

Living by The Golden Rules. - The only path to True freedom from Personal and Social crisis

Many will immediately dismiss the idea that the pathway out of our modern-crisis lies in the “golden rules” that many are familiar with. But rules that are considered irrelevant as guides for living in a sophisticated society, with sophisticated problems.

By this, we mean the highly developed social systems and technological advancements that differentiate today from pre-modern times. The logic behind this argument is: *“how can rules that were adopted or suitable for a time when humans lived in small collective groups, apply to today’s large multi-ethnic nations, and the growing global village?”*

It is correct that social structures, systems and technology have drastically changed. But, the motivations of human beings have not changed. Modern man is still driven by the same traits that gave cause for the commandments, or advice that we call the golden rules, to guide harmonious living within a society or group. For example, it does not matter if, driven by the same unwholesome motivation, ancient man used sling shots to kill one person at a time, and modern man uses drones to kill thousands per strike. The same is true whether a person steals by raiding a settlement, or does so using the modern practice of non-genuine agreements, or conventions that are designed to deprive the weaker group/person of their resources.

The motivation for the examples used here could be traced back to greed, hate, envy, pride or avarice. All these traits existed in the ancient societies as they do today. It is towards the control of these unwholesome impulses and traits that the golden rules were introduced, and adopted by the pre-modern societies.

Unfortunately, the turbulent history of mankind clearly shows that many societies did not fully adapt their behaviors to the tenets of their golden rules. But even here, one can still see differences in the degree and types of turbulence in the histories of various cultural groups. And perhaps the most striking differences can be attributed to the degree by which these groups inculcated the spirit of their golden rules into their daily lives. As opposed to placing a focus on interpreting the words.

Cultural groups where the leaders and the generality of the community considered their golden rules sacred, even though they may have struggled as individuals with abiding by them, generally experienced less abhorrent behaviors among its members. Here, people were more stoic, which helped them to maintain an emotional balance and personal integrity in the face of life's daily challenges. Being more grounded in the rhythms of nature, they also exhibited high levels of patience, recognizing and focusing only on what they could control, while accepting everything else as *one of the givens of life*. The result is that there were fewer incidents of theft, murder, envy or strife in such societies. Also, greater value was placed in these societies on harmony and concern for the well-being of their community. Internal or external conflicts in these earlier cultures were usually more quickly resolved, and occurred infrequently.

This contrasts with societies/cultures where the leaders no longer saw their golden rules as sacred. Even where the larger body of members believed in the golden rules, the lip service of the leaders, to these rules, meant that their focus was on how to interpret the words to their own advantage. Having thus distorted, watered down, or narrowed the intent of the rules, they, without qualms, perpetrated all of their ill-motivated acts. First this was done against their fellow community members, and soon extended to their neighboring communities. Their actions within their own communities led to the establishment of oppressive class structures in which those at the top could take at will, from the oppressed. Their acts against their neighbors resulted in frequent wars, whose intensity and duration expanded with conquests. Even forged alliances collapsed because its members were similarly motivated and soon turned upon each other. So, the peace promised by the alliances never materialized.

The bad-examples shown by these leaders gradually eroded any regard that their exploited compatriots may have had for their golden rules. And, with time, the majority also started interpreting the golden rules to their own advantage, even when dealing with other members of their own oppressed class. The result is that such societies increasingly exhibited evidence of all of the vices and traits that are very manifest today. The only difference being the methods by which these vices were perpetrated then, versus today.

The notion that the simple golden rules are incompatible with modern living did not eliminate the need for rules of conduct on how members live in a society or country. This recognition has led to the volumes of codes that are reflected in any modern society's laws and regulations. However, because most of the formulators of the laws and the members of society no longer hold the rules to manage the behavior of the individual or group as sacred, the inevitable focus for most people is how to interpret the law or regulation to their own advantage, ignoring or not even making an attempt to see or understand the spirit of the law itself. In modern judiciary practice, greater importance is given to process and technicalities, aimed at interpreting the outcome to one's advantage. For example, in the United States of America, the laws against stealing features **thousands** of specific statutes, ranging from general theft to highly specialized financial crimes, scattered throughout **Title 18 of the United States Code**. Compare this to the simple golden rule:, "**Thou shall not steal**".

Needless to say, one would have to be an expert to comb through the thousands of pages covered by these statutes, in order to understand the contexts and nuances associated with them. However, a closer examination of these statutes shows them as attempts to address the various ways in which an individual may try to interpret what *it means to steal*, or the circumstances, to their own advantage. By contrast, the simple golden rule speaks to the decency of the person to resist the temptation to take what does not belong to them by force, or by guile. This is regardless of whether it is a petty theft or plunder, for personal gain, or on behalf of a group or even a government.

The golden rules also point to the personal liability that one would bear, in the eyes of the Supreme authority, for violating the rule. Thus, it behooved each person to develop a deep grasp of the spirit of each rule, because, ultimately, they would be responsible for the violation. And no one can argue their case for them before the Supreme law. Also, the golden rules were stated in terms that were simple enough for anyone to grasp the essence or spirit of the rule.

Based on what has been said thus far, it follows that any society in which the majority sees their golden rules as sacred (i.e. with a liability for violation that is bound to the overarching creation principles) would naturally feature people who are self-policing, and striving not to intentionally act in ways to harm their neighbor.

Had mankind diligently continued along the path of inculcating the advice given by their golden rules, it is arguable that most of today's personal and social crisis would not exist. We would have learned by now, through millennia of practice, to resist the urge of our unwholesome motivations that are the root cause of all personal and social crisis. We would have learned that any temporary benefits from acts that hurt our neighbors will inevitably be followed by years of torment in the future, regardless of whether one is still on earth, has passed into the beyond, or is back again to earth. It is this recognition of the continuity of life that helped the initial adaptors of the golden rules. Unfortunately, the further mankind lost awareness, and then knowledge about the continuity of life, and the inevitable liability for our actions, this deterrent, that once induced deeper reflection before we acted, was lost.

As a result, today, modern man is caught in a web of actions and reactions that we weave daily, and that cause crisis in our personal and social lives, while we look for the culprit outside of ourselves.

But the principles that govern living on earth, to which the adoption of the golden rules would have helped us to align, still continue to operate today, as they have done for millennia. Living in alignment with them would reflect a life that does not intentionally or knowingly hurt a fellow human being or creature. While a life not aligned with

these principles will manifest in a life that intentionally or knowingly hurt a fellow human being or creature. Here, many may claim unintentional hurting of their neighbor or creature. But the fact is, anything that we do to another, which we know will cause them pain, is an intentionally committed wrong. Even if the person is a masochist who him or herself can endure pain. The ability to endure does not mean that one has not inflicted pain or hurt.

Conclusion

Let us now review some of these golden rules, to serve as a quick reminder or refresher for those, who after reading this piece may wish to revisit them . Examples include the 10 commandments of the Abrahamic religions (i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as all of their offshoots). Similar tenets are present in nearly every ancient civilization and philosophical tradition such as :

- Confucianism (China). Originating in the 5th century BCE, Confucius answered when asked about a single rule for life: *"Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire."*
- Hinduism (India). The ancient epic *Mahabharata* states: *"This is the sum of duty: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."*
- Ancient Greece. Philosophers frequently invoked reciprocity. Thales of Miletus advised: *"Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing."*
- Buddhism. A core tenet from the *Udana-Varga* reads: *"Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."*
- African Proverb. Emphasizing caution about the consequences of one's actions: *"When you cast a stone in a marketplace, you never know who would be hit; it could be your mother"*

As mentioned earlier, many societies have, for centuries, focused emphasis on interpreting the golden rules for personal advantage. This is when they are even considered or mentioned. These distorted interpretations are today scattered in dogma, pop-psychology or life-styles, making it difficult for a genuine person who wants to retrace their steps to grasp the real essence of these golden rules.

We invite anyone who is interested, to read Abdrushin's explanation of the 10 Commandments. The excerpt below of his explanation of the commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*, hopefully shows how far-removed modern man is from grasping its real essence. Yet, without this, we are prone to continue to hurt our fellow human being, and thus to create problems that lead to personal and social crises.

The fifth Commandment. Thou shalt not kill! .

Yes, beat your chest, oh man, and proclaim loudly that you are no murderer! For, surely, to kill is to murder, and according to your conviction you have never transgressed this Commandment of the Lord. Proudly you can step before Him, and without fear and anxiety look forward, filled with hope, to the opening of this particular page in the Book of your Life.

But have you ever considered, in this regard, that there is for you also a deadening, and that to deaden means the same as to kill?

There is no difference between them. You alone made this difference up, in your form of expression, in your language; for the Commandment does not say one-sidedly: Thou shalt kill no gross material earth-life! But in a broad, comprehensive way, it says succinctly: Thou shalt not kill!

For example, a father had a son. Petty ambition drove the father to insist that his son should go to college, at all costs. But this son possessed gifts that urged him to do something else, for which college would be of no use to him at all. So it was quite natural that the son felt no inclination toward such forced studies, nor was he able joyfully to summon up the energy. The son was obedient. At the expense of his health he exerted himself to comply with his

father's will. However, since it was against the son's nature, against the gifts he bore within him, it was quite natural that his body also suffered under it. I will not pursue the case here any further; it is repeated in earthly life so often that the cases would run into the hundreds of thousands, and even more. But it is an irrefutable fact that through his ambition or obduracy the father here sought to deaden something in this son which was given to the son to be developed on earth! In many cases he is successful in actually deadening it, since its development in later life is hardly possible anymore, because the healthy main strength for it has been broken in its best time, wantonly wasted on things alien to the boy's nature. The father thereby committed a severe trespass against the Commandment: Thou shalt not kill! This is quite apart from the fact that by his action he deprived mankind of something which might have been of great benefit to them through the boy! However, he must consider that although the boy is or can be spiritually related to him or to the mother, nevertheless before the Creator he remains a personality of his own, whose duty it is to develop for his own benefit the gifts he received on coming to earth. Perhaps the Grace of God had thereby granted the boy redemption of a heavy karma, in that he was meant to invent something, which in some way would bring great benefit to mankind! The guilt of this prevention weighs all the more heavily upon the father or the mother, who set their petty earthly views above the great threads of fate, and thereby abused their parental power.

It is no different when parents are capable of allowing the petty earthly calculations of their intellect to prevail in connection with their children's marriages. How often is a most noble intuitive perception of their child therewith ruthlessly stifled, through which action the child may indeed be given freedom from earthly cares, but at the expense of his soul's happiness, which remains more incisive for the child's existence than all money and earthly possessions.

Naturally the parents should not indulge every dream or wish of a child. That would not be fulfilling their parental duty. But serious examination is demanded, which must never be one-sided in the earthly sense! However, it is just this examination in a selfless way which is seldom or never employed by parents. Such cases exist in a thousand forms. It is not necessary for me to say any more about it. Reflect on it yourselves, so that you do not transgress this most weighty Word of God in the Commandment! In so doing unimagined paths will open up to you!

However, it is also possible for the child to stifle the justified hopes of its parents! If it does not develop its inherent gifts as is necessary in order to achieve great things, once the parents have accommodated the child by letting it choose the path it asked for. This, too, leads to the killing of noble intuitive perceptions in his parents, and the child has transgressed the Commandment in a ruthless way!

This also applies when a man in some way deceives true friendship or the confidence someone gives to him. He therewith kills and injures in the other person something which bears real life! It is transgression of God's Word: Thou shalt not kill! It brings him bad karma for which he must atone.

You see that all the Commandments are but the best friends for mankind, in order to protect them faithfully from evil and from suffering! Therefore, love them and respect them as a treasure, the guarding of which brings you only joy!

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