

## Case Studies On Dilemmas

Knowledge just through intuition is one way to wisdom. Here you acquire the principles directly without reference to relevant practical experiences. But learning from experiences and then forming the principles on which wisdom is created is another way.

In the spirit of the second approach I thought it would be interesting to discuss practical cases that present moral or legal dilemmas and derive principles on the basis of which if one acts would result in a neat solution to the problem.

I started this discussion in a forum and is still going on. I have mentioned the contributors to each cases.

### Dilemma 1

I will start with a hypothetical case which presents a dilemma.

Mrs and Mr.X are wife and husband resp. They have been in the relationship for quite some time and have almost adolescent daughter and son. Mrs.X happens to meet Mr.Y with whom she grows a relationship. It should be noted that Mrs.X really does not have a chemistry with Mr.X but has a chemistry with Mr.Y. But somewhere within herself she feels a guilt for the relationship with Mr.Y.

What should Mrs.X do ? and what is the rational basis for it?

Contributors: Smt.Renuka, Shri.Vaagmi

The first solution is when Mrs.X is not capable of controlling her feelings for Mr.Y. There are two important factors that would determine the future peace of such persons namely (a) self control or (b) capacity to control situations. So as you say if Mrs.X is the type of person who can control situations but does not possess self control, she will opt for this solution and find her peace .

In my view such persons have to constantly keep planning for their peace and do not possess the type of inner peace that is possible.

The second solution is when you are ridden with guilt. This indicates in the fight between guilt and chemistry, guilt eventually wins. So she is able to bring back her self control. The fact that she has self control indicates she possesses more freedom in dealing with a situation with that self control. She gets influenced less by external factors than if she had been a type who choose the first solution.

So the fundamental principle I am putting forth is that one's inner happiness and its quality depends a lot on the self control he or she exercises. Those who do not possess sufficient self control are also happy but there are differences in the quality of happiness that each approach offers.

So what I was thinking is that once we lay down the fundamental principles on what brings peace and happiness which is what every solution eventually strives for, we can branch off from there and become more specific on the principles and eventually actions that would lead to peace and happiness.

More views on this case:

If Mr. Y and Mrs.X are able to enjoy music over static they can continue the relationship for ever leaving Mr X behind so that he can look for some other partner to work on a new oscillator to start a new musical effort.

There is nothing to feel guilty about it. We, in fact, offer oblations during tharpanam to the jnaatha ajnaatha pithrus.

Westerners have got rid of this guilt part of it quite easily as it is their culture. The effort there it appears is to create and transmit music always.

### **My Response:**

Guilt comes from within. It depends on the mental make up of the person. It can be obscured just like all morally right things can be, but the point is it is a naturally occurring feeling. A person who feels guilt for doing something morally wrong is still listening to the conscience. By overriding guilt the music will only become discordant with time. In my view it cannot be music always. Definitely not good quality music.

It is my view that the western notion of equality and its notion of other values alone are not enough for an exploitation free society. In the same way a society which talks of only values cannot give an exploitation free society. In the former case, the way it has been practiced, everything reduces to just performing the right behavior and no care for right intent. It is just being politically correct and pragmatic. In the later, everything eventually reduces to meaningless rituals and superstitions. Both lead to exploitation.

It is between these two groups that we see fights very often these days. Pragmatism and values have to be integrated. The problem is people have found it easy to practice pragmatism alone or preach values alone without bothering about the other. The mix of both is what gives rise to character and integrity. It gives stability and harmony to society.

We need to think about ways to stress about the importance of both so that one does not compromise on one or the other. As an individual this would seem to be a daunting task but would not be so if the society realizes this as a whole. Spiritual leaders, politicians and social workers have to understand this and be involved to make the mass change possible.

### **Dilemma 2:**

Is there a need to engage in productive money earning exercise to be happy.

If not why work for a living?

I find those who have not earned a penny in a lifetime and lived off others are happier than those who have slogged a life time to earn a few rupees.

Should we be happy beggars than unhappy wealthy people?

### **Dilemma posed by Shri.Krish**

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Picking up from the last dilemma, we saw that quality of life depends on the logic you use in your life. The question is do you prefer pleasure or mental happiness. The answer would be mental happiness without any qualification. Even during pleasure there is mental happiness. So there is nothing to choose here. You just have to realize the truth.

A subtle point to note is that one who seeks pleasure actually seeks mental happiness. Consider this. If we take away his mental happiness but let him have the pleasure, will it be acceptable for him? But the reverse case of mental happiness without pleasure is quite a satisfactory one. This in my view settles the issue. So one should follow **a recipe that tries to maximize happiness and not one that tries to maximize physical comforts.**

The most basic and the lowest level of happiness is when your security of life is not threatened. Food, shelter and clothing gives you this. The next level of happiness happens when you start providing for yourself more than the above needs. This when you start reaching the normal standards of living. You not only feel secure about food, clothing and shelter but also comfortable. From this point onwards it seems that material aspect fail to conclusively increase the quality of happiness.

You can strive to increase the happiness by trying to be wealthier or popular. The happiness is created by the attention of other people towards you. This is a mixed case. It can increase the level of happiness or can decrease it because negative factors come into play. A more stable level of happiness is reached by intellectual accomplishments i.e., fame.

But when your mind develops to a stage where it considers helping others at par with attaining personal benefits, the quality of happiness changes in a real way. As this attitude keeps intensifying, the happiness keeps increasing. But the tragedy is, in reality we find very few of such people because of the state of affairs of our times.

To sum up I would say there are two distinct levels of happiness , one occurring by satisfaction of needs of self and the other when you go beyond them.

Let us move on to the next dilemma to get more insight about happiness caused by money.

### **Dilemma 3:**

#### **Is desire for money not right?**

We see people not being happy in spite of possessing money beyond or even way beyond what is sufficient for happiness. To put things in perspective, let me get quantitative for a change and calculate how much money is required for people in their lives for a very good standard of living. I assume only the husband is working and a family has two children. I assume that the person works for a period of 40 years.

Major Expenses:

Education of two children - 1 crore

Marriage of two children - 1 crore

Health Expenses - 1 crore

House, Car and other amenities- 1 crore

Savings and recurring expenses and some charity- 1 crore

So a person has to earn 5 crores over a period of 40 years that is approximately 1 lakh per month.

The 1 lakh per month is the average salary over a period of 40 years. But a person's income increases due to seniority, merit or if self employed the business grows etc. So roughly this 1 lakh per month over 40 years would correspond to Rs. 30,000-40,000 per month or so starting income according to today's standards

This is for a good living. Beyond that I think the focus on money would not bring net positive results. Earning half of this or even quarter of this still need not diminish your happiness much as you can still make a good living. But beyond 1 lakh a month one's attention should not be on money but more on developing one's inner self.

Also I am not against money that comes as a side benefit whatever the amount be but without focusing on it and not worrying about it.

To sum up I would say without hurting others we can earn enough to enjoy a good living and our satisfaction would be even better if we only focus on giving our best and not on money.

When I talk of the extent of money needed, I am talking of those who have not reached the level of ceiling. I am talking about and not about those who already are very wealthy. My yardstick is the middle

class standard of living. I believe from thereon, there are two other main factors that give happiness, one is human need for attention from others and the other is satisfaction in helping others. For the former, focusing on accomplishments through intellectual and special skills do a much better job in giving net happiness and for the latter the inclination to help others similarly does a much better job in giving you the fulfillment.

**More Analysis:** Let us assume you have immense talent. Would using your talent and focusing on becoming wealthy give happiness? Let us say you focus on bringing out the best in you, money would automatically follow. The talent is an inner factor to be used at your will and disposal. Nobody can take away your talent. If you focus on it, you would both be acclaimed for your talent and be very wealthy too. But if you focus on just becoming wealthy using your talent, the external factors begin to play a greater role as becoming wealthy is not at your will and disposal.

When you take off the burden of having to accomplish a result, the level of happiness automatically rises. So after a certain extent focusing on inner self brings the best results.

I am not against setting of goals but if such goals are directed towards accomplishing a result in your inner self, it would be a lot more effective means to happiness. For example let us say you start your career. You set a goal that within the next 3 years you would accomplish a certain financial objective and you create a plan for it.

But had you set your goal that within the next three years I would reduce my greed, and think about how to go about it, that would be a lot more worthy goal because by controlling your greed you have a balanced approach to increasing your wealth and you don't usurp others territory. You still have the same talent. People may still work against you but not as vigorously as when you trample them. People may actually begin to like you for your good qualities. That not only decreases the stress but also enhances your performance.

Any thing you seek in excess can make you insensitive to and transgressing on others legitimate rights. Something that is excess for some may seem to be normal for others. So to clarify, something is in excess for you if you can only fulfill the desires you set out for by taking off what others are righteously entitled to.

When you begin to think I want to become very wealthy or very popular instead of thinking I want to become less greedy or less angry is when you set a wrong goal. You can be very wealthy without focusing on that goal. There is more intelligence in this than simply trying to accumulate wealth.

People who are greedy really do not care much for others, think they are special and deserve most of the share of what is made. Most people are intelligent enough to succeed greatly, if given the right encouragement and environment, As you think it is not preserve of a very few.

You are what you are because of nature and environment. You did not and cannot choose to be intelligent or stupid. The knowledge you add is a minuscule of what is there. Even Newton acknowledges this and says he is only standing on the shoulders of giants. **If you are able to develop this type of humility and be empathetic, your pursuits will be harmless and your wealthiness be welcome without limit.**

#### Dilemma 4:

Women are not allowed inside certain temples. So there seems to be a case of discrimination. We have been recently seeing events where some women's organizations have been fighting for the right to worship. On the other side it is said something which has been a part of tradition cannot be given up.

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Regarding unsettled issues such as existence of God, both the sides have to be accommodated. Spiritual people base their beliefs on their experiences or faith. Scientists base their beliefs on physically verifiable evidence. For the former the latter is an illusion and for the latter the former is just imagination.

What I suggest is in resolving issues, spiritual people should provide a moral basis for their cases and the secular ones "analytical logic" if I may use that phrase. In the case of the temple for example if traditionalists are able to show that a higher dharma is upheld because of the practice then that should provide sufficient grounds for the continuation of the practice. Otherwise not.

#### **Dilemma 5**

Here is a bender of a dilemma. Definitely not for dabblers!

Draupadi's dilemma in marrying all the pandavas after Arjuna won her.

Should she have done that?

Before embarking on the draupadi dilemma, let me pose questions which brings out certain principles

Here are they:

1. Do you think lying is immoral?
2. Would you lie to save the life of a person?
3. what if the person you are trying to save is wicked?

Here are my views.

Lying is immoral when there is no moral basis to utter it. It is generally not as straightforward as this. The situation becomes complicated when there are two or more dharmas at play. The second question reflects this. Then you have to see which is the higher dharma among the two and perform it. So in general I would lie to save the life of a person when somebody is coming after him to kill him. The third question complicates this even further.

Let us make it simpler. Would you be concerned for the life of a wicked person? The natural reaction is no because he is likely to corrupt or harm others in some way. But look at it this way. The person presents a problem. If one can find solution to a problem there is permanent cure to it unlike trying to suppress it by not saving the wicked person. Can you cure a wicked person? That

is what God does all the time through the various events that happen in one's life and the various personal experiences one has, the wicked person also is set right. So a person at the level of the highest dharma would not hesitate to save the wicked person because he knows that the person can be corrected.

But in general, if you do not find a person at the highest level of dharma, the ideal solution would be to first eliminate the symptoms and still work towards a permanent cure.

Coming to the draupadi dilemma, typical discussions present the patent aspects of polyandry and do not give any insights into the subtleties of the problem. Let us talk about polyandry first. Does it violate any dharma? I think so because anything that kindles the six enemies of the mind is against dharma. An average woman with more than one husband gives plenty of room for kindling almost all the six enemies of mind to an undue extent assuming average husbands. The same may happen in polygamy but it is worse in polyandry.

But here is my analysis of why such righteous people as kunti, pandavas, draupadi and the Lord Himself consented for such a marriage. The background of the problem is while the pandavas were in exile, there was an agreement of sharing anything that they brought home. It so happened in the case of Draupadi who was brought home that Kunti unknowingly told the pandavas to share what was brought.

Since this is a dilemma, opposing dharmas should be at work. So what are the opposing dharmas at work? The first one is having to honor the promise made among themselves and the word of the mother. The opposing adharma is a woman marrying five men. The only way this can be satisfactorily resolved is when the adharma is not seen as such. So going by the rationale that adharma is something that kindles the six enemies, would this situation have kindled the six enemies in the pandavas or in Draupadi. The answer is no since all the six are so righteous that it would not have an impact on the six enemies of mind.

Thus in my view Draupadi or others did not violate any dharma.

Note: If there is adharma in performing something it can be still done, provided you are able to use a higher dharma in that act. In the case of Draupadi's dilemma it happens that there is no adharma.

**But in general polyandry and polygamy are to be avoided.**

**Rationale for opposing polyandry and polygamy**

Even a celibate can have the emotions Consider these two cases:

1. heterosexual couples 2. Two men and one wife.

In the first case it is the normal emotions depending the nature of those people that are created and displayed

In the second case, the ego of the two men clash. When ego clashes all the emotions go awry. The wife

may show partiality. The guilt feeling will not be so strong because both are husbands unlike in the case where she is emotionally attached to a person other than her husband. This can affect her own psyche in a negative way because generally one negative trait leads to another. Sex plays a greater role because two men are involved.

So what happens in polyandry is that the external aspect of the relationship is highlighted more than connecting at the inner level. A woman being more inward seeking than men is more affected in a polyandrous situation than a man who has polygamous relationship.

Let me state the cardinal difference between happiness from the inner self and happiness from the external world. In the former you get happiness by focusing on the whole. The more you compartmentalize the more you lose the happiness. In the latter you get happiness by spending your energy on a number of things. The more the variety or more the differences, the more happiness it gives you.

So while it is the unchanging that gives you inner happiness, it is the constantly changing that gives external happiness. They are different levels of happiness.

A woman in a polyandrous situation loses where there is a lot of efforts that needs to be spent on compartmentalizing.

### **Dilemma 6**

Mr.X is a rich and powerful man in his village. By catering to the weaknesses of the people, he was able to keep everybody under his control. However Mr.Y is an incorruptible person and wanted to sway the people away from the bad influences of X. He sought to inculcate independent thinking in people. This implied giving up short term pleasures and disciplined practice of the prescriptions of Y.

How can Y accomplish the difficult task? Or who should people support X or Y?

Note: A good and practical solution can help in weaning people away from unprincipled and corrupt politicians.

#### **Here's my solution:**

The general belief among people is that everyone will have weaknesses and succumb to them. People start believing in you when you lead by example. The fact that Y is incorruptible makes the matter easy for him. He has to show that he is above the intoxicating effects of money, women or power. If he can do that people will definitely listen to him as good appeals to the inner self of everyone. People have shunned it because it doesn't seem to be practical to be good. But X will do all he can with his power and money to prevent this from happening. I think the machinations of X will eventually be overcome if Y exerts self control. **Such is the power of self control**

**More specifics on implementation by Y:** Y needs to adopt a two pronged approach. He should appeal to the minds of the people though that by itself is not enough. He should show the

viability of what he says by his actions. Only when teachings are integrated with actions, they yield the desired results. **In fact it should be beyond teaching by example.** People should be able to follow it themselves.

A novel way of implementing the approach is that he can ask the people themselves to be teachers to other people. You learn most effectively when you teach. When people try to teach, they really try to think on their own and that is the most authentic way of learning.

**How can the teaching be?:** Actually X and Y follow different routes to self realization. People of the type of X want to control the external world and people of the type of Y want the inner self to be in control.

Y can actually try to convince the people of his philosophy this way: What does one gain by comforts and pleasures? The answer is the type of happiness physical comforts give. Is there any constraint on that happiness? The answer is yes. The source of comforts and pleasures need to be constantly present.

If the source dictates your happiness, are you not imprisoned by it? Try to imagine that you are free from its influence. Are you not able to visualize a higher level of happiness because you really are in control of the situation. So you still get happiness, in fact a better one and you are free from external influences. When you are free from such influences, mind works with clarity and great logic. So you are able to be better at work and relationships also.

People can change by seeing Y as an example, by gaining insights because of Y's efforts and then able to discern personal experiences correctly or by their own thought processes. Those who are not able to make a real change can at least exhibit the right behavior.

If x sees people changing he will also adapt and not try to exert negative influence and may even try to be positive because if he finds that people want positive things he may want to compete with Y on that objective.

### **Some notes on Self control**

I have talked so much about self control. How does one really gain self control. And before that, what really is self control? I will explain it based on higher or spiritual knowledge because only a spiritual understanding and practice can lead one to self control.

The mind is what interacts with the external world. The mind interprets the information from the physical world which is passed on by the sense organs and the brain. Ego and intellect and lower mind are parts of the mind. There is an influence of the physical aspects such as the output from the lower mind and ego, on the intellect. . The intellect itself exists at some level of spirituality. When the physical aspects are powerful enough to overpower the spirituality of intellect we form materialistic perspective otherwise our perspectives would be spiritual in nature.

The mind itself is a projection of the jivatma which in essence is the real self. So self control is nothing but how much control the self has over the physical force exerted on it. When the present

power of the jivatma as reflected in the mind is able to overpower the physical forces, the self control happens.

Actually, there is another part of mind called the citta. It represents the past impressions. In my view , the lower mind representing the present forces, the citta representing the past forces together build the ego. The ego is what could cloud the intellect or the conscience. In the fight between ego and conscience whichever is stronger makes its influence felt in the thoughts and actions of a person.

When ego is in an incipient stage you are controlled by others. But as it grows you want to be in control and control others. Ironically this when when you are losing the self control the most. Think about it, what happens when you try to exert maximum control over others. It manifests as anger if you are not able to control them, it manifests as greed as you want more and more of the external things, it manifests as pride if you are able to exercise control and so on.

Without the influence of intellect it is a sure recipe for self destruction.

Right spiritual knowledge and guidance can act as a solid basis for people to make their decisions and actions and help them partly towards the goal of achieving self control. But that is only the first phase. Once you are able to discern what is right for the situation, you need to put it to action. This is where the bigger challenge lies.

You definitely may have to fight against those who are against it and prevail over them. If your principles or convictions are shaky you will give in easily. That is where our convictions can help us. So to put what we think into action, we have learn to cope up with the external pressure. We may have to use some practical techniques which would help us in this regard.

As a matter of fact if one really has enough self control nothing else matters. But it is when we are trying to gain such control that we have to put up a fight. In the coming cases we will focus much more on how to be pragmatic about putting what we think into action. **The big benefit of all this is we become free of external pressures and temptations and that is when we really become free thinkers.**