

# SELF-IMAGE

## The Begging Bowl

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**It is a fact that** most of us suffer of a poor “self-image” with a host of harmful consequences, such as: self-rejection, depression, shyness, resentments, anger, hurts, self-accusation, guilt, withdrawal, touchiness, insecurity and the like, may help

### **Intent of this story:**

- To become aware of our poor “self-image”
- To discover our personal potential and richness.
- To enhance our “ self-esteem”

## The Story

### **Narrator:**

Chandra Kant was a wretched beggar.  
Lonely, homeless, hungry, dirty, despised.  
He spent his days begging for alms from passers-by.  
With a begging bowl in his hand, he dragged himself  
From door to door, from shop to shop,  
From street to street.  
The only thing Chandra Kant could call his own was his big,  
dirty, begging bowl!  
He used his begging bowl not only to ask for alms  
But also, to eat, bath and sleep.  
After all, his begging bowl was the only possession  
he had in this world  
Chandra Kant **thought of himself** to be a very poor  
and destitute man.  
**He felt himself to be abject**, vile and for nothing.  
He thought and felt himself to be inferior  
to the rest of men.  
Often he muttered to himself:

### **Chandra Kant:**

What a wretched man I am!  
I am useless, good for nothing.  
I am a parasite. Nobody likes me.  
No one will ever like me!  
I am poor and destitute!  
There is nothing I can give to others.  
I only am fit for begging.

### **Narrator:**

**In his relations with others,**  
Chandra Kant was shy, withdrawn, and insecure.  
Some other times, he was mean and behaved, nasty and spiteful.

Whenever he saw others better than himself  
 he felt sad, depressed, jealous and resentful. .  
 He hated others for being rich and what's worse,  
 he hated himself for being poor!  
 One day, in one of his begging rounds,  
 Chandra Kant stopped at the door of a curio shop.  
 He stretched his arms and put forward his begging bowl  
 and cried out:

**Chandra Kant:** For God's sake, A little "bashes" Bah!  
 Just for a morsel of bread.  
 I am hungry. Be kind to me!

**Narrator:** The shop-keeper looked at Chandra Kant with  
 contempt'  
 Then he looked at his big, dirty, heavy begging bowl.  
 He kept staring at it, and finally with a touch of  
 curiosity said:

**Shop-keeper:** " Show me this dirty, stinking bowl of yours!"

**Narrator:** The shop-keeper took the bowl in his hand and  
 examined it closely.  
 Chandra Kant was watching him intently and impatiently.  
 The shopkeeper kept examining the bowl.  
 He scratched it. And in surprise, he exclaimed:

**Shop-keeper:** " What a funny beggar you are!  
 You need not ask for alms.  
 You can give alms to others!

**Chandra Kant:** What? Do not talk like this, Bhai!  
 Do not taunt me, Sir! Do not make fun of me,  
 a poor wretched man!

**Shop-keeper:** Wretched? Poor?  
 No man! You are rich!  
 You are richer than I!  
 Stop begging!  
**This big dirty, heavy begging bowl of yours  
 Is made of pure gold!**

## **Reflections**

1. What were the consequences the ignorance of his treasure had on Chandra Kant?
  - a. **In his thinking:** On the way he saw himself.
  - b. **In his feeling and emotions :** On the way he felt about himself.
  - c. **In his behavior** On the way he dealt with people
2. What is meant by self-image? How does it influence us in our thinking, feeling and behaving?
3. How do we come to have, how do we build our self-image?

4. Can we discover our true self - our real value, our treasures? How?
5. What's the difference between "self-image" and "true self"?
6. Why did Chandra Kant despise himself and why others despised him also?
7. How is it that others do not respect us as we deserve and that we do not respect others as they deserve?
8. Can we make ourselves respected and valued by others? How?
9. In what way can we help others to improve their self-image?
10. In the light of Chandra Kant's story, can you account for any feelings of insecurity, touchiness, lack of respect for others, resentments, anxieties, discouragements, unsatisfactory personal relationships, aggressiveness etc, you may feel within yourself?
11. Any other insights or lessons you learnt from the story?

**NOTE; If you use these jotting in a Group Event, you may ask the group members to share their replies to the questionnaire with the group.**

## **Thoughts for Personal Consideration** **Meaning and Importance of 'SELF-IMAGE'**

### 1) **Real self v/s imaginary self:**

**My real self is what in reality, objectively I AM.** The bowl in reality was made of gold.

- My real self is the sum total of all the qualities, talents, abilities and strengths, I really have.
- Whether I am aware of them or not, it does not make any difference. They are there

**My imaginary self, or the image I have of myself, It's not what I am and I have, but what I perceive – rightly or wrongly- of myself.**

- My perception of self makes or builds my Self-image.
- Chandra Kant saw and perceived his begging bowl as an ordinary cheap bowl.
- He saw himself as a poor beggar. He was not aware of the treasure he actually had.

### 2) **It's not the real self, but our imaginary self ( *the image we have of ourselves*) conditions and controls our thoughts, feelings, actions, reactions and behavior.**

For instance, if at night there is a coiled rope on the ground, but I perceive (I see) a snake:

One: I'll **think** that there is a snake.

Two: I'll **feel** frightened as if it was a real snake.

Three: I'll **act** or behave, as the snake was real.

\* I may **run away**, (We call it 'flight reaction') or

\* I may **hit it and kill it** (we call it 'fight reaction')

### **3. Expressing this in a sketchy way**

`- **applying it to ourselves - we may affirm:**

What I perceive of myself -

**Conditions:**

**MY THOUGHTS ABOUT MYSELF.**

My thoughts about myself -

**Conditions**

**MY FEELINGS ABOUT MYSELF**

My feelings of myself

**Condition.**

**MY ACTIONS AND REACTIONS**

My actions and reactions.

**Condition.**

**MY BEHAVIOUR**

**My behavior**

**Condition**

**MY PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER.**

#### **4) Applying this process to Chandra ant's story:**

- He perceived himself as a poor person,
- He thought himself to be poor.
- He felt wretched and despicable like a beggar.
- He acted like a beggar, asking for alms. Behaving nastily.
- His whole character and personality was that of a disgruntle beggar.

#### **5. Giving Illustrations and Examples of Daily Life:**

##### **For instance:**

1. A brainy boy who never had a chance of a good education may think himself useless and dull.
2. A girl who is not a good singer but whom jokingly everybody says she is a good singer, may think herself to be a good singer.
3. An outcaste, judging by the way he is regarded and treated in society by all, may take it for granted that he is inferior to others.

**Conclusion: It is a fact that we shall always think, feel and act according, to our self-perceptions, that is, according to the image we have of ourselves.**

## **THE PRINCESS UGLY**

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### **How Our Self-image is Formed Deformed And Reformed**

#### **A Fairy Tale**

**1<sup>st</sup> Part**

Once upon time, there was a beautiful princess. Actually, she was the most beautiful girl the world had ever seen. Jealous of her beauty, her stepmother, hated her from her heart,

Right from her girlhood her stepmother kept telling her: “**You are ugly! Very ugly! Very ugly!** Even more, she gave orders to all the attendants in the Royal Palace to remind her how ugly she was. Day in, day out, she was bombarded with the same words: “**Ugly, ugly, very ugly!**”

At the end, though the Princess was the most beautiful lady in the realm, she kept saying to herself:  
**“I am ugly, ugly, and very ugly.**

No one ever will ever like me;

No one will ever love me.

No one ever will marry me!

**I am ugly, ugly, very ugly!”**

In her grief, she did not want to meet anyone; she refused to be seen by anyone. In despair, to hid her ugliness from one and all, she confined herself to a dark and lonely dungeon at the basement of the palace. There, night and day, she cried over her misfortune:: **“I am ugly, ugly, very ugly!”**

## Thoughts for Personal Consideration

### 1. Formation of Our Self-image:

No one can come to know himself through himself. e.g. No one will every know the color of his eyes unless he is told by others, or he sees his image reflected in a smooth surface like a mirror.

We come only to know ourselves, our strengths and our weaknesses, our goodness or badness through the perceptions of others. People around us act like mirrors that reflect to us the images – the perceptions - they have of us. **They do not necessarily reflect to us images of what we really are, but only of how they see us.**

Slowly, on the communicated perceptions of others about us, we build our self image; for instance, if a child sees and feels himself loved and accepted by others, he will build a self-image that he is lovable and acceptable. He will believe in his worth, he will develop ‘self esteem’.

**Actually speaking, our original “self-image” was unconsciously shaped in our childhood days, without our being aware of it, by what we call ‘significant people’, namely, parents, close family members, teachers, neighbors and peer group members. They were, so to say, the first mirrors that reflected to us what they thought we were, how we were and our worth. Unfortunately, in our childhood days, we were not able to examine how accurate or how faulty their perceptions were. Uncritically, we introjected them.**

### 2. Deformation of Our ‘ Self-image’ - Distortions:

Just a word about material mirrors. There are true mirrors and false mirrors. True mirrors give us an objective, impartial and accurate images of our physical selves. False mirrors change our images and reflect untrue distorted and inaccurate ones.

For instance, the images reflected by mirrors displayed in some stalls at fetes and fairs are distorted. Concave mirrors flatten our images, convex mirrors elongate them, still others, with rough and irregular surfaces, completely disfigure our images.

Among the people that acted as mirrors in the process of building our self-images there might have been many convex, concave and irregular mirrors, indeed! Very few of them, if any at all, gave us an

accurate image of ourselves. They offered us shortened, elongated, distorted or even monstrous self-images.

The same principle can be applied to the story of the Princess Ugly. Day in, day, day out, she was looked upon by one and all as being ugly and treated as an ugly person. As time went on, she saw herself not only as ugly but uglier and ugliest! Her poor self-image was continuously spoiled and deformed.

### **3. Reformation and Improvement of Our Self-image.**

## A Fairy Tale 2<sup>nd</sup> Part

After the Queen's death some kindhearted people in the palace spoke to the Princess Ugly and told her the true story of her life. "Your stepmother hated your beauty. That's why she, not only kept telling you that you were ugly, but she also commanded us to tell you the same. Do not believe what she told you. Do not believe what we told you. You are not ugly. You are beautiful, beautiful, and very beautiful. Come out of the dungeon. Show yourself to the people. They will like you. They will love you. They will admire your beauty."

But the Princess could not believe them. She kept saying: "No, I am ugly, ugly, and very ugly" No! No! Nobody will ever like me, no one will ever love me, and no one will ever marry me!"

In the neighboring kingdom there lived a charming Prince. He made his mind to marry the most beautiful princess in the world. For a long time, he searched and searched in vain for the beauty queen of his dreams. In his search one day, Prince Charming happened to visit the Palace of the Princess Ugly. One of the Palace Guards whispered to him the story of the Princess Ugly now hiding in the Palace Dungeon.

In his crazy search, the Prince daringly stormed into the dungeon of the castle. When he saw Princess Ugly in her splendid beauty, he was enthralled. He took her in his arms and whispered to her the magic words: "Beautiful, very beautiful, most beautiful" and whisked her off to his own Castle.

As she reached the Prince's Palace, every one there was enchanted and fascinated by her beauty. From now on, praises and admiration were poured on her by one and all, especially by The Prince. He adored her with fascination. At the start, she refused to believe anyone, even the Prince, complimenting her beauty.

Slowly, after many days, she began taking in the wonderment and loving acceptance she received from one and all. Still, for many days she questioned whether what she was told in former days was true. She wasn't quite sure of her beauty.

Finally, one day, when she intently looked at herself in the mirror whilst the enchanted Prince was standing behind her admiring her splendid beauty, all of sudden with amazement and surprise she cried out with delight; **Yes, I am beautiful, very beautiful, most beautiful!** And burst out laughing and crying with joy.

### **Conclusions**

1. Prince Charming and the Palace People help her to rediscover her beauty and accept it.
2. However it took s long to Princess Ugly to change her self-image

3. It's never too late for us to discover our treasures, our goodness and beauty and accept them if loving and friendly people help us to discover them and to accept them
4. We should always act like Prince Charming in helping others to find their worth.