purpose not only makes life peaceful but also fun as all the unnecessary chatter from your mind is cleared and you can solely focus on your goal at hand!
4. Stop making excuses: The fear of the unknown, of failure, of being stranded in an unpleasant situation, or at times the need to rationalize our misdoings and avoid facing the truth pushes us to the brink that we start finding excuses or in the worst scenario start blaming others for our circumstances and this becomes a vicious circle. Learning to take responsibility for our actions and being honest with ourselves will not only empower us but also help us become focused and action-oriented
5. Let go of anger: Anger is a secondary emotion caused by primary negative emotions like fear, disappointment, anxiousness, sadness, threat, and pain which generates nothing but unpleasantness, mental aggression, and more pain. It can be difficult to let go of anger but we need to find our own ways to vent it in a manner that is not hurtful; finding our own trigger, learning to walk away from that unpleasant situation or finding a healthy deviation, taking deep breaths, meditate, talking to someone or seeking professional help if required. A peaceful mind is a very powerful mind and it paves a path for success and happiness

To quote Sadhguru, 'Being human means having the possibility to consciously shape yourself'. It gives us the opportunity to align our actions with our values which leads to that inner peace and joy we are always looking for.

While the journey to becoming a good human is an endless cycle of learning and re-learning (mostly from our mistakes), a steadfast devotion to such a path will eventually lead one of us to become someone who is only capable of imparting only love and happiness in others' lives.

