

## **THE PATH OF THE CALF**

*Taken from: "Basic Managerial Skills for All" of E.H. McGrath, s. J*

### ***Intent of the Story:***

- ✓ *To encourage people not to take things for granted but to question our established ways of thinking and living.*
- ✓ *To realize that improvement in all spheres of life is always possible.*
- ✓ *To egg us on to change our world for the better.*

## **The Story**

Once upon a time there was a calf. One evening he walked home through a thick jungle. The distance to his home was only one kilometer, but he walked three since, like all calves, he wandered here and there, left and right, up and down.

The next morning a shepherd's dog passed that way and saw the calf's marks, and followed the path of the calf through the forest. Shortly after the dog, a flock of sheep followed the path one sheep behind the other. Thus a path through the woods was made.

Men began to use that path, cursing its twists and turns as they did, but doing nothing about it. The path gradually became a lane, the lane became a road, and horses and bullock-carts followed it, yes, followed the steps of the wandering calf.

A century later the road became a street, and then a city crowded thoroughfare, with thousands following in the footsteps of the wobbly calf!

Two centuries later the road became the main street of a very large city. Buses, Lorries, trams and cars followed the path of the zigzagging calf!

### **A poem of Walter Foss (1895)**

"A hundred thousand men were led  
By one calf near three centuries dead.  
They follow still his crooked way,  
And lost one hundred years a day!  
For men are prone to go it behind  
Along the calf-path of the mind,  
And work away from sun to sun  
'T'o do what other men have done.  
They follow in the beaten track,  
And out and in and forth and back, '  
And still their twisting course pursue,  
To keep the path that others do.  
They keep the path a sacred groove,  
Along which all their lies they move."

## **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Why do people, otherwise clever and smart, tend to walk in a rut, and follow pre-cast ways of thinking and acting?
2. How is it that mostly we are gregarious and blindly follow the crowd?
3. Are fads, fashions, social conventions, rituals something of a calf's path? Explain.
4. Should we accept things as we find them? Why? Should we not rather question them?
5. What happens when we question accepted customs and social conventions?
6. Can there be progress in any field without questioning and critical examination? Why?
7. What things do you feel should be questioned in our world about economic systems and theories - politics - social values - morality - religious beliefs and dogmas - structures - liturgy - rituals and rites - etc. Explain why.
8. In order to go about in life with a critical mind, what are the questions we should have always on our lips? *Answer: Why? What? What for.? Who? Where? When? How? Is there no other way?*
9. Try to detect some "'paths of the Calf"
  - in our educational system school and college; formal and informal education; degrees. and pedigrees of knowledge, etc.
  - In the job market - employment by degrees or by expertise:
  - In labor contracts; salaries, or partnership in business,
  - in the political systems; ideologies, stereotypes, country's constitutions, etc.
  - In our religious affiliations: religious structures, rites and rituals, dogmas, and doctrines, immemorial practices, etc.
10. Mention - according to your way of thinking - some calf-paths in our day to day living, such as customs, conventions, rules of etiquette, etc?
11. How to walk **our way** and **follow our path** in a world where all paths seem to have been chalked out already by the wandering of so many calves?

## **Explain the Following Sentences**

An unexamined life is not worth living  
 Traditions are good, but often turn into chains  
 Don't do things just because the crowd does them.  
 There is always a better way of doing things.  
 Do not follow the crowds, lead them  
 Do not go through life with a blank mind.  
 Do not take things for granted, question why they are such at all.  
 Do not try to be different, be yourself  
 Being yourself, you will always be different.  
 Stand on your feet, not on others shoulders.  
 Before you act, think why you should!  
 Do not look for others' approval but only for your conscience's.  
 Don't trudge in a rut, walk on the open road.  
 Question what you do, and let you be questioned.  
 There are many ways of cooking an egg.  
 Be always an original, not a copy.  
 Be a shepherd not a sheep..  
 To yourself be true,

