

## On Good and Bad Neighbours

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### POINTS TO DEVELOP

1. One cannot choose one's neighbours.

One has to learn to live with neighbours.

Neighbours have their positive points.

Who are good and who bad as neighbours?

Misunderstandings to be avoided.

We must see to it that we ourselves are counted among the 'good' neighbours.

One cannot everything in life. Nowhere is this more applicable than when it comes to the kind of Neighbours one ends up with. It is simply a matter in the hands of God. If one is lucky enough, one may be blessed with neighbours who are ready to help and share problems and can be depended upon in times of need. On the other hand, some of us have to put up with a bunch of troublemakers-neighbours who have nothing better to do than to be too interested in what is going on at the house next door and who are always eager to create an unpleasant scene or commotion.

The truth is, one cannot really isolate oneself completely from the people around. The link between man and society is not only age-old but essential for the survival of man. For an individual, the mere fact of the existence of the society is a strong reason for feeling secure. As our neighbours are the people dwelling closest to us, we cannot naturally avoid communicating and socialising with them. Constant interaction among neighbours is all the more inevitable nowadays as a result of the large number of flats mushrooming in suburbs, towns and cities. The flat system has brought people closer to each other especially as they are required to share public facilities like the car parking space, the elevators and the garbage disposal arrangement. In such cases, people cannot help but bump into each other while going to and fro.

Moreover, who else can we depend upon when suddenly confronted with problems and requiring help especially in case of an emergency? Only our neighbours can respond quickly and save the situation. For instance, if a burglar were to suddenly attack your house, would you not cry out for help hoping that your neighbours would hear you and come to your rescue? And, if possible, would you not right away bang upon your neighbour's door for help?

But what makes neighbours good or bad anyway? Good neighbours are those that are ready to lend you a hand when you are faced with a problem or a dilemma. Let us say that you have to leave your home for a few hours on an emergency but you are also expecting the gas wallah to drop in at any moment. In such a situation, the first person who would come to your mind is your trusted neighbour. You can always leave your keys with them and expect them to carry out the task for you. If you have guests at your home and fall short of some item or other, would you not rush immediately to your neighbour's place for help? Though too much of that borrowing-especially without returning the item-is a sign of a 'bad' neighbour. Good neighbours are those who are willing to share common concerns with you. If your colony is facing constant threats of burglary or if violent outbursts in nearby areas have awakened fears, it is usual for the neighbours to get together and plan out some means to counteract the danger-like the 'neighbourhood watch' to keep watch on a shift basis. Such cooperation and helpful interaction show not only how supportive neighbours can foster a friendly environment but also lay the foundation for a better society.

Good neighbours also make life much more easy. There are times when one may feel lonely or sad and wish for someone close at hand to discuss the problems with. Good neighbours are always there at such times to provide comfort and assurance. Routine gatherings, and occasional picnics and outings can make life more exciting and offer a change of scene.

On the contrary, uncooperative and selfish neighbours can directly make the neighbourhood an accursed place to live in. Worst are those that can never keep to their business and simply love violating the privacy of other people's lives. You often find them peeping from their windows or loitering by their front doors with a hungry gleam in their eyes, keeping a lookout for everything that might be happening next door. Such people are a great nuisance, for everyone has a right to privacy. Gossiping among neighbours about each other and mainly those who are not ready to join them in their chats is another irritating problem. Half-truths and total lies are exchanged and rumours thrown around-all these just because of their curiosity and craving for excitement. Sometimes, neighbours totally refuse to cooperate, and break the unity of the neighbourhood. In extreme cases, neighbours, for what would seem a trivial mistake, get ready to shake their fists and create an uproar.

Often misunderstandings cause neighbours to view each other as sworn enemies. In this fast-paced life we lead today, there is not much time available for leisure. Most of the time, one is involved in some kind of work or the other. People who are loaded with work from morning to

evening cannot be expected to pay social calls or frequently visit their neighbours for friendly chats. This is generally mistaken as a sign of total disrespect for social norms and obligations. Neighbours need to understand that it is not necessary to pour attention over each other in order to be good neighbours.

One cannot do away with one's neighbours however bad they may be. At the same time, one cannot live without trustworthy neighbours who would be concerned enough to help in times of distress. Each one of us must ensure that we act as good neighbours. It would do good to remember that we should do unto our neighbours just as we would expect them to do unto us.