

“David Penglase has a great message to help people with a very profound truth that, when followed, can lead to the good things we all desire in life.” **Ron Willingham. Best selling author of When Good Isn't Good Enough.**

The **Teachings**

**A legendary tale of
Bunnyanna and Hareyanga**

**In the Gunbower Forest, The Teachings of
Mother Earth's Core Rules Is A Much Needed Lesson For Our Time**

By David Penglase

In the Gunbower Forest, nestled on the mighty Murray River, two communities, the Hareyanga and Bunnyanna lived in fear and mistrust of each other. When young Monty Hareyanga and Lochie Bunnyanna meet by chance and in danger from hunters and Vixenide, an unlikely friendship develops as they travel together to learn from a wise old Wombanean who recounts to them the lost 'Teachings' of Mother Forest. There they discover the true meaning of Mother Forest's Core Rule "Be Kind To Your Kin", and set about to reunite their forest communities to live in peace and harmony.

This simple, yet profound Australian Parable that appeals to all ages, has at its very heart a message our world needs now more than ever. It explores the powerful and Universal Law of Reciprocity - *what we give out we get back*, and reminds us of the true meaning of the Golden Rule *do unto others*.

More Praise For ‘*The Teachings – A Legendary Tale of Bunnyanna and Hareyanga*’.

A lovely book with a timely message. How easily we forget the very basic things that bind us together. **Vanessa Hall, author of The Truth About Trust.**

Congratulations on Bunnyanna... A beautiful read. **Glenn Capelli, True Learning Corporation**

Great reading, it so reflects the reality of our times, both past and present. **Ronnie Kagan, WinningWay.com.au**

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Dedication

I dedicate this little book with its big message to my mum who sadly passed away aged 54 from the terribly debilitating disease of Pulmonary Fibrosis. Her gentle wisdom, caring nature, and never-an-unkind-word attitude, provided such a wonderful role model.

Sadly missed and still much loved.

Of the three laws of Mother Forest,
Be Kind To Your Kin, Protect The Forest, Be The Best You Can Be,
the core law is and has always been.....

Be Kind To Your Kin.

1

THE CORE RULE

In the Gunbower Forest that flanks the mighty Murray River with its River Red Gum trees, thickets of wild and thorny blackberry bushes and the dusty dirt roads that had been carved, endlessly coming from somewhere and going to who knows where, the Hareyanga community were known as the unclean vermin of the forest. Or at least that's how the nearby Bunnyanna community thought of and spoke about their neighbors.

The Bunnyanna and Hareyanga communities did not get along. It had been a long time since the peace treaty had been sealed, but the history of damage, disease and blame still weighed heavily in the memories and folk lore on both sides.

The Bunnyanna blamed the Hareyanga community for the devastating *mixiplague* that almost wiped out the entire population of both communities, and the Hareyanga blamed the Bunnyanna. On this matter they had agreed to disagree, and tension remained.

Peace between the communities was always treading a thin line, but the knowledge of the destruction that war would bring to both communities kept them apart, and each community went to lengths not to cross paths.

Lochie Bunnyanna had been raised by his parents, like all young Bunnyanna, to fear and yet look down on the existence of the Hareyanga. But Lochie had a secret. Something that he had never dared share with anyone. Not his parents or his friends.

The Bunnyanna viewed themselves as being very family and community spirited, where helping each other, especially in times of need, was a well practiced principle. The teachings of Mother Forest's *Core Rule* - was one of the first lessons that every young Bunnyanna would be taught.

The *Core Rule* of Mother Forest was "Be Kind To Your Kin". There were other rules, such as "Protect The Forest" and "Be The Best You Can Be". But the *Core Rule* was to "Be Kind To Your Kin".

Every Bunnyanna was taught the 'light of day test'. The light of day test was a test to help make good decisions. The Bunnyanna were each taught to ask themselves "*If I make this decision and take this action, in the 'light of day' would my fellow Bunnyanna agree that my decision would be upholding the Core Rule of Mother Forest?*"

Lochie's secret, that he had never dared share with anyone, was that he believed the Bunnyanna were themselves not living up to the *Core Rule* of Mother Forest.

2 **A SECRET KEPT**

Lochie's secret had started to develop many years earlier. When he was very young, he remembered venturing away from a family picnic to explore a sound he had heard off on the other side of a nearby blackberry thicket. Carefully weaving his way through the woody and thorny undergrowth, being careful not to get entangled by the wild and camouflaged runners that the blackberry bushes would often grow, he quietly peered through the thicket to see a wide expanse of clear green grassland that was bordered on the other side by another blackberry thicket.

At the edge of the thicket on the other side, he could see what he knew to be a young Hareyanga, who seemed to be frozen with fright, staring off into the distance.

Lochie knew this grassy area, beyond the safety of the blackberry thicket in which he was invisible, was a no go zone for the Bunnyanna, but he really wanted to know what had scared the Hareyanga.

As Lochie studied the Hareyanga he noticed one ear must have been broken at some time, as it seemed to be permanently bent halfway up and pointed straight out to the other side. Lochie thought that this gave the Hareyanga a funny and gentle appearance, which was very different to what he had been taught to believe about the Hareyanga.

Lochie slowly, gently, and very quietly, step by step, edged his way from the shrouded safety of the blackberry thicket, keeping a watchful eye on the Hareyanga, while still trying to see what had frozen him with fright.

Suddenly Lochie saw what had put the fear of Mother Forest into the Hareyanga. Where the Bunnyanna were taught to fear and look down on the existence of the Hareyanga, they were even more fearful of the dangerous and deadly Vixenide.

Vixenide were a danger to both Bunnyanna and Hareyanga communities, and many other communities within the forest. Security was strong in both Bunnyanna and Hareyanga communities, especially of an evening when the Vixenide would roam the Gunbower Forest in search of absent minded or careless Bunnyanna or Hareyanga to capture and feast on in a savage and unthinkable way.

Off into the distance of the grassy clearing that was bordered by the opposing blackberry thickets, Lochie could now clearly see a Vixenide with a distinctive flash of white fur in the shape of a star on his forehead. Lochie was certain the beast had not seen him, and was also fairly sure he had not seen the Hareyanga either. But he knew that if the Hareyanga didn't move soon, the Vixenide would spot him and attack.

Not thinking of the possible consequences, and despite all he had been taught about the Hareyanga, Lochie had a deep and strong feeling that it was his obligation to warn the Hareyanga and help out. He decided to try to snap the Hareyanga out of his frozen state, somehow, without attracting the attention of the Vixenide.

As Lochie edged very slowly and carefully forward, the Hareyanga remained as still as stone and staring at the Vixenide, who had still not seen him, and with a voice as deep and dark as Lochie's worst nightmares, the Hareyanga silently sneered at him, *"Don't take another step, Bunnyanna, or you will die."*

Lochie thought to himself that this was just so typical of what he had been warned about Hareyanga. He was trying to save the Hareyanga's life, and in return he had been threatened with his own.

Lochie lifted his foot to try one last approach when the Hareyanga sneered louder *"Do not put your foot down or you will die."* The Hareyanga's tone was so chilling that Lochie kept his

foot off the ground and froze. *“Look beneath your foot.....don’t put it down.....the ground is not natural.....you’re about to step on a claw trap!”*

The Hareyanga’s words were measured and threatening, and Lochie just knew to trust what he was being told to do. He had seen what a claw trap could do. One step on the hidden trigger mechanism, and your leg would be trapped by an iron claw, instantly breaking it with no chance of escape and a certain death.....if not from the loss of blood caused by the trap, then from the trappers when they returned, or from the Vixenide who seemed to have a special sensory connection to the sound of the snapping of a claw trap.

Lochie slowly stepped backward. The Hareyanga who had now noticed, while saving Lochie, that the Vixenide had discovered them and was quickly racing toward them, yelled at Lochie *“NOW....RUN....run back to where you belong.....NOW!”*

Lochie turned to run, and at the same time saw the Hareyanga yell at the Vixenide to distract his attention which was focused squarely on Lochie. The Vixenide turned and raced toward the Hareyanga and that was the last that Lochie saw of either of them. He darted back through the blackberry thicket, forgetting to be careful about the danger from the thorny runners, but luckily avoided being entangled and finally made his way back to safety.

In the distance behind him he thought he heard the fatal sound of the iron claws snapping and the horrific yelp from the Vixenide who must have been caught.

3

IN SEARCH OF WISDOM

On Lochie's return to his family picnic, he was of course punished for his disappearance and was warned again of the many dangers in the Gunbower Forest. Although, bursting to tell his near death experience and the curious discovery of a good natured Hareyanga, Lochie dared not tell, for fear of even further punishment from his parents.

Many years had passed and Lochie had kept his secret and his belief that the Hareyanga may not be all that the Bunnyanna were saying they were. In fact, Lochie was wondering whether the Bunnyanna had anything to fear from the Hareyanga at all. After all, even though the Hareyanga were different from the Bunnyanna in many ways, they were certainly very similar in many others.

Lochie formed his secret opinion that Mother Forest's *Core Rule* of "*Be Kind To Your Kin*" was not meant to mean "be kind to Bunnyanna and not to others", and yet that was how the core rule was being taught.

He had heard his father talking to the other Bunnyanna elders about an old Wombanean who lived not too far from the Bunnyanna community. Often when matters of importance were being discussed by the elders, the old Wombanean - who had lived many years, and survived flood and fire - was sought out for his wisdom.....although as Lochie would soon discover, not all wisdom of the Wombanean was acceptable to the Bunnyanna.

Lochie decided that he too would seek wisdom from the old Wombanean. He had kept his secret for so long and it was time to learn more about the Hareyanga, but not just from the potentially narrow and tainted perspective of the Bunnyanna.

This was risky business, and he needed an excuse to tell his parents so they would let him go to see the Wombanean. He knew that his father, as one of the respected elders, had more respect for the Wombanean than many of the others, and Lochie decided to tell him that he wanted to learn more about how the Wombanean had survived for so long in the forest and to share what he learned with his mates.

Lochie's father thought this was a good idea, as the younger generation had seemed to have lost their way and weren't showing the respect to the elders, or Mother Forest, like generations before them had.

Lochie did indeed want to learn as much from the old Wombanean as he could, and in that way, he genuinely believed

there was no lie in what he had told his father.....he simply hadn't mentioned his secret.

So Lochie set off early the next morning along the safety of the well worn path from the Bunnyanna community to the home of the Wombanean.

He hadn't ventured too far, when up ahead, at a fork in the path, he was completely surprised to recognize a familiar sight from long ago. It was the bent eared Hareyanga who had saved him from the iron claw trap and the Vixenide all those years ago. The Hareyanga spotted Lochie, and instinctively ran away to avoid any confrontation.

“What a remarkable chance of fate,” Lochie thought to himself, although disappointed that the Hareyanga hadn't recognized him - or if he did, had chosen not to hang around to chat.

The forest was now becoming even thicker and the young river red gum saplings through which his path was weaving

were almost choking each other for their share of the sunlight streaming through the broken canopy of the older and taller gum trees that protected the forest communities.

He finally arrived at the Wombanean's home at the foot of one of the forests largest and oldest gum trees. The battle scars from past fires and lightning strikes were worn as a proud badge of honor by the old gum tree and the safety of the partially hollowed trunk was the perfect place for the Wombanean to live.

As he called out to announce his arrival, Lochie continued to feel a sensation that he had for most of the way, that someone had been following and watching him. That quickly disappeared as the Wombanean appeared from within the shadows of his burrow with a slow and deliberate swagger from side to side. His little legs seemed to be shaking under the weight of his portly body that gave evidence of many years of feasting on all the good nourishment that Gunbower Forest provided.

“Young Lochie Bunnyanna.....it is so good of you to visit me at last”. The Wombanean’s voice was a deep and velvety comfort for Lochie who really didn’t know what to expect.

“Wombanean, I have many questions to ask, but one in particular that I must first have you promise never to share with anyone else.”

“Your father told me you had an enquiring mind and much potential as a future elder of your community. Lochie, anything you ask of me today, will remain between you, me and Mother Forest”.

Before Lochie could begin to reveal his secret the Wombanean hushed toward Lochie with a knowing smile. He peered over Lochie’s head and called out to a small thicket of blackberries.....”And are you going to join us young Hareyanga, or will you stay hidden in the shadows and learn nothing today?”

Lochie turned to look at the blackberry bush just in time to see, peeking between the twigs and leaves, the bent ear and face that he knew to be the Hareyanga who had saved his life.

4

A TRAVELLER'S TALE

“I think you two know each other.”

“Yeah....this is the Bunnyanna who nearly got us both killed.” The Hareyanga’s voice seemed a lot less threatening now, than how Lochie remembered it, although that deep and menacing undertone was certainly still there. Perhaps it was his knowing smile beaming from the Hareyanga’s face that was softening its natural gruffness.

“I’ve wanted to find a way to say thanks for a long time and I’ve always hoped we’d meet again....So, thanks.”

“What’s this, then?” The Wombanean was teasing the pair. “Is it possible that Bunnyanna and Hareyanga can be friends?”

They both looked at each other. Lochie certainly couldn’t see any reason to fear or look down on the Hareyanga. Could they be friends? Could it be possible despite the bad history between their communities?

“What brings you here, Monty Hareyanga?” The Wombanean was swaying from side to side which made Lochie think his legs were struggling to keep his stumpy wide frame upright.

“This Bunnyanna did.”

“Lochie. My name is Lochie.....and you’re Monty...right?”

“Right.”

“What do you mean *I* brought you here?”

Lochie’s eyes were now fixed on Monty and searching for meaning.

“Ever since that day in the clearing between the two thickets that separate our communities, I’ve taken it on myself to watch and learn more about your community.”

“You’ve been *watching* me?” Lochie was alarmed by the thought of being watched and followed, but now understood why for so long he had often thought that someone was watching him.

“Take it easy. Not all of the time. Only every now and then when I could sneak away without being caught by my

parents or the other elders in the community. They don't like the idea of us venturing too far."

"And what have you learned, young Monty, about the Bunnyanna?" The Wombanean had finally succumbed to his own weight and was resting awkwardly against the tree.

"Basically, I can't for the life of me see why there is so much fuss, mistrust, fear and hatred between our communities."

"I thought as much." The Wombanean signaled for the pair to join him at rest by the tree. "Rest, young Lochie, and Monty, why don't you tell us how you came to join the Hareyanga Community....because you've traveled a long way from where you were born, haven't you?"

As the unlikely threesome rested under the safety of the river red gum tree, Monty recounted how he and his family had traveled from the Barmah Forest, many miles up river from the Gunbower Forest. They had stowed away on a river barge that

was traveling downstream. Things had become unsafe in their community.

“The biggest difference between the Gunbower Forest and the Barmah Forest is that the Bunnyanna and Hareyanga lived together peacefully as one community.”

As the Wombanean nodded knowingly, Lochie jumped up wide eyed with amazement. “Bunnyanna and Hareyanga living together. I knew it was possible.....I knew it.”

Monty just smiled and continued to tell how a dam was being built upstream from where they lived in the Barmah Forest and it was threatening all of the communities. Some of the elders had heard of the destruction these dams could have on a Forest. The Forest communities had long learned of the natural signs when their rivers and creeks would swell and flood. These natural signs were warnings that allowed the communities to move comfortably to the safety of higher ground until the rivers and creeks would once again recede to their natural flow. Mother Forest’s reasons for flood were understood by the Forest

communities to be a time of cleansing and for the water dwellers it was a time for birth.

But these dams would change the natural flow of the rivers and creeks and for the forest communities living near the dam, the early warning signs of a flood did not come. This meant danger, and stories had been told of entire forest communities wiped out in flood.

“I’ve learned since that, just like the communities here, Forest communities fear moving too far from the safety of what they know within the boundaries of their homes.” As Monty continued, Lochie could see a great sadness on his face.

“Although many decided to stay and take their chances by moving to higher ground, a few of the more adventurous, like my family, decided to leave and seek to join a community further downstream.

“I miss my relatives and friends very much....but that was all such a long time ago.” Monty’s eyes began to mist over in

memory and just as he felt like the tearful dam in his own eyes would break, Lochie, who had been listening in awe of how brave Monty and his family must be, quietly said “I don’t think any Bunnyanna has ever left, and as far as I know, nobody from outside has ever arrived.”

He looked to the Wombanean for confirmation. “Other than Monty’s family,” the Wombanean responded to Lochie’s comment, “there hasn’t been anyone leave or join the Hareyanga community either.”

“It took us ages to be accepted” Monty continued “and even today, because of our family’s views about Mother Forest’s laws and our beliefs about the true origin of the great mixiplague that affected the Hareyanga and the Bunnyanna in the Barmah forest as well, we are still *tolerated* more than *accepted*.”

“Wait a minute.” Lochie once again jumped up, excited by what he was hearing. “Are you telling me that the Hareyanga Community know and follow the Mother Forest’s rules?”

“Lochie, all communities in all the forests near and far are entrusted to follow the rules of Mother Forest.” The Wombanean seemed saddened by his own comment. “And yet over the decades, despite my best efforts to convince them otherwise, many communities have developed beliefs that their interpretation of Mother Forest’s rules are better or *more right* than the interpretations and actions of those in other communities.”

“But Monty, you’re saying that the Bunnyanna and Hareyanga live peacefully together in the Barmah Forest and share the same beliefs about Mother Forest’s rules.”

“That’s right. Although the Hareyanga elders here have banned my family from speaking about it. They claim that we are breaching Mother Forest’s first rule by claiming that the Hareyanga and Bunnyanna can live peacefully together. Here, *Be Kind To Your Kin* is taught as be kind to your *breed*. We are Hareyanga and Mother Forest wants us to look after ourselves and that we have no obligation to be kind to others.”

“Wombanean” Lochie was almost shouting “that’s my secret I came to share and discuss with you.....what if we’re interpreting Mother Forest’s rules incorrectly?”

5

WE ARE ALL KIN

The Wombanean looked at each of his young students and turned his eyes to the ground. “I have longed for this moment.” He paused for what seemed an eternity, when the familiar laugh from a Kookaburra brought him back into the moment. He looked to the sky in search of the feathery joker, but the kookaburra was well camouflaged and resting in one of the hundreds of gum trees surrounding the threesome.

“For a long time, many of the elders in most of the communities who say they respect me, seek my help with important decisions, but do so with the one exception.” He again paused and shifted his burgeoning body weight from one side to the other. “When it comes to the interpretation of Mother Forest’s rules, they just won’t listen to me anymore.”

Lochie remembered only recently how he had overheard a conversation between his father and several elders of the Bunnyanna community suggesting that the old Wombanean was losing his mind and that although out of respect they would still seek his wisdom, they would no longer tolerate his *inclusive* interpretation that Mother Forest’s rules applied for all Forest communities.

“Although it is obvious to all that we in the forest have our differences, Bunnyanna and Hareyanga have many similarities, but differences as well. Wombanean, Kangawalla and even the Spikebacks who feast on the Forest ants have some things in common, but are all different too. We are all different,

and yet we are all creatures of Mother Forest. The tree dwellers and dirt burrowers, two legged, four legged or belly crawlers...we are all part of Mother Forest.”

“But Wombanean, surely not the Vixenide?” Lochie gulped hard just with the thought of the terror they constantly threatened.

It was Monty who spoke first. “I know for sure that Bunnyanna and Hareyanga can live together in peace. In the Barmah Forest, the horrid mixiplague which caused such widespread death and disease, was always known to be not of Mother Forest’s doing. It was not the fault of any one Bunnyanna or Hareyanga. No one knew who was infected first or how they were infected.....we just knew this horrible curse had fallen only on the Bunnyanna and Hareyanga and that the rest of the Forest communities were not affected. It was this kinship of disease that drew our communities together – not drive them apart like here in the Gunbower Forest.”

“But Monty,” Lochie’s concern was obvious “Surely you don’t think we could live in peace with the Vixenide?”

Wombanean’s ears twitched and his gaze fixed on Monty and Lochie. “Do you know of the story about the *Good Vixenide*?”

Both shook their heads and answered “No.”

“This is a story that used to be told before the mixiplague changed the forest communities. The story was part of both Hareyanga and Bunnyanna folk lore, but even for those who know the story, the powerful lesson has long since been forgotten.”

Lochie and Monty looked at each other and eagerly leaned forward to hear the Wombanean’s story.

“The story goes that a Hareyanga elder was returning to his community after a morning stroll when he stumbled and got entangled in a thorny blackberry vine. As he struggled to free

himself, his legs were spiked and trapped by the thorny vine. The more he struggled, the deeper the thorns cut into his legs and the tighter the vine gripped him.

As he lay in pain on the side of the path, he looked toward the way he had come, and to his shock and horror, some distance away, he could see a Vixenide who had stopped in his tracks just staring at him. Fighting the urge to panic, the Hareyanga looked toward where he was heading and could see that a Bunnyanna and a Kangawalla were coming toward him.

“Hurry!” the Hareyanga yelled to the Kangawalla and Bunnyanna. “Help me, please.”

The Kangawalla quickly bounded forward to help the old Hareyanga. But when he caught sight of the Vixenide in the distance, he stopped, looked back at the Bunnyanna and headed off for the safety and invisibility that could be found off the track in the deep forest vegetation.

“Help me!” called the Hareyanga to the Bunnyanna, and the Bunnyanna moved more quickly toward the Hareyanga until he too stopped in his tracks when he saw the Vixenide up ahead. “I’m sorry,” he said to the Hareyanga and darted into the forest to make his escape to safety as well.

With a trembling sense of fear and despair, the Hareyanga dared now to look back to where the Vixenide had been standing to discover him slowly, ever so slowly moving toward him.

Willing himself to try and move, the pain was so severe he resigned himself to the fact that he was surely going to die.

Lying on the path, now quite still, his breathing shallow in anticipation of his fateful demise, the Hareyanga saw the Vixenide more clearly now.

What at first he thought were the slow and deliberate steps of the hunter stalking his prey, he now realized that the Vixenide was very old and his steps were measured and unsteady.

The Vixenide was now close enough for the Hareyanga to hear his rattled breathing which gurgled with every in and out breath. "Do not fear me Hareyanga....I am well past being of any danger to you."

His voice seemed to come from deep at the back of his throat, muffled and strained. It was clear now that all of his teeth that would normally be gleaming with sinister intent were missing.

The Vixenide knelt on one knee tentatively, leaning down so close that the Hareyanga could feel his breath. "What have you done to yourself, Hareyanga?"

"It's my legs, they have been spiked and trapped." The Hareyanga knew he was saying these words, but they sounded so far off in the distance and he was now wondering whether this was all just a dream.

The Vixenide summed up the situation and said "Lay still, this is going to hurt." He then carefully, piece by piece, amidst

the restrained winces of pain from the Hareyanga, who now certainly knew he was not dreaming, disentangled his legs from the blackberry vine.

“Can you walk?”

The Hareyanga tried to move, but despite being freed from the thorny vine, the pain from his wounds was still too great.

“Lay still. I’ll be back soon.”

The Vixenide left the Hareyanga for a few moments and returned with a large sheet of Ghost Gum bark that he was dragging along, walking sideways with his toothless jaw firmly gripping one end. He placed the bark sheet next to the Hareyanga and helped nudge him onto the middle.

“Which way and how far?” The Vixenide asked.

“But why?” asked the Hareyanga still in disbelief about what was happening to him.

“The lifecycle that Mother Forest provides for us all, including the Vixenide community, sees us move from young and innocent through to old and wise. The first rule of Mother Forest is to Be Kind To Your Kin.”

The Hareyanga interrupted with a gasp “You know of Mother Forest’s rules?”

“We only kill when we need to eat. It is the natural way for us carnivores. And we know that those who become our prey fear us at all times, which we understand and have to live with. But we also teach and live by Mother Forest’s rules. You would be surprised to see how often we Vixenide help other forest communities by warning the tree dwellers of the threat of fire or of other dangers that at times threaten the existence of those of us who live in the Forest. They in turn warn other communities. So yes, we do live by the rules of Mother Forest, despite what other communities may think of us.”

“And here you are now, willing to help me in my hour of need, when my friends fled from you to save their own lives.”

“Sadly, such has become way of the forest Hareyanga. Now lay still and I will take you to the safety of your community so they can better look after you.”

The Wombanean sighed heavily “This is one of many stories known as *The Teachings* and sadly our current elders are not telling the stories and so the lessons are not being learned.”

6

THE CHALLENGE

Lochie and Monty sat silently, staring at the old Wombanean.

“There are many other stories in *The Teachings* and over time we will share these and you will tell them to your young friends. The future of peace in the forest can only be assured through the actions of the young.”

The Wombanean sighed once more at the importance of the task that he was placing on Lochie and Monty.

“Much rests on this chance encounter the two of you have had and your willingness to not remain silent, to forge new friendships and trust between your communities and to build deeper understanding of all the Forest communities because we are all kin and Mother Forest’s first rule is to Be Kind To Your Kin.”

A lifetime of friendship that started years ago from a brief but incredible encounter was forged under the safety of an old Wombanean’s tree. It would take much planning, many setbacks, and incredible resilience for Lochie Bunnyanna and Monty Hareyanga to show their communities the truth of the intended meaning of Mother Forest’s rules, and to reintroduce *The Teachings*.

When the communities finally learned to live in harmony together and to trust rather than fear, share rather than withdraw, communicate rather than argue and to respect rather than blame, the legend of a young Bunnyanna and Hareyanga was passed down with clarity and meaning from one generation to another and became one of the many stories of *The Teachings*.

Lochie and Monty shared many adventures on their quest to bring their communities together through understanding and living by the core rule and the other rules of Mother Forest.

Their lives were full of exciting journeys, danger often crossed their paths, and their families became inseparable friends.

And there was an incredible discovery and twist to how the pair met, when years later they once again came face to face with a Vixenide who had a distinctive flash of white fur in the shape of a star on his forehead.....but that's another story for another time.

THE END

7

IN 'OUR' WORLD

The story and lesson for us all from *'The Teachings: The legend of Bunnyanna and Hareyanga'* is simple, immediately practical and perhaps more important now, than ever before in our history.

'Be Kind To Your Kin', the core rule of Mother Forest, is perfectly aligned with what many of the world's greatest philosophers and religious figures from all creeds of belief have stated in different forms.

One way to interpret Mother Forest's core rule for those of us who are not 'forest dwellers', is in the form of what is referred to as **"The Golden Rule"**.

The Golden Rule as it is often presented is to 'Do unto others as you want others to do unto you' and it is part of humankind's common language that is shared by people with often differing and also similar moral and spiritual beliefs, as well as differing personal situations.

In practice, the application of the Golden Rule is often discussed in context of religious beliefs and there are similar versions of the Golden Rule in Buddhism, Baha'i, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism and Taoism as well as others.

The Golden Rule however, is not a moral compass that provides us with 'the answer' to all questions. One way to think about the Golden Rule is as a 'team player' with other moral principles and teachings.

What is required for each of us to promote and achieve better outcomes is the rational application of The Golden rule in our lives.

Otherwise it would be easy to adopt misguided interpretations of the Golden Rule to be able to mean 'be kind to your enemies' (which given certain contexts could hold significant danger) or to use it to justify fighting fire with fire, and that if you hurt me I am always justified to hurt you in return.

So how do we rationally apply the Golden Rule?

The first essential ingredient for rational application of the Golden Rule is the acquiring of as much knowledge and information about each situation and the people who will be affected by any situation where we face a difficult or important decision.

Asking questions like:

- Who will be potentially affected by any action on this decision?
- What do I know about each of these people who will be affected?
- How do I know that what I know about each of these people is valid and not misinformed or assumed?
- How will they be affected?
- Why will they be affected?
- When will they be affected?

The second essential ingredient for rational application of the Golden Rule is our Imagination.

This means using our imagination and applying rational empathy. Rational empathy is about trying as best we can, to understand how we would feel if we were the other people who will be affected by any decision or action we are considering.

This is not as simple as asking ‘How would I feel if I was in their situation?’ Although subtle, the more rational and appropriate question to ask is, “Given what I know based on my research and knowledge about this situation, and what I have learned about the people who will be affected by any decision and action that is taken, *how would I feel if I had their experiences and beliefs, and was in their situation?*”

Perhaps an even more powerful and useful way to consider ‘Be Kind To Your Kin’, is through a deeper understanding and application of **The Universal Law of Reciprocity**.

In its most basic state the universal law of reciprocity can be defined as ‘What we give out, we get back’. If we give out kindness, kindness is more often than not returned to us. If we give out positivity, more often than not, we will receive positivity in return. If

we give out negativity, more often than not, we will attract negative responses.

Have you ever watched a baby smiling or giggling on public transport? Did you notice how many adults on the bus or train were smiling right back at the baby? Did you catch yourself smiling?

Have you ever been confronted by an apathetic and abrupt customer service assistant? Despite your best intentions, when you walked into the shop, you had to fight really hard with yourself to not get sucked into their negative world and end up in an argument.

Have you ever been in a team meeting or having a meal with family, brothers and sisters, and noticed how one member sends out a few sarcastic remarks, and all of a sudden, sarcasm is being shot back and forth with much laughter, and sadly some hidden hurt and tears? These are all examples of the universal law of reciprocity in action.

In this basic and often quoted 'what we give out we get back', the universal law of reciprocity is relatively easy to understand and implement.

However, the reality is, the universal law of reciprocity is so much more than merely ‘what we give out, we get back’.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said “Our actions and our behaviours are our morals shown in conduct”. What this great philosopher suggested is that everything we think, say and do sends loud and clear messages to the world about who we are and what we stand for.

The universal law of reciprocity is not just about what we give out, we get back. A more important aspect to the power of the universal law of reciprocity lies in our intentions.

When people are trying to evaluate any kindness of an action, they do so not only by the consequence or outcome of the action, but also by the intention underlying the action.

If for example an action of kindness is done for purely selfish reasons, and if these reasons were evident ‘in the light of day’ (you’ll remember the light of day test taught to the Bunnyanna – with any decision you’re about to make and any action you’re about to take, would you make that decision or take that action if it were held up in the ‘light of day’ for all to see), then the ‘kindness’ of the action would not be looked upon as favourably by others, and any

kindness that was returned, in whatever form, would potentially be reduced.

The true test of character is not what you think, say and do when visible to others, but what you think, say and do in your privacy.

Your intentions are the platform upon which your true character stands.

What this means is that to practically apply the universal law of reciprocity each of us must be aware of the value and impact of our intentions on the decisions that we take and the actions that we make.

When we are about to say something to a family member, a friend, a work colleague, a customer, supplier, or somebody who is serving us behind a counter at a shop or in a hotel lobby, what is our intention?

When we 'do good' with 'good intention' the universal law of reciprocity, at its most fundamental level reciprocates with us feeling better about ourselves. We emotionally and physically feel good, when we do good with good intention because we receive positive chemical rewards (known as neurotransmitters) to a part of the brain

(referred to as the Nuclear Caudate) that is dedicated to processing thoughts and behaviors when we do so.

This explains just one of the many ways in which the universal law of reciprocity works. When we do good, with good intention, we feel good in return.

10 Simple Ways To Practice Reciprocity

This list of ten simple ways to practice reciprocity is of course only a guide from which you can either select from or build on.

One strategy for practically applying these 10 simple ways to practice reciprocity is to set yourself a challenge to do as many of these as you possibly can over this next week.

If you're into keeping track, why not put the list up at your work desk and check off each one as you do them. Make it your "Reciprocity To Do List".

Remember to keep your intentions true.....doing good for the sake of doing good, and not for the hope of positive gain or return of favor.

Here's the list.....

1. Think **good thoughts about others** who are different
2. Look for opportunities to **genuinely praise** the actions of others
3. **Smile** and say hello to people when you're out walking
4. **Open a door** for someone today
5. While driving, **make it easy** for someone to merge into your lane
6. Look shop assistants in the eye, smile and **say thanks**
7. **Really listen** to someone today
8. **Give something** more than what is expected
9. Send a **personal note** of thanks to someone who has helped you
10. **Share** what you have with someone in need

Now each of these ten simple ways to practice reciprocity are of course, put in another framework, ten simple acts of kindness.

Could practicing these ten simple acts of kindness really create any significant impact? The answer is absolutely!

There has been significant research completed that demonstrates what is known as '**circular reciprocation**'. This is also known as the principle of 'pass it on'.

One simple example that you may have heard, or even experienced for yourself of circular reciprocation is when you hear someone saying something like "I just wanted to give back to this place that did so much for me".

In other words when a person experiences a kind act, let's say someone makes it easy for them to comfortably merge into a busy traffic lane, they in turn, 'pass on' the good deed by also allowing and making it easy for another person to merge into their lane.

Another form of circular reciprocity from these simple acts of kindness is what is known as '**serial reciprocity**'. An example of serial reciprocity is when you hear someone say something like "I hope in doing this, that *they* will do the same for others."

So when you consider the potential for circular and serial reciprocity from any act of kindness that each of us practices, then there really is wonderful opportunity, as we practice being 'kind to our kin' with true intention that we would like to positively impact the world, with one simple act of kindness at a time, we can really make a world of difference.

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A CONCLUSION

Although practically and in reality it may not be possible for us to always apply the Golden Rule in every situation, the consequences of the universal law of reciprocity will always occur.

These consequences will apply in terms of positive reciprocity – the rewards reciprocated for kind and positive actions, as well as for negative reciprocity – the punishments reciprocated for unkind and negative actions.

The universal law of reciprocity is always operating which means whether we believe in it or not, whether we truly understand it or not, there are consequences to our everyday thoughts, words and actions.

In our world outside of the Gunbower Forest where Bunnyanna, Hareyanga, Wombanean and Vixenide live, we can sometimes get caught up in the many games that direct our attention away from more valuable intentions.

The three rules of Mother Forest - Be kind to your kin, protect the forest and be the best that you can be is a simple framework for life beyond the forest.

Being kind to your kin is a simple yet powerful reminder to check in on our intentions, especially when it comes to our relationships.

The wonderful gifts of love, care, and support can only exist in positive relationships, and surely for many if not all of us, it is the giving and receiving of these gifts that makes our lives more enriched and worth living.

Our intentions are the springboard that creates the outcomes of most if not all our relationship experiences.

If our intentions are based on integrity, truth, and the desire to do good and not harm, even when the immediate results of our actions may not achieve that which we intended, in the long run the universal law of reciprocity will give back to us in a positive way.....even if that, in its simplest form, is the pleasurable physical response to a positive and knowing feeling, that our intentions were at least good.

Be Kind To Your Kin!

A Personal Note From The Author

Thank you for choosing to read *The Teachings: The legend of Bunnyanna and Hareyanga*. I've written this book without any other reason than to make my attempt to remind us all - me included - of the value of our intentions, and I want to personally wish you all my best in your endeavors to pursue value in your life and to create value for others.

We all make mistakes. Some days are outstanding, others mediocre and others still can border on disaster. Our personal paths in life may not be easy, but we really do have total control over our strength of character, our thoughts, words and actions, and our belief in the power of the choices that we make in our lives and the intentions upon which we base those choices.

I welcome any feedback, questions or experiences you might have on how the universal law of reciprocity has affected your life and the life of those around you.

You can contact me at <http://www.davidpenglase.com>

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David." with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

About the author

David Penglase is a recognized expert on the ethics of selling, value-discovery and value-delivery. He presents nationally and internationally to conferences, conventions and in-company workshops.

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