

## Fields of Golden Grain – Four Laws of Harvest

My wife, Eva, and I lived in the Czech Republic for eight years (1993-2001) – about 12 kilometres from Trebon in picturesque south Bohemia. Our home lay in a village (Smrzov) nestling in a landscape where forests, fields, and meadows were interspersed with large and small fishponds that sparkled in the sunshine. During autumn and winter walks we experienced the stillness and silence of forest paths, contrasted with the sounds of chirping birds in the spring and summer. We enjoyed picking mushrooms and wild berries. Occasionally, deer crossed our path, as did hares, squirrels, and pheasants. Every spring, storks returned to the tall chimney in the village to bring forth a new generation of chicks.

However, it was the golden fields of grain (wheat, barley, and rye) surrounding our village at the end of summer that now bring back vivid memories. Harvester machines arrived in August and farmers worked into the night under tractor lights to bring in the harvest. It was the climax of the annual cycles of fields ploughed under cool autumn skies; lying fallow during the snowy winter days; and being planted with grain in the spring.

In reflecting on the yearly harvests, I have pondered *four laws of harvest*. These, I believe, apply to our day-to-day lives. They are as follows:

- We reap what we sow.
- We reap far more than we sow.
- We won't reap if we don't sow.
- We reap even though there may be a delay from when we sow.

In this short article, I offer the following comparison: The *seeds* a farmer sows and the resulting crops with the *intentions* (or motives) we plant in our minds and the resulting feelings and memories that live with us.

First, *we reap what we sow*. When a farmer plants wheat seeds, wheat grain always results – not rye or barley. The crop harvested is exactly based on the seed planted.

Likewise, for every intention we set and act on, we will experience the result of that intent. If I have good motives, then in my mind I will always feel good about it. I will have good feelings and good memories – regardless of what the outcome might be (how others respond to our actions is something we can't control). On the other hand, if my motives are bad, then in my mind I can never experience positive feelings or memories. (A friend asked: "What is good?" In a nutshell, everyone desires happiness and doesn't want suffering. If my actions lead to the well-being of others, then they are good. If they hurt others, they cannot be good.) How important to be mindful of our motives behind any action – because our *intent* will determine whether we experience misery and suffering, or peace and happiness.

Second, *we reap far more than we sow*. Every spring our neighbours in Smrzov planted vegetable seeds in neatly cultivated soil furrows. It always amazed me to see them harvest their vegetables by the basketful during the summer days. The few seeds they had planted were nothing in comparison with the abundant reaping!

Likewise, our motives and actions can have *far bigger outcomes* than we ever imagine. A kindly word spoken, or written, at the right time can leave someone encouraged for days and weeks. Our words might be life-changing for a person. We, too, will continue to feel good long afterward. Like tiny acorns, our motives and actions can produce far-reaching results, like huge oak trees. (My friend commented: "I suppose a harshly spoken word can also be remembered for decades. I absolutely agreed.) How important to consider the motives behind our thoughts, words, and actions!

Third, *we don't reap if we don't sow*. When our villagers planted their spring vegetable gardens, they could fully expect a harvest in the summer. If, however, they didn't plant, there would be no hope for any harvest.

Likewise, in our minds, we will *not* experience a result for which we have *not* created the cause. If my motives are pure and clean, then why would I suffer from regret, heartache, or even depression? Rather, I will experience peace, contentment, and happiness. (Here my friend asked: "Is this all true to life?" My answer is that being *mindful* is indeed very hard – but when we begin to practice mindfulness, it begins to make a noticeable difference. We no longer react and respond to life mindlessly and suffer quite as much.) How reassuring to know that, in a given situation, we will *not* meet with sadness and unhappiness, if we have *not* created the cause for it to happen – but have acted out of honest motives.

Finally, *we reap even though there may be a delay*. One summer, the rains didn't come and we had a drought in South Bohemia. During those dry months, the seeds lay dormant in the ground. Then, when heavy rains finally came, the entire landscape soon became bright green with seedlings sprouting forth from the earth!

Likewise, the effects of an intention and our actions are never lost – but will ripen and bring results, sometimes months or years later. There was an incident in my life that caused me to be motivated and driven by anger – and I acted ignorantly and foolishly. At the time, I didn't give it much thought. Now years later, the full impact of my folly has hit me – and the feelings and memories I am experiencing are unpleasant. (My friend asked one last question: "What if you know your intent is not good, and you change your mind and don't carry it out?" Excellent! You would always have good feelings and memories about not having caused someone to suffer.) How vital to be mindful of our motives and actions, and to know that their effects are never lost – even across time!

Even though we have left the Czech Republic many years ago, the memories of the golden grain gently swaying with the summer breezes still live with me. More importantly, four laws of harvest have been imprinted on my mind – *laws that govern the motives we set in our minds for our actions and the consequences that come*.