

My
Dear
Son

BOOK
Two

Short Stories



N Natarajan

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Introduction

Dear son,

This is the second book I am writing for you and the generation next, to benefit from. While some of the stories I write in this series were handed down to us by our ancestors I will be adding a few of my own experiences so that the stories and messages reflect the current life scenario.

During travelling, we made it a point to have some discussion or the other on life and events.

During these discussions, we realized that each one of us held divergent views on most topics. That is, we realized the existence of several realities and all of them were valid in one's own situation. There we learnt to accept the other person's view without seeing through our own narrow views.

I am sharing with you, , the essence of those discussions along with some stories in this book. Why stories?

We might forget the theme with the passage of time. But stories stick around in the mind for a longer time.

You will do well to share these themes and stories with friends and colleagues whenever you find an occasion.

When you are on a family trip or a holiday with your grand children, make it a point to tell as many themes and stories as they can listen to and internalize.

N Natarajan

Bangalore

My, unforgettable, Hyderabad days!

You may remember the days, while I was working in Hyderabad and you grew up from a primary school student to a science graduate.

Out of those twenty plus years, for close to six years, I and my colleagues commuted between home and office in a chartered van. It took 45 minutes to an hour one way. During those 45 Minutes, we discussed a variety of issues starting from domestic violence to world wars, Office politics to national politics, stock markets to World Bank transactions. Other common topics of discussion were Literary discussions, Religion, Spirituality, Poetry, quiz, pun and stories. The list is quite long.

The narration and short stories you find are a few important ones among what we discussed.

Every day would be a special day. Some times people who did not travel in our route regularly opted to travel with us for the fun that could be found nowhere else.

Some one travelling in the van asked one day, "who is Van Hussain?" Several people in the van answered in one voice. "It is simple. It is a brand name of trousers! It could be the promoter of the brand".

The man who asked the question, said, "You are all wrong". He continued, "It is our new driver of this van, called Hussein".

Some times we had some problems too.

While we returned home in the evening, I would be among the last couple of commuters.

As the people alighted on the way, we used to remove

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our footwear / shoes, fold our legs and have a chit chat.

One evening, as the van arrived at my stop, it was already dark. I slipped my feet into a pair of footwear and reached home.

Hardly ten minutes went by. The phone at home rang. There was an angry voice at the other end. For some time I did not understand what his problem was.

He directed me to see if I have a complete pair of my chappals. I said, yes I wore and walked home. Then I discovered that one of my chappals had been exchanged with his.

I told him coolly, don't worry, we will rectify the mistake on the following day.

I had no problem walking with different footwear in each foot. May be, it invited the attention of some on the way. It did not matter to me at all. Some might have laughed. A few others might remember that incident for a few more days.

But my friend, I understand, cannot take any of these.

On the following day, he wore a fresh pair of footwear and packed one of my footwear in a news paper. That packet was brought in a plastic cover.

The following morning and evening, this incident was discussed and the van was filled with laughter.

There was a different perspective to that incident. It was found that only two out of 14 persons had no problem in walking with such a pair of chappals.

The rest of them felt too awkward to walk using such a pair of footwear as it made them appear as a joker.

We discussed various ways of diverting others' attention from our feet (with different designs of footwear).

It was one of the most hilarious discussions we have had in the van.

1. Theme: Never say a lie:

Know this:

During my professional life I had the occasion to understand what people felt about living a virtuous life. Very few believed in it. Many believed that there should not be a rigid frame work for leading the life. Typical opinions expressed by many people I sampled, can be summarized as follows.

- (1) Speaking lies is inevitable in life.
- (2) It is perfectly all right to say a lie to avoid punishment or to tide over a difficult situation.
- (3) It is profitable to tell lies.
- (4) One can entertain others with lies.
- (5) For some, lies are breath. They need no motives.

Unfortunately, many are unaware of the truth that:

- (1) Lies bring about losses and some times disaster.
- (2) There are an insignificantly small number of people who live only by Truth. Such people may have no great skills. Yet they are in demand.
- (3) Consciously, practice speaking only the truth in

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every situation. You will discover the benefits and you will never tell a lie again.

Advice:

(1) Decide today that you will not tell a lie, in any situation. Well, there are some situations when if you speak the truth it could affect some one seriously. Do not speak the truth but do not lie.

You need to be conscious of this for some days and perhaps a few months. Then you will find that not saying a lie would have become your nature. There is no need to announce it to any one. The moment you do, many would be tempted to test you. You will have time only to go through the tests and nothing else.

There after, you will never look back.

There are not many stories that highlight the ill-effects of living by lies. The following story will do that. The story originates from Persia. To my surprise, similar stories of Romanian origin are no different in content. This convinces that good judges and rich people who lie are common in every age and place.

Theme: Never Say a lie.

STORY 1

The poor man and the rich merchant.

It was a busy noon in the largest market place in the capital. People had come from far away places for both buying and selling. The merchandise was brought on camel backs as well as donkey backs.

A poor man, called Ahmed, earned his living as a porter for merchants in the market. Ahmed was a simple person who worked hard and was a believer in God.

While wading through the crowd, he stumbled on an object on a narrow passage in the market. He bent down to pick the obstacle and leave it on the side of the walk. He found it was a leather money bag. Only very rich merchants own such a big purse. He opened it and found a large number of Gold coins in it.

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While he was wondering who might have lost it, an announcer was making the following announcement:

A merchant, Sheik..... has lost his purse in market. Any one who found it and returned it would be rewarded ten Gold coins. For poor people like Ahmed, ten Gold coins was huge money.

Ahmed approached the announcer and told him that he had found the purse. He requested the announcer to lead him to the merchant who lost the purse.

On seeing Ahmed carrying his lost purse, the sheik's face lit up. He took the purse and counted the coins. Ahmed was waiting for the reward that was announced. Sheik turned his face and pretended to be busy with his work. Ahmed after waiting for some time reminded the sheik that he was waiting for the reward.

Now the sheik kept a cold face. He bluntly told Ahmed that he would not give any reward. He said, "Before the Chief of the soldiers comes to market, vanish from here. Otherwise I will complain to him that you have stolen 100 gold coins from my purse".

"You will be jailed for ever", threatened the Sheik. Poor Ahmed took the case to the Sultan.

The subjects of the country revered their ruler, known as Sultan for being both just and extremely intelligent.

Sheik and Ahmed were summoned to present their case. Ahmed recounted whatever happened in the market place. He pleaded that the Sheik had not only not kept his promise but also threatened him to get him arrested and jailed.

It was the turn of the Sheik. Sheik agreed that the purse was lost in the market and that Ahmed located it and brought it to him. But, Sheik said, "When I counted the coins in it, instead of 200 Gold Coins, there were only 100 in it". "He should have taken those 100 gold coins". I did him a favor by not handing him over to Chief of Soldiers, because he was poor.

It did not take even a minute for the Sultan to understand the problem. He delivered his judgment, as follows. The judgment, you will find, is logical and indisputable.

My subjects do not lie. I accept the versions given by Ahmed as well as Sheik.

If Ahmed was a dishonest person, he would have kept all the coins with himself. He did not do it.

The Sheik found only 100 gold coins instead of 200. This establishes the fact that the purse found by Ahmed is not the one that Sheik lost. So, he ordered Sheik to hand over the purse with 100 Gold coins to Ahmed and instructed his Chief of Security to investigate the missing purse of Sheik.

Ahmed received a reward more than he was promised. The greedy Sheik lost all that came back to him. That was the punishment he received for his lies.

2. Theme: Love and Friendship are illusions.

Know this:

(1) Illusion can be defined as a state of mind when an apparently non-existent object or phenomenon appears to exist or an existent Phenomenon appears non-existent.

(2) Love and friendship take birth and die in one's mind.

(3) It is part of the trick-pack played by nature / God / a Superior force which easterners understand as Maya, to keep all forms of life in a cycle of Birth-Growth - Reproduction -Death.

(4) While love disappears at some stage in youth, friendship accompanies man till his end.

(5) A friend is defined as some one who helps you in a difficult situation , without seeking a reward or return.

(6) It is the weak among us who look at friendship as a Divine intervention to bail themselves out when in trouble. This is the important reason for people to glorify friendship.

(7) Take any definition of a good friendship, and ask yourself to whom you would be such a good friend. You will not find an answer. Ask as many as you know. None will have.

The problem is that every one is looking for such an ideal friend, who would be a man Friday for him.

(8) Very rarely people get along well for a long time. The team of two . There could be more reasons for the relationship to last than going strictly by the definition of friendship.

(9) More often, friendship between two expands to a team. Typically the members will have divergent socio-economic back grounds. Every one looks for some specific aspect of life from others. Examples are:

Money, a shoulder to cry, muscle power, official position, to run errands, sing their praise and so on. When these are met even national , the ties last long.

(10) Most friendships break up some day leaving a bitter feeling among the members of the team.

When I explained this to my co-travelers in the van, for the first time, many protested violently. A couple of days latter they congratulated me silently. This is a very good story to illustrate the typical scenario.

2. Theme: Friendship & love are illusions

Story: Three friends



When there are more than two identifying themselves as friends, it is referred to as friend's circle. We may have different friends' circles at different stages of life and also in different spheres of life .

If only you give due thought, you will discover that the members of each circle will vary in terms of their individual strengths and seek others to compliment their weakness.

We will proceed to the story.

There lived a fox in the forest, which befriended a donkey in a village adjoining the forest.

A lion in the forest was also a good friend of the fox. Let us analyze how there can be friendship between the three different species.

Lion is agile, fast and powerful. It hunts its food. The lion needs no other animal for its own survival. But yet, it leaves a little for the lesser animal to feast on. Life of lion is not threatened by a fox, this is an important aspect.

Animals like fox have speed but no power to hunt their food. Fox depends on lion for its survival. In return animals like fox sing the praise of the lion and the lion is happy with it. You may call it ego satisfaction.

Fox has its ego hurt because it has to praise the lion for its survival. So it turns to the donkey in the village to get its hurt ego healed.

Donkey needs no one for its survival. It is slow, dull and hard working. But the donkey has its unique situation in that it does all work with no compensation. So it found a shoulder to cry on when the fox offered its friendship. In return the donkey praised the fox for its goodness. Fox sees no threat from the donkey, and only the need to listen to the donkey's tale of woe, whenever they met. Otherwise the fox has no real benefit in associating itself with the donkey. It is also true that Lion has no purpose served by its association with Fox.

Friendship between the three continued for long. A situation arose when the friends needed each other for survival.

The lion was injured during a hunting expedition. A few bones broke and a few other bones were dislocated. The lion could not hunt any more. Now both the lion and the fox starved without food.

The hungry lion asked the fox, if it could some

how organize some food. Fox was equally hungry. Suddenly, the fox remembered the donkey in the village. It explained to the lion, "The donkey is a useless animal. Its friendship got us nowhere. Now it is time when donkey's friendship will come of use."

The lion was surprised. It asked, "How come a lazy donkey can help us?" The Fox said, "I will bring it here. You knock it down in one blow. We both will eat it."

Lion agreed to that idea but demanded to know how to bring the donkey to the forest.

Fox replied, "It is quite simple. Any animal which lives in the cities and villages has inherited the weaknesses from humans".

"Humans attach great importance to friendship, which can be exploited", reasoned the fox.

"Most importantly they will fall victims to flattery".
"These two are enough to bring them to forest."

The lion asked the fox, if it meant that animals living along side humans have no brain at all.

"You said it", replied the fox and set itself on a journey to the village to meet the donkey.

In the village, when every one had slept off, the donkey was trying to find its food in the streets. The Fox met the donkey and greeted it.

As usual, the donkey started listing the listless woes of donkeys as species. The fox, this time, was not a mute listener.

The fox assured the donkey that there was always a way to come out of misery. The fox continued, "The humans always exploit the animals for their selfish

ends. So, it is better to live only among animals. You have such soft grass abundant in the forest. You can enjoy it for free. There are no people in the forest to enslave animals.”

The donkey was not that dumb, as the fox thought it to be. “I know that in forests there are several wild animals that would devour us”, observed the donkey. The fox said, “It is merely the rumor created by wicked men to ensure animals do not disappear into the forest. Am I not meeting you often? Am I not living in the forest? Which wild animal devoured me?”

The donkey was not fully convinced, as such.

The fox, realizing that its plan A did not work with the donkey, pulled out its plan B: “There is an acute shortage of male donkeys in the forest”. The fox continued. “A handsome donkey like you will be entitled for at least three beautiful and healthy female donkeys in the forest. As a package deal, you get free food and no hard labor. You are one of the good souls. You deserve this and much more. Make a visit once and you will know all by yourself. If you don’t like”, the fox assured that, “I will drop you back to this village.”

The fox set out on a long journey lasting several hours. It was hungry, weak and tired. The fox explained to the donkey about the beautiful life in the forest all the way.

Finally, the donkey arrived into the dark den. It could not see anything inside. It would take some time before it could see around.

The hungry lion took a giant leap on the donkey only

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