

MY NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

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In this New Year I imagine that we are standing at a cross road. The first road is of inactivity and laziness; the second road is of following immoral leaders without any discernment; the third road is of injustice and untruth; and the fourth road is of justice and morality. Which road would you like to take?

I would choose for me the fourth road of justice and morality. I think that to be steadfast on the road of justice and morality, a New Year resolution will help me. So my only New Year resolution is to follow unwaveringly my conscience, my inner voice. I am sure on the cross road of life that is the only resolution which will take me to my goal of being a person for others. Perhaps the three other roads may be easy and attractive. But they will lead me at the end not to peace and tranquility, but to destruction and unhappiness.

My New Year resolution to follow steadfastly my conscience is solidly based on my personal experiences and on my firm conviction. In October 2016 I came back from a trip to New Zealand after spending on 11 days with my nephew Shaju, his wife Mini and children Jovin and Rosmin. During my stay and travels in New Zealand two things about the people there specially impressed me. I am deeply touched by two characteristics of New Zealanders. So my New Year resolution is inspired by those two characteristics.

My nephew Shaju is doing a government job in Social Service Department. His wife Mini is also working in the biggest government hospital at Auckland as a nurse. I learned two things about the New Zealanders on the basis of their talks and experiences. The two things are their value of human life and truthfulness of the people.

First, the value of human life and the care and concern for life. Shaju narrated to me an experience in his job. It is part of his job to visit and follow the welfare of the persons in their home, who have suffered mental illness and got cured. He sees to it that the 'patients' take regularly medicines, do physical exercises according to his/her need and capacity and that he/she have enriching entertainment and social life. From time to time Shaju also takes 8 to 10 'patients' in his government vehicle – a van – to entertain them in games, sports and other physical exercises and other entertainments.

Once Shaju was driving to the home of a cured patient. Then a car came out from a road-side bungalow in speed and hit Shaju's van with a loud bang. Shaju's van was overturned. Both the vehicles were badly damaged. But luckily Shaju and the car driver escaped without any injury! Shaju phoned immediately to his office and informed about the accident. Help was prompt.

After due medical checkups Shaju was found okay. His bosses told him that he may go home take a few days' rest before resuming duty. But Shaju told his boss that he is mentally and physically fit to continue on his job. And taking another office vehicle he went on his duty for the rest of the day. In the police investigation found that the car driver was under the influence of

drug and that he has been punished with jail twice earlier for rash driving.

Commenting on the incident Shaju told me that in spite of being a foreigner and doing a better paid job than most New Zealanders he never experienced during the incident or on any other occasions any discrimination or bias in his many years in New Zealand either from his high ups or from those with whom and for whom he worked. But everyone appreciates and respects the life of everyone else and human life in all forms.

The second noble value which I experienced in New Zealand is the trustworthiness or truthfulness of the people there. People speak truth and people are trusted for their word. Let me give you an example. When I was at Auckland Shaju's college going son Jovin's car met with an accident. At a traffic signal stop another car hit hard Jovin's car. When he came back in the evening after attending the lecture in Auckland University he told Shaju and me about the incident that he and the other driver were unhurt but both the cars were partly damaged without any engine problem. Shaju instructed his son to report the matter to the insurance office. As instructed by insurance people Jovin reached the car to a garage next day morning on his way to the University. "After visiting with uncle Auckland Central Park and the Sea Life Aquarium we will pick you up in the evening from the main gate of your University" Shaju told his son. On the third day Shaju got a phone call from the insurance company "Your car is not worth repairing. We will send you the full amount of the insurance tomorrow directly to your bank account."

Shaju told me, "Uncle, the people here do not cheat in anything, nor speak any lie. People trust us and we trust people fully here. Like in India there is no controversy or arguments in anything and everything."

In the midst of people who say lie without shame or regret and take or give bribes we need a resolute resolution to listen to our inner voice and follow our conscience during this New Year 2017. This is a great challenge. Facing the challenge squarely will lead our lives in the long run to genuine love and peace.

So let us take this New Year resolution to follow our conscience and stick to it resolutely in all situations pleasant and unpleasant. Then, like the people of one of the richest countries in the world, we will learn to appreciate human life and will become truthful and trustworthy. Thus following our conscience we will enjoy peace and mutual love and respect among all people without any discriminations of caste and creed, race or culture.

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