



# The Achievers Journal

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## **Kunzang's Choden's *Dawa, The Story of a Stray Dog in Bhutan*: A Study of Present Karma in the Shaping of Destiny**

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### **Abstract**

*Present karma, the action on daily bases has power to subvert the negative karma of the past and has power to architect the wondrous future. The fate of both past and future which is inevitable to face at one point of the time in the circle of birth, death and rebirth depend on present karma. It is only the present karma that can make living possible and visualizing the true potential of oneself to make the dream happens in reality. There is no another such precious now then the present now and there is no another individual like one then oneself to make the thing happen, that one wanted to happen in one's life. How smartly one acts and executes the works on time will reflect the type of living and the life he or she will have. One is solely and only the maker of one's own fate and the type the world one lived in. This paper therefore, explores how the present karma works miracles in making the life wonders at present and in all time to come. Each and every point in this paper on the working of present karma in shaping one's destiny in life will be authenticated with an example that really made the life of the protagonist, Dawa, different in the novella 'Dawa; The Story of a Stray Dog in Bhutan'.*

**Keywords:** Present, Karma, Fate, Determination, Practice, Indomitable, Spirit, Manifestation, Optimism



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Present being the birth of the past, it owe duty for the past; present being the seed for the future, it has vital role to care for the future but the supreme role of the present is to make the living in the present. Life is born to live and living is decided by the present. Present karma, the daily action dominates other two stages of life cycle; past and future. Without present, past and future would not exist. Present karma has power to decide the course of our life, the daily state of our mind, body and speech. Without the continuity of karma we would not have been born and without continuing karma we cannot make our life lived. Therefore, present Karma, the daily bases action is inevitable to make our daily ends meets for surviving as Oliver welded Hitmes rightly said that the great purpose of life is to live it.

While the role of the past and the future cannot be denied, the present karma of Dawa makes his dreams come true. Dawa has unique characters and genius qualities. He executes all the day to day activities smartly in time. The energy he invests in the form of action, thought and speech brings him a great success in his life. Dawa lives with dignity and a respected figure in everywhere he goes. His pride and status are earned through his indomitable spirit and undying effort. One of the Dawa's achievements is making history by travelling more than one thousand kilometer throughout the west, central and eastern part of the country, Bhutan. The journey of Dawa is not tranquil, causal and normal as usual. It is horrible; sometime through extremely cold and sometime extremely hot and sometimes in a thick forest and sometimes in a barren land. Besides he is barred of any friend. The basic necessity, food to sustain his life is totally out of the control. The deadly



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predators and constant attack is never far. But despite the presences of world's entire deadly obstacles he could make safely with his present karma. His accomplishment is all because of his action on time, his caution move and undefeatable spirit. His dreams and wills accompanied by his action moved him towards achieving the goal.

All the three manifestation forms of present karma; speech, thought and action are precisely used in pursuing the attainment of his travelling desire. He uses the karma of thought to set goal that is to travel searching better meaning and purpose in his life, the karma of speech, speaking his desire of travelling to the most experienced old dogs such as Moley and Dampa to seek help and the karma of action, putting all thoughts and speech into the action. Some of the notable actions Dawa executes are; while in Paro he moves from one place to another in the whole Paro valley although which never quenches his thirst of travelling. In Thimphu he has followed different monks, children going to school, attended the class sitting near the windows and visited many family houses to learn pure Dzongkha. His action in learning is rewarded when Dampa immediately notices that Dawa speaks in pure Dzongkha with all the correct horrific terms in a beautifully modulated voice, just like the old monk. He is finally convinced of Dawa's amazing gift for languages (Kunzang 61). Learning pure Dzongkha becomes very important which Dampa advises him for his safety. Although he fears human being as they poison his whole family, he eavesdrops human conversation to learn language, to understand and to saves from tortuous beating. The result of effort in learning is shown when he understands them and saves him and his species from severe



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pain. For instance, “When man told son to get whip...in the meantime, Dawa had warned the other dogs run away from the impending danger. The dogs had already scattered across the town and hidden themselves when the man appeared in front of his shop with the whip, which was a bunch of electrical wires twisted together”(Kunzang 12).

Dawa is never at dormant and his present karma is always in motion. He has exactly done what Shiv Kera in his book *You Can Win* says, “don’t wait the things to happen for you: you make the things happen”. Our day to day life is judged by our action performed at every movement. Our purpose of the life is to make living and not to take from the living. To make one’s life complete and better by learning new thing, experiencing differences, gaining powerful knowledge and adopting necessary skills come only from the action. Dawa’s action is not driven by the outside force but by the force from inside. He considers the self contains everything and self can create a better world, not other can create better world for him. Robert H.Schuller, in his book ‘*tough time never last but tough people Do!*’ writes “there will never be another now-I’ll make most of today. There will never be another me –I will make most of myself”. This is what exactly followed by Dawa. He is completely independent and lives on his own day to day action. The power of living lies inside, in the being and in deep down in the soul. Osho, in his book ‘I teach the religiousness not the religion’ says, “outside cannot manage one, like man, god and postmaster. Only inside from the inner like an organic being”. Life is in the essence of the soul. Dawa has a great will in his great soul which could eliminate the darkness outside and make life better and living a life wish



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fulfilling. Swami Vivikannanda, in Bhagawat Gita said, “What we are every moment is determined by the sum total of the impressions on the mind. This world is neither good nor evil; each man manufactures a world for himself”. He further said that we generally find man holding two opinions regarding the world. Some are pessimists and say, “how horrible this world is, how wicked!” some are optimistists and say, “how beautiful this world is, how wonderful!” Dawa always believes in the brighter side of the life. He believes in the wonder of the world and acts with great effort in shaping the wonders in his life.

Prior to the historical travelling, Dawa twice became the leader of the howling while in Paro and in Thimphu. An orphan becoming leader, without any parental guidance is an amazing. Dawa’s success hasn’t dropped something from nowhere. It was not from other’s karma but because of his own karma. Dawa has created the art for his leadership. The art Dawa adopts to become a leader as per the text is here under.

Dawa was the leader of the howling pack for a long time. It was not by accident he became a leader. He had dreamed of it, worked hard and honed his potential skill to an art form, finally raising the art form to a magical, mystical formula with hypnotic effects. Many dogs vouched that he was destined to be a leader. (Kunzang 04)



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To assume the leadership position, Dawa was never in inaction. Dawa, firstly sets the dream of becoming a leader which eventually ignites his potentials and put in to the action. Dawa follows the tactics like what Robert H.Schuller, in his book ‘Tough Time Never Last, But Tough People Do!’ says ‘Today’s decisions are tomorrow’s realities’. Then he collected all his inbuilt spirit to use while in building the attributes for the same position. People who do not dream and stay without dreaming will remain learning nothing and doing nothing. They become like an object without a soul, blood of living and spirit. It’s no better than a scarecrow. Putting the thoughts into actions in daily bases is a key to success. Although Dawa inherits good voice from his birth, its qualities will be diminished if doesn’t keep using constantly and in check. Alfred Lord Tennyson, in his poem ‘Ulysses’ clearly writes, ‘How dull it is to pause, to make an end, To rust unburnish’d, not to shine in use!’ More over it becomes valueless if doesn’t serve the purposes. Dawa has qualities to become a howling with his soothing voice but he has to use it. Dawa works hard to make his voice serve the purposes suitably to his dream. His indomitable spirit guided by an intelligentsia was fully in practice. Dawa’s hard practices can be understood from the extract below.



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Dawa found a wonderfully secluded place under a spreading willow tree on the left bank of Paro river. It was at this spot that he practiced his stance, watching his reflection in the clear blue water of the river. He stood on the sandy bank and positioned his legs. The front paws spread easily but firmly and the weight of his body on his hind legs optimized the position. Then he tensed his shoulder and raised his head resolutely but calmly into the air, his snout at an angle and his eyes focused on the imaginary moon, the source of his name and identity. He inhaled deeply and as he held his breath he imagine his dead family. Then he howled as inspired the images. Day after day he practiced his leader's voice until he was absolutely sure that he was ready for the arena of leadership. (Kunzang

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While the leadership position is beautiful and becomes everybody's goal, it should be based on the strong foundation. Leadership post must be earned by the firm qualities so that one doesn't abash the values of one's life. Most leaders in the world ended up in the jail for many reasons; such as corruption, rape, fraud and failing duty. Their claiming on the post is not based on the firm foundation. It must have been out of corruption, without exerted much effort. Such an easy earning is venerable to the sustainability. Shakespeare in his play, 'Tempest' rightly pointed out that lest too light winning make the prize light. Dawa's leadership is based on perfect leadership qualities. He has practiced enough, tested his leadership qualities and built his personalities. To become a leader one has to demonstrate the potential and abilities, for subjects to trust him and to preserve and handle his/her success. Dawa understands his self importance to make realize his leadership dream. It is understood when the author says, "But before he could work on the other dogs, Dawa wisely decided that he had to work on himself" (Kunzang 09). Without a compatible strength guided by principles, moral and discipline, claiming for the leadership position, culminates into one's disgraces in the near future. Present karma is only the karma one can demonstrate in reality. The results of the present karma are immediate and can be visible. It is the only karma which can be applied in practical and its result can be seen in reality. If the present karma is used in wrong way, it has power to destroy its doer and if the present karma is used positively it has power to make the life. Dawa is saved from the life threatening danger by his present karma. When Dawa reaches in Thimphu, a capital city





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of the country where there is lot of people, vehicles and dogs he is nearly torn by a group of his own species. Thimphu is completely new to him and he is in extra caution for a different encounter. When Dawa was completely dazzled by stars like light constituted of city light, traffic light and power light, he is surrounded by a pack of unfriendly dogs, who snarled and positioned themselves to attack Dawa. Those dogs threaten Dawa like a thunder storm. At this time had Dawa uses karma negatively he would have been torn into pieces. But he is wise and farsighted enough to use his instant karma and saves him. The extract below from the text has clearly stated how he is nearly destroyed and how his instant action safes himself.

Why are you here?’ snarled a proud grey one who stood with his chin over Dawa’s neck, ready to snap. This is our country, growled an old dusty one in a possessive tone as he stared at Dawa. But Dawa knew better than to challenge them. He looked away as gesture of non aggression. Dawa realized that he would be torn to pieces if he would challenge this ferocious pack, so he lowered his tail and put it between his hind legs, hanging his head so low that his nose touched the ground. He refused to answer. More demanding snarls and mean growls. Dawa remained silent and submissive.

(Kunzang 21)

Dawa adopts the characters which is unpredictable. His course of action is situational. At one point he becomes very aggressive and at another point he becomes very submissive. This living



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technique, Dawa embraces is crucial for Dawa to make a healthy surviving and to accomplish his dreams. Dawa becomes aggressive and his action turns ferocious if it is for conquering his beautiful dream. He becomes totally fearless and makes travel for whole day and night. It is said, “In Thimphu, during the day Dawa explored the city, and within a few days he knew every corner of the town. He knew the best scavenging places” (Kunzang 27). But he was not unmindful. He understands that what the author says, “Unlawful intrusion into someone else’s territory was a universal dog crime”. He is very caution with his action in order not to led his quest destroy his life. His actions are well calculated and never in astray. He chooses to move from Thimphu towards his destiny in early morning to avoid destruction from the dogs and human. While on the way when he has no alternative means to survive, he eats yak herder’s food in the hut at Pelela. While doing this unethical thieving he keeps his eyes and ears open for any sound to run away immediately to escape from harsh consequences. Another important action Dawa performs is whenever people give him food he pays gratitude with a smile and lowering his head. This action really gains pity, love and affection from the people Dawa meets. Dawa’s double faces and duel actions are necessary for his survival in achieving the purpose. His two opposite nature; submissiveness and aggressiveness depend on the degree of threat to his journey towards destination and risk to his life. Such an erratic nature works magically in every attempt towards a fulfillment of the purposes. While his act of submissiveness protected and saved him, his act of aggressiveness kept him alive for pursuing the goal in his life.



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Dawa's knowledge is followed by an action. The goal he sets is never left unattended. Every dream is immediately followed by an enduring action. When he knows that his family members were killed by the human poisons and realizes that he too would face the same fate, he took a measure to keep himself away from the people, hiding during day and will come only at night for the food. He fears that he too would be killed by people like his siblings and mother if seen loitering in the day. Dawa's harsh condition that he is growing up with is explained by the extract below.

Somehow, he knew that he had lost his family because of human intervention. He mostly stayed in hiding and only came out in the night to pick up scraps of food that the other dogs had rejected outside people's homes and shops. With nocturnal feedings, he grew stronger and bolder, and then he sometimes dared come out during the day and look for food.

(Kunzang 7)

Had Dawa not learned a lesson and taken the necessary steps as stated above he would have been succumbed to a same destiny like his family. In the world nothing is as powerful as an action. Life is lived by an action and action brings developments in the world. Swami Vivikananda rightly said that

All the actions that we see in the world, all the movements in human society, all the works that we have around us, are simply the display of thought, the manifestation of the will of man. Machines or instruments, cities, ships or men-of-war, all these are simply the



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manifestation of the will of man; and this will is caused by character, and character is manufactured by karma. As is karma, so is the manifestation of the will.

(Karma Yoga)

All the advancements in the life of Dawa; mentally, orally and physically are the result of his due execution of the present karma. Dawa becomes mentally incomparable, orally superb and physically strong through which he can mitigate any encounter with perfect agility. In short, one's own individual present karma is only the one that decides the fate of the life and living of that particular being.

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