

# **INTROJECTION**

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## A CONCEPT

Nobody seems to be fully satisfied in this world of plenty. Everyone lacks something or the other and is haunted by such consciousness. One may have a wife but no children. Blessed with children, another may not be possessing riches. With wealth, one may be deprived of health. Man is always given to grumbling over anything or everything. Ironically enough, he never holds himself responsible for his adverse circumstances, failings and deprivations. For all this, man lays the blame on God, bad luck, family conventions, social and environmental factors. He seeks false consolation from such extraneous props and takes them as inevitable. In this context, Freud said that man's present position is attributable to the first seven years of infancy. Even followers of Freud soothe themselves smugly that the first seven years in question cannot be recalled. Consequently, man takes refuge in imaginary formulations and feels that all is well. Such speculations, however, drive him to state of helplessness and to apply brakes to his life, thus making it stagnant and colourless. In order to make life dynamic, it is imperative, therefore, for man, to hold himself responsible for his failures and privations, his luck, society and childhood notwithstanding.

Doubtless, man has to face hardships in the beginning. For sometime he is on mental tenterhooks, but by persistent efforts, he becomes capable of discerning and appreciating the charm implicit in his circumstances. The consciousness of privations and reverses is certainly not bad by itself. It is, in fact, a challenge for man that rouses him from slumber. Actually man is inclined towards spirituality because of uncongenial circumstances. The latter inspires him towards Divine knowledge and leads him to self-realization. This transforms his technique of contemplation.

Such a person stays satisfied, if endowed with health, even though he may be deprived of wealth. He prefers health to bank balance of a couple of lakhs. Nor does he blame his luck if he is rich but issueless. For, his vision sees persons who are unable to procure two square meals a day, despite toiling and breaking stones in the scorching sun, the whole daylong. He considers himself lucky even with a worthless and bad tempered wife. The latter does not entangle him in attachment but makes him God conscious. Then he recalls the episode of Tulsi Das running madly after his wife. The latter's sour and bitter remarks however, overhauled his head and heart, through and through. This made him Tulsi Das, the great poet.

The idea is that positive thinking makes man's life pleasant. He picks up the art of remaining happy and gay in every circumstance. Words like luck and destiny are automatically erased from his conversational diction. Relishing the available amenities of life, he actively plans for acquiring more. Thus he steps into a creative and joyful era of life. His personality is forged into a pleasant model of fragrant values, full of all ecstasy and charm. The ups and downs of life have no impact on the life of such a person. This is just like a rose whose loveliness and scent stay in tact in an archard or a desolate place alike.

Would that we made our thinking and attitude towards life positive.

## **A MAN TRANSFORMED**

We do not know the meaning of life but pretend to do. The various phases in man's life from birth to death namely being born, growing up, getting educated, taking up a job or undertaking a business and earning money, getting married, raising family are a non-stop job till the very end. We have mistaken this long journey to be the real image of life. People around us are also having similar views. If a person with one leg in the grave, is asked this question as to what is life, he'll also reply that he has done the same what his fore-fathers did in the past and people around him are doing now.

In other words, we are all accepting this argument from the majority of the people and are in agreement with it. Our approach to the whole question appears to be democratic in nature where the majority opinion has the last say. In other words, we are determining the aim of life through the ballot box and have accepted the majority verdict.

Being born is a natural event and it is not of much consequence. The only importance which can be attached to the event of being born is that we get an opportunity to shape our life in a particular manner. Being born is like getting a musical instrument on which we can play any type of music.

What majority considers as life does not go beyond earning our living. To get up in the morning, to go to office or a shop, return home in the evening, have our food, go to sleep and get up again in the morning to start the same routine, is like, carrying the musical instrument on our shoulders till our death without playing any tune. In other words to curse life and find thousands of faults with it is like dying before actual death.

Even if we obtain many qualifications and degrees, also learn by rote many scriptures and our name is considered amongst the educated elite, we have not really understood the real meaning of life. Despite having acquired unlimited wealth and having our name included amongst the richest people in the world, we will still remain in the dark about the real purpose of life because worldly knowledge and wealth are of not much consequence towards understanding the real meaning of life.

To go to a temple, offer our prayers, recite verses and give the offerings of coconuts and other objects as also observing various rituals will not help us in understanding the real purpose of life. The question now arises as to where to look for the answer to this complicated riddle of life. Till such time certain fundamental questions like, Who am I ? What am I ? do not arise in our mind, we cannot move a single step towards knowing the real purpose of life. The search for answer to these questions is essential for reaching the ultimate truth. But most of us leave these questions unanswered and abandon them as being useless or keep on postponing these questions for a later date. We are afraid to face these questions squarely because, they are likely to upset our continuing journey along the beaten track being used by our contemporaries. Supposing we were to question our wisdom in collecting wealth, our efforts towards gaining wealth will be thwarted. Our efforts will come to a grinding halt and our mind will be diverted towards different direction. The interesting thing is if such questions do arise in our mind, we deliberately alter their original shape and start asking instead: Is there a God? Who has made this world? Is there a Heaven or Hell? If so what one can expect at those places? These sort of questions have no relevance in real life. To study the cause of creation is a subject for the scientists to investigate. Persons who are indulging in deadly sins should

worry about heaven and hell. But for an ordinary person leading a normal life, these questions do not merit attention.

When we are thirsty, we crave for water, when we are hungry, our mind and brain become restless. We need similar craving for knowing the Truth and purpose of life. Even though the path is arduous, this craving is very meaningful for attaining the Truth. This feeling will make us realize that there is far more to know than we already know. There is plenty to be experienced, to be seen and to be heard besides what we have done so far. We shall be able to come to the conclusion that life is sending signals and news in many forms but so far we have neglected signals and news. If these questions become an obsession with us, soon we shall reach at the door of Truth and the real meaning of life will become clear. Those who seek have known, have found the answer but if we do not ask these questions, we are unlikely to get the answers. God is always ready to give answers to these questions. In this context this quotation from Holy Bible is relevant: "Knock and the door shall be Opened."

There was an old lady by name of Rabia, who used to participate in the congregations of Jesus Christ. Once she stood up in the congregation and said, "This is enough, I am tired of hearing this sermon of yours 'knock and the door shall be opened', the door is always open and was never closed. Raise your eyes and see for yourself the opened door". This incident proves that a searching eye can always find the answer at some moment of the life. Any body experiencing this revelation gets a jolt and shock.

The Truth reveals itself. When this happens, we know the true meaning of life and experience the same like the air in our lungs and blood in our veins. When we are face to face with life, we can feel it like we are standing on the banks of holy Ganges and experiencing its silent flow. We also experience pure love in our heart, as if we are amidst freshly blossomed flowers and experiencing the fragrance. In short we become a changed personality and are reborn afresh.

## **A PERCEPTION**

It is a human weakness to pretend to appear before others as an embodiment of virtues and goodness, which one does not possess. In other words, we are not what we present ourselves to be, or we do not present what we really are. Even otherwise, appearances are often deceptive. The distant hills look charming and the shimmering sand looks like ripples of the seawater, in the glow of the bright sun, causing an illusion. We bear a two-faced personality, the real one with all its infirmities and a masked one to attract and impress others. In our day - to - day life, we often hear people speak of love but such people may not be imbued with even a modicum of love. We come across social workers who may not be actuated by the spirit of service. There may be many who sing of beauty but more often they are bereft of beauty. There is a wide gap between their profession and practice. A man who looks to be a darvesh may be a fake one, possessing not even the elementary trait of a darvesh. At times, we have no sympathy for others and yet we pretend ourselves to be most sympathetic and compassionate. What a paradox! By so doing, we try to build up a false image of ourselves in our minds, which drives us away from the reality. Thus, we go on deceiving ourselves, and the more we drift away from the reality, the more we get caught in the quagmire of self-delusion and self-deception. Therefore, unless we cease to pretend and be what we are, we can realise neither our true self nor the Supreme Self.

In fact, so long as we tread the path of pretence and falsehood, we cannot tread the path of Truth. On the contrary, if we take recourse to truthfulness, falsehood would automatically flee. Whenever truthfulness confronts falsehood, it always triumphs and shines all the more. Whenever we suffer from any disease, we go to a physician for treatment. Similarly, if we have any infirmity, shortcoming or drawback, we must remedy it or else it would eat into our vitals like a canker. There is no malady more serious than falsehood. We must weed it out root and branch.

'Know thy self ' has been the constant refrain of the ancient sages and seers. What is needed most is to know our real self and for that we shall have to cast off our deception and learn to present our true self. If we do so we shall lead a life of bliss and happiness.

## **AIM OF LIFE**

It is an admitted fact that birth and death is an unending cycle. Whoever is born, must die. The span between birth and death is generally termed as life; howsoever long this life may be, it is limited because it is inherently related to beginning and end. Now, the question arises as to what life is and what its aim or purpose is.

At first sight, the question seems complicated and rather beyond the average understanding. Everyone will answer this question according to his understanding. An infant wants to continue to enjoy the lap of his mother as long as it can; it is not attracted by gold, silver, diamond, etc. or the sky-scrapers or the royal palaces. Nothing is more precious to it than the breasts of his mother. When the same infant grows up a little, it is attracted by dolls and toys, and when he begins going to school, he takes interest in playing with his classmates besides books and games. When he enters the college, he takes pride in being counted among the promising students of his class or tries to excel in sports so that he may secure a distinction. During this period, he also thinks of the worldly comforts, profitable occupation, high position and as soon as he finishes his studies, he is concerned about his future: he hankers after high posts and amasses wealth. In short, he strives for a bright future and when he advances further, he goes in for marriage and in this way enters family life and begins to regard the well-being of his wife and children as the aim of his life.

Considering all these facts we arrive at the conclusion that one's centre of attraction and attention goes on changing. As one grows, one's aim of life undergoes a change according to his thinking. That is why persons of different occupations and ages have different aims of life. A sweeper, a barber, a schoolteacher, a doctor, and an officer or rulers have different aims at different stages of their lives. The fact, which is worth considering, is that when all people pass through similar stages of development, namely, birth, playing with toys, study, occupation, marriage, procreation and death, why do they have different aims of life? If we ponder deeply, these different aims will be found to be revolving round the same pivotal aim - happiness. For instance, if we consider the life of a person whose apparent aim is to amass wealth, we shall find that it is not the real aim of his life. Wealth is not the end but the means for social recognition, well being of his family, better standard of living, name and fame and consequent happiness. Similarly, a student does not strive to become a sportsman of high order to secure a distinguished position but to attain happiness. To reiterate, people adopt different means to attain happiness, which they consider as their aims of life. This is not the end of the story, because on achieving name and fame and comforts, and conveniences, they get only momentary happiness, nay abiding happiness. A man who carries a wounded person from the roadside to the hospital and arranges for his treatment, in fact, does so for his happiness through good deed. If someone feeds a hungry person, his real aim is also to attain happiness through charity. In short, if we consider the deeds of any person from any angle we shall arrive at the same conclusion, namely, that his real aim is to attain happiness. In fact all efforts and endeavours being made in the world are aimed at attaining happiness.

Everyone craves for happiness. No one wants sorrow. But we find in our daily life that each happiness is followed by sorrow. We may adopt any means and create favourable circumstances, but we cannot attain abiding happiness in this way. That is why man remains a victim of mental tension all his life and ultimately departs from this world losing his existence and individuality when material comforts come to naught. If one realizes

one's true self, for him the world becomes an inn. For him pain and pleasure are like sun and shade. For him the animate and inanimate creations of the world are transitory. He learns the art of living without attachment. He learns to pick up happiness even in this world of sorrow and suffering. He attains such happiness as is not tinged with pain and suffering. However, one cannot realize his real self without the blessings of a True Master. The True Master alone can lead one from self-centredness to God-realisation - all bliss and happiness - the aim of human life.

## **ANATOMY OF SUCCESS**

The success in life depends upon human endeavour, love understanding and common sense. This is proved by many historical events. However, no sincere effort has been made to study these events in their perspective. The study of history is confined only to passing of examinations. Others make use of these events to support their arguments or to make their oration more forceful. In other words, the study of biographies of the great personages is not taken seriously. Here are a few examples:

Chandergupta Maurya who was the first monarch and laid the foundations of a united India, was the son of housemaid named Moora. He was brought up in poverty and deprivations. Under the guidance of Chanakya, the great statesman and as a result of his own hard work he founded a well-administered State. Noorjahan was the daughter of an Iranian refugee. She became the queen - the guiding force behind all actions of Emperor Jehangir. Alexander the Great also went through many tribulations in life. Although born a prince, his mother became involved in a passionate affair, got her husband Phillips, the King and Alexander's father, murdered and humiliated Alexander. But Alexander overcame the adverse events with his determination and converted his bad luck into fortune to become Alexander the Great. He also realised at time of his death, that he was following wrong path and all his achievements came to naught.

The life of Abraham Lincoln who fought for justice and equity and in the end had to make supreme sacrifice for the cause, was fraught with failures. Wherever he tried his hand, he only met with failure. He started his career as an employee in a shop. The shop became bankrupt. He joined a partnership firm with a friend with similar result. He somehow managed to get law degree and started his practice. This was also a failure. His marriage was a total disaster. He had a strong desire to remove the discrimination against the blacks by white and establish a true democracy. He fought four unsuccessful elections. Finally he met with success by winning Presidential election and became a legend in his life time and immortal in history.

Socrates was an ugly son of a sculptor. He lost his father at a young age. His mother was a nurse. In spite of the heavy odds, through his diligence and intellectual pursuits, he was to become one of the greatest philosophers. History just cannot ignore him. In the end he had to lay down his life for his beliefs. Shakespeare who is compared with the renowned Sanskrit poet Kalidas, was the son of a butcher. He himself worked as a butcher for some time. But his hard work and talent in writing, acting and plays made him one of the greatest literary geni.

Mahatma Gandhi had a humble beginning. His belief in his convictions, his moral uprightness and his desire to excel in the chosen field and face all adversities boldly, made him the Father of our Nation. He shook the foundations of the British Empire and ultimately became a martyr for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity.

In the field of religion, the life of Swami Vivekananda is a success story. He became famous in his lifetime after his participation in the Parliament of World Religions in U.S.A. The basic hallmark of his character was perseverance. He was in search of truth. He went to all known Gurus and Saints and was not satisfied because they could not answer his basic question: "Have you seen God?". Ultimately he met Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He asked the same question from him and got a positive reply. This convinced him and he became the most dedicated disciple of Swami

Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He preached his Guru's teachings all over the world and he himself has become a great historical figure.

The history is full of such life stories and events, which proves that to bemoan failures, to blame the luck for not achieving desired results in life and to blame the world in general is to ignore the bitter truths and is merely indulging in escapism. To achieve success in any field, one has to surmount obstacles and fight against adverse circumstances and arouse one's inner faculties. To wait for favourable circumstances for achieving success is futile. Initiative and strong determination pave the way to success.

## **ANGER IS REWARDING TOO**

Anger, more or less, exists in every human being. Its outburst is rather sudden, but it would like to take no time while receding either. If somebody shows disrespect to us, we won't hesitate to insult him too. If someone calls us names, we would love to use worse in his honour. In such cases we hold the persons, who want to humiliate us or call us names, responsible for our anger and thus feel relaxed even though the former may have some or the other compulsion of his own. When we show anger, we receive anger in return and the vicious exchange takes the form of a cycle that goes on.

Many a time, our pen may stop writing; its ink may run out suddenly. We feel so angry that we doom it and sometimes utter some abuses too. Then, suppose it is raining and we are unable to open the door for one reason or the other and fail to enter the room quickly. We lose temper. We are so enraged that we kick the door and curse it in abusive language. Similarly, while walking on the road, we may hit a stone. Immediately we begin to call it names. And the most amusing aspect remains that for the reason of our anger we deem it fit to pass on the buck to the pen, the door and the stone. At times we may lose temper on someone even while sitting alone; and we find our fists clenched, teeth clenched and eyes bloodshot automatically. Interestingly, the person against whom our outrage is directed is not present, not aware at all. Sometimes, we feel annoyed against someone in the office or at the shop, but we fail to express our feeling spontaneously because we may be under some compulsion or the other. We may, however, give vent to this suppressed anger, when we are back home. We may lose temper on our life partner on small excuses like less or more salt or chilies in the vegetable preparation. And the poor lady of the house may also consider it appropriate to control her anger for the time being, but burst out over her son the next day on a small excuse of a missing button from the shirt or some stitches from the knickers. And the loving son may cool his ire with sobs and cries only. In short, it means that the anger has nothing to do with the persons it is directed against; it is directly related with the personal state of the one who is overwhelmed with it.

While angry, sometimes, we pretend to be civilized and cultured and try to suppress our anger, restrain ourselves. A shopkeeper may wear a false smile on his face in his endeavour to put up with some unethical and improper remark of a customer. In a similar fashion, a subordinate may tolerate the most sarcastic and pungent remarks of his officer. Similarly, the son may often avoid answering the father's wrath in the same tone, in the same language. The wife too, many a time, may choose to remain quiet when the husband is angry. Our restraint in such cases is, however, the result of some compulsion or the other on our own part, although it is insignificant whether we suppress our anger or express it. For, anger becomes an integral part of our conduct if we continue to get opportunities to express the same. Anger becomes a habit with us and we lose temper on every small thing. A stage arrives when we begin to pick up quarrels even in dreams and unleash our anger on others. As a result, we begin to grow physically weak; our life becomes unpleasant, ridiculous.

On the other hand if we act with restraint and suppress our anger, it generates an energy, a powerful emotion that may integrate itself with the functioning of our organic system and affect any of the parts of the body. It may even disturb some organ and cause aggravation. No energy finds outlet or gets finished by itself. What is important, therefore, is its use. It must essentially be spent or utilized. If not used or spent, it may interfere with the functioning of our body and damage its regular system, before it is

exhausted. When this energy gets accumulated as a result of the suppression of anger repeatedly, we feel so angry that we would like to clash with others. It means that whether we suppress our anger or express it, it is injurious for health. Rather it may be more harmful to suppress the feeling of anger than to discharge it.

Life has only two points of view - either constructive or destructive. There are only two attitudes of life, ways to follow - either negative or positive. We can, therefore, use our instincts, our innate powers both for destruction and development. In case, we suppress our anger, it means the use in negative; we are not using the energy for positive purposes. It means, if we are worried, it is due to our own impulses and emotions.

Anger by itself is not always bad. Anger is a fast moving wave, a forceful emotion, a powerful feeling. When we are overwhelmed by anger, we are filled by enormous energy. In anger, we may knock down even a person healthier and stronger than ourselves. Under the influence of anger we may accomplish easily something that we find ordinarily impossible. Scientists have already established that a person in anger may accomplish something in one minute, which he ordinarily cannot finish in a shift of nine hours. In this way, anger is a power, an energy. And power or energy is not a curse at all. Bad is only its negative or destructive use. What we require is only to canalize our anger and put it to some constructive use. Here is a powerful energy in our body that calls for a profitable use.

If a subordinate does not obey us in the office, the reason may be our own inefficiency. If the child does not change its behaviour despite our repeated warnings, the reason may lie in our own lack of care towards him; our own failure to provide proper lead to him. Or it may be the result of our depriving the child of our love, which is normally his due. In these circumstances, instead of being angry with the subordinate or shouting at the child, we should improve our own ability, our own efficiency, or provide proper care and guidance to the child and give him proper love. In this way we shall be making constructive and positive use of our energy. The power generated by our anger will stand used for constructive and not for destructive purposes. It will stand transformed from negative into positive power. For this, however, we must not overlook our own weaknesses; we must ponder a while so that we may choose the positive path.

We all know that a little jogging or exercise is a source of leisure or relaxation. But we do not apply our mind to understand as to why it is so. In case, we think over it for a while, we shall certainly arrive at the conclusion that a little walk or exercise causes the release of certain powerful emotions that were lying suppressed hitherto. In view of this we can certainly make use of the energy of anger for making certain parts of our body healthier and more handsome. If we clench our fists or shrink our feet as strongly as possible and then release the same suddenly, we experience a kind of spontaneous relief and relaxation. In case we repeat the same regularly, our hands or feet may become stronger and more attractive. The method can be applied to other parts of the body as well.

As we go on utilizing the power of our anger, we find it more and more helpful to give life a constructive outlook, a positive angle. We are face to face with our vices or weaknesses, which we try to avoid. Instead, we feel inclined towards good deeds that make us relaxed, happy. And we do not have to search for opportunities for such deeds; they are there in life at every step. What we need is only to give up insisting that it is none of our responsibility or we are not concerned. Then, we'll feel happy to wipe off the

tears of a child weeping on the roadside, and obliging him with a piece of toffee. We will feel satisfied to remove a stone that is likely to hurt the wayfarers. We may be simply thrilled by helping the needy. Such small gestures or acts of kindness bring a peculiar kind of solace, a strange kind of joy, an unprecedented bliss. And in the quest of this solace, one develops a habit of showing such small fine gestures. In this way, our attitude itself becomes constructive. The negative instincts automatically grow weaker and weaker. A regular experience of this kind fills our life with solace and bliss. And gradually we arrive at such a mental stage, where we start realizing that our own entity too is the creation of some Power. We start seeing the manifestation of that Power in different creatures in different ways at different times. And this is the stage where the destructive aspect of our anger stands transformed and we are eager to align with the Power that is boundless and all-pervading.

### **ARE WE HONEST?**

Presently, double dealings, cheating, black marketing and corruption have become current coin. No department, public or private, is immune from the charge of corruption. Apparently, we take corruption as an incurable malady. We are forced to put up with it helplessly. Rather, willy-nilly, we are participating in this trade in some way or another.

We, thus, legitimize corruption by associating corruption with our helplessness. Thus we 'whitewash' ourselves of this taint, though we know full well that accepting of bribe or giving bribe both are crimes and sins. Our heart searching, an impartial self - assessment would reveal that our utterances and actions are not at par. We are dishonest, liars, through and through. Our life is a package of falsehood. For a truthful appraisal of self, we must commence a probe from our home as basically home and family is a starting unit for every person.

For instance, at times we pretend to snub our children, but sometimes we forgive their lapses. In this situation, the bona fides of our forgiveness becomes dubious for the children. If a wife conceals her displeasure, smiles artificially towards her husband, it is hard for the husband to trust her real smile. In case of false snubbing, there can be no genuine forgiveness. Tears cannot be trusted if the smile is sham. Viewed from this angle, the entire span and story of life is exposed to be false.

In nutshell, an honest man is recognized by the fact that he would weep if his tears are true and his smile would be like-wise genuine. His word and deed would not be antagonistic. With hatred heaving in his heart he cannot wear the mask of smile. He would never borrow or hire another person's laughter. In case man turns honest to this extent, dishonesty would not trespass in his life. Honesty postulates a truthful personality. Such personalities alone can purify the polluted environment.

Would that we adopt this spirit and root out corruption, which nurtures thorns of various vices.

## **AWARENESS**

Hardship knows no smooth sailing; relief is afforded only through total riddance from hardship. The target available without struggle is never attained through struggle. Such an attitude helps us identify our self. And identification of self dissolves all difficulties. Consequently life becomes comfortable and holy without effort. Any constructive operation involves effort. But even showmanship of piety is subtle egoistic activity. And egoism leaves no room for possibility of a neat and clear conception.

Pilgrimages, telling of beads, holy marks on forehead and even saffron or white robes cannot make us holy. Such ceremonials cannot possibly inculcate in us high values of saints and mystics. Mere display of virtue and piety related to robes and sects is not genuine piety. This means that noble traits like universalism, compassion, humility, brotherhood and love cannot be aligned to the beliefs of any particular sect. In fact, all such ventures isolate us from the self and the Supreme Self. We spend our entire life in various worldly engagements. When fed up with one pursuit, we improvise another. We start rotating the rosary beads mechanically when sick of tobacco and liquor. Tired of running a shop, we resort to temples. Thus goes on and on the round of our chores without imparting us contentment and solace. Thus we consume our entire life in various ventures for resolving our self-created problems. But we do not have any leisure for knowledge of the Truth and Supreme Self. It, however, goes without saying that ultimate truth can be realized in moments of leisure, not by conscious endeavours. For, the truth is eternal, present every moment at every spot. It is we ourselves who are absent and indifferent to Truth. Such negligence can be basically ascribed to our interests in various ventures, our inclinations and our attachments. Failure to rid ourselves of various preoccupations is the biggest obstacle in the way of self and God realisation. Every enterprise of ours is linked with our consciousness of doer ship. Such a consciousness binds us with the phenomenal world. All our hardships emanate from the transient world.

Riddance from the ego of doer ship liberates us from the captivity of worldliness and its tangles. Such a state of non-doer ship bestows knowledge of divinity, truth, ecstasy and bliss. This state has been described as one of complete surrender or merger. This effaces the ego of doer ship and results in kinship with solace and rapture. Then instead of doers we become a medium like a musical instrument, every note of which symbolizes art of an artist.

Such a moment of surrender is one of self-awareness and encounter with the omnipresent totality. Would that we accepted surrender and lived in this state instead of indulging in various enterprises.

## **BORROWED THOUGHTS**

Thinking starts from the very birth of man. The family environment contributes a great deal to the development of the child. The child may have been born in any family - Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian - it cannot but be influenced by the religious faith, customs, traditions and way of life of the family. This is the stage, when its thoughts begin to shape. Thereafter, it is influenced by the children in the neighbourhood, the school and college education, social norms etc. Everyone passes through these stages and if one does not, one remains mentally undeveloped. In this context, we have the story of child having been carried away by a wolf to a forest and brought up there in the wild environment. As a result, on growing up, the child began to crawl, roam and growl like a wolf. This shows that in the beginning a child is like a clean slate or a blank paper and it is gradually influenced by the environment and the people it comes into contact with and it 'collects' innumerable thoughts.

There is no doubt that man is what his thoughts are. It is impossible for him to be bereft of thoughts and since thoughts float all-round, he goes on gathering the same. However, man commits the blunder of considering the acquired thoughts as his own. Practically everyone nurses this illusion although the thoughts acquired from the parents, from the environment or from the society, cannot be one's own. If the thoughts are original or the result of one's own experience or thinking, it will be alright to call the same as one's own even if they have been experienced by someone else before, but it is not proper to consider another's thoughts as one's own.

Nevertheless, man is busy in learning by heart the books and scriptures so that he may have the solutions to the problems even before they arise. In other words, he wants readymade answers to all possible or probable questions so that as and when the need arises, he may pour out the same instead of raking up his brain for the answer. It has become a habit of man to acquire thoughts because amassing of thoughts is considered a sign of learning. The bigger the bank balance, the richer the man. Similarly, the bigger the repository of thoughts, the more learned the person.

There is nothing wrong in acquiring new and healthy, thoughts to enrich and sharpen one's own intellect. One should always be open-minded and eager to learn: one can learn even from a child, common events and day-to-day happenings. However, one must ponder over the same deeply and objectively to sift the grain from the chaff. If man feels content in blindly accepting and owning borrowed thoughts, his own intellectual capacity is not only weakened but is dissipated in the course of time. Falling of an apple from a tree was neither a new nor an unusual event. However, when the great scientist, Newton, watched this phenomenon and applied his mind, he was able to discover the Law of Gravitation.

Is it not a fact that mostly we have acquired thoughts and, knowingly or unknowingly, consider and flaunt borrowed thoughts as our own? What a self-deception! As a poor man tries to conceal his poverty by putting on borrowed clothes, an ignorant person conceals his ignorance by borrowed thoughts, though neither poverty nor ignorance can be got rid of by borrowed clothes or thoughts. Unfortunately, this very attitude prevails in the religious field as well, with the result that man has become superstitious, orthodox and closed minded and is blindly following the beaten track of rites and rituals instead of searching the reality and grasping the essence of true religion. Over laden by borrowed thoughts, he has virtually become a slave of the same and does not think for himself but accepts whatever is told to him in the name of religion. The solution lies in applying one's own faculties of thinking and discrimination to arrive at the truth.

## COMPASSION

According to mundane perception, feeling of others' anguish alone is regarded as compassion. For instance failure to shed a few tears in a condolence function earns you the title of a cruel and stone hearted human. Only formal or etiquette oriented sympathy and compassion are visible in the world. The current convention for the common man is to do good to a good guy and vice versa. A low level person makes others the target of troubles. The elite possessing uncommon caliber, however, behave righteously even towards an evil doer. In this way the former induces the latter towards betterment.

The seed sown in life breeds in due course of time. Dragging out a sprouting seed from the soil amounts to intercepting the operation of nature. The seed must come to naught because it grows according to nature's dispensation. Agonizing a bad guy on the plea that he must meet his deserts, cannot be reckoned as a right venture. The reason is that we can entertain good intentions, undertake external supervision but nothing more. Questions like the proper stage of punishment, its time and quantum are beyond our wit. Our function is to do good till the last. In this connection we often hear that a wrong doer must be punished to save him from rigid maturing of such a habit. True, but the questions the determination of the type of punishment and who should be entitled to punish. On this point the wise think that the punishment should elevate and reform the errant, not deprave his psyche. It is relevant to add here that the punishing authority should be free from evil. The Bible says in this context that some opponents of Jesus had the grievance that he does not accept the injunctions of scriptures. One day all of them together presented an elderly lady before Lord Jesus with the charge that she has committed such a sin. The penalty prescribed in the scriptures for that sin was that every way-farer should hurl a stone at her. The aforesaid opponents wanted to observe whether Lord Jesus awards the foregoing punishment to that lady. The Lord heard them and said serenely that he agreed in principle to the proposed punishment, but the first stone should be hurled by the person who has never committed sin. This response of Lord Jesus caused his opponents to bow their heads and return. That elderly lady took a pledge before the Lord to renounce that vice.

In the event of physical illness of a person, we express our sympathy towards him. He is helpless and unable to do even his routine jobs. Likewise, if a person afflicted with desire, anger, avarice and egoism, does not behave properly, he too is entitled to get sympathy from us just like ailing guy. In fact the world is a scene of struggle—nay, a dense jungle of reeds. Vices are flourishing in the world and go on multiplying despite our endeavours to end them. Fed up with pervasive evils, the common man starts scorning the world. But hatred is hardly a solution of the problem. Unconsciously, the cynic himself feels attracted to sin, and may be influenced by the prevailing sins any moment. A compassionate man possessing a psyche of high standard is, however, well aware of the bitter fruits of vices and sins. He comprehends their genesis, centre and ultimate end. He never accepts these vices. In brief the world deserves compassion and not hatred enveloped as it stands in the waste land of vices. Hence it is noble to love the vilest of humans in order to elevate him to be a good fellow.

Eradication from human heart of the element of evil and assist him is an act of compassion. It is indeed a high state of psyche to put up calmly with the feeling of having been tormented by someone and to abort vindictive spirit without feeling inferior. Hence our guiding principle should be to impart solace and peace to all living beings. This quality reflects a broad vision, a noble trait. It is associated with God's grace. This is indeed the essence of super consciousness—of God knowledge.

## DESIRES

Desires grow like mushrooms. They know no end. Hardly when one of them is satisfied, another one rears its head. This process continues. Mirza Ghalib, the famous Urdu poet, did not lament in vain, when he said :

A thousand desires, each worth a life-time, A lot many fulfilled, still many more chime.

In the tangled woodland of desires, one is like a fly caught in the cobweb. There is no way to come out of their vicious circle. They hold us in vice - like grip.

Desires are of two types: inborn and borrowed ones. Inborn desires have a touch of Divinity. They tend to mould us as a perfect man or woman. They lead us to the purpose, for which a man is born. i.e. seeking God, who created him. Such desires are noble, sublime, elevating and inspiring. They inspire us to lead a life of contentment, virtue and piety. We feel an inclination to move among men of knowledge and learning, to visit places of pilgrimage, to do good to the people and to wipe off the tears of the suffering.

The borrowed desires are propelled and motivated by our curiosity and inclination to imitate others. The lure of imitation lands us into many a mire of sorrow and suffering. If we see a smart man, we try to outsmart him. If someone wears fine and costly clothes, the fire of envy rages fiercely in us and we would not rest contented unless we procure a still finer dress. Such desires tend to waste our time and resources in a silly and idle pursuit. They land us in troubled waters. For mere show, we burden ourselves with avoidable misery, headache and tension.

Competition is not bad. To possess ambition is not a crime. To progress and move forward in life is praise-worthy. Progressive outlook is indeed a virtue. But what we need is to maintain a proper balance between desires and means adopted for their fulfillment. If we bend all our energies in stealing a march over others in fields of dress, style and standard, we may be able to do so but at a heavy cost. In the bargain, we shall lose peace of mind and the joy of homely life. We would be like the motorbike rider in daredevil race who, in a bid to overtake others, is often toppled and crashes. Illogical cut - throat competition often ends in chaos and misery.

In order to lead a happy and balanced life, we must learn to distinguish between inborn or genuine desires and the borrowed ones. As the proverb goes: borrowed garments never fit well; they make one look odd. The inborn or genuine desires are something more than mere imagination; they are prophecies and predictions, which can become realities. They lead us to the abode of Creator. On the contrary, the borrowed desires, with an eye upon worldly acclaim, cost us dearly. A crow with a peacockfeather does not become a peacock. A fox with a lion's tail will remain a fox. Imitation is after all imitation. A crystal of sugar cannot become a diamond. A fly will betray its imitation. Pursuit of genuine desires leads us to peace, bliss and happiness or a state of contentment. But if we weave a cobweb of borrowed desires, born out of jealousy and a sense of out-smarting others, we shall be doomed to frustration, misery and tears. A feeling of unfulfilment shall continue to haunt us till we finally close our eyes in eternal sleep. For desires, the sky is the limit and man a mere pigmy.

### **DETRACTOR - A FRIEND TOO**

To criticize or malign others is a part of human nature. Whenever two persons get together, they must slander another during their gossip, wittingly or unwittingly. People find a special kind of pleasure in defaming, speaking ill of others, in their absence. And the one who gets into this habit, he would exaggerate things based on hearsay and circulate the same as widely as possible. Such people thoroughly enjoy slandering and defaming others. It becomes their hobby to malign others for their shortcomings or faults, whether true or baseless.

The most amusing part of the conduct of such persons is that they denigrate only those who are quite close to them; they find fault with their own people only. Even otherwise, we are generally cautious about those who avoid us, those who would like to keep distance from us. We are let down by our own near and dear ones only. History of criminology testifies that most of the murders were committed by those who had close relations with their victims. On this, a man of wisdom says: " Don't ask what will happen if a cat crosses your way, don't worry about the bad omen; guard yourself against those who accompany you."

The irony is that those who find fault with others or malign them consider themselves to be above board while others, in their view, are wrong and dishonest. If you question them, they would flare up and say, "Those who are considered honest by the world, we know, they are quite different inwardly; we shall unmask them, we shall expose them." Some of these people may know our shortcomings, may be familiar with our mistakes, but find it difficult to express their disapproval or hatred, simply because they lack courage or dare not face us; or they may avoid speaking against us so that they appear to be indifferent, unconcerned. They would, however, relish exposing us as a measure of amusement and laughing at us in their gossip sessions.

In view of the aforesaid, we must admit that the inclination to criticize or malign others is present in some measure or the other in the temperament of every human being; and it is also a fact that none of us would tolerate others speaking ill of us. It is, therefore, imperative to evaluate our own reaction to statements being made against us, to criticise us. In this regard, our task can be easy if we base our self-assessment on the following questions:-

- Don't we feel mentally disturbed to hear criticism against us?
- Don't we feel worried or upset about it?
- Don't we lose temper?
- Don't we feel revengeful against our detractors?
- Instead of changing ourselves and removing our shortcomings, don't we try to silence our critics one way or the other, so that we don't have to worry, there is no hurdle in our way and we continue to be viewed as gentlemen by people?

If this is so, we must admit that our thinking, our approach is not moving in the right direction.

Let us first understand that to ridicule others is a bad habit. A person who speaks ill of others or maligns others, is not considered to be a gentleman. So, as far as possible, we must avoid this evil. At the same time, we must do some introspection regularly. We must overcome our weaknesses and not allow them to raise their head or surface again,

so that our critics do not get anymore chance to speak against us. Moreover, we should not use harsh words against our critics, carry no feeling of hatred against them in our heart, and have no spirit of vengeance against them, because they only do their duty by making us conscious of our drawbacks and shortcomings. We must, therefore, treat our detractors as our well-wishers, our friends. We must co-operate with them, assist them. We must give them opportunities to know that we too are their well-wishers. Sometimes they may realize the feebleness of their remarks and give in simply because they can not face the reality. It means we can easily remove the misunderstanding by mutual conversation, avoiding tension.

In short, with purity of our thoughts, we can change our mental attitude. We must be strong in our determination and hold good opinion about those who spread bad impression about us. We must endeavour for their betterment and of our own. We must make use of the bounties of Nature, the instincts bestowed by the Almighty, for inner peace. We must keep our mind united with God and feel happy all the time, having nothing to worry about others finding fault with our conduct. We must not vacillate from our noble aim. We must continue to march on the path of humanity with full sense of dedication. If not more, we should at least give up maligning others under all circumstances. We must remember the meaningful words of a great philosopher that the one who points out our deficiencies is our friend indeed'.

## **DREAM AND REALITY**

While dreaming, one does not feel that he is witnessing a dream. During this experience, the dream becomes for him a reality. On waking up, he discovers that he was in the dreamland of fantasy. In other words, the reality of the dream turns out to be false, when he wakes up. When the dream is true, we stand falsified. Out of two experiences, only one can be true.

A child dreams of childhood. A youngman has youthful dreams. During old age, one dreams about that state. Thus the scenes of dreams continue to change but the dreamer does not. Physically man alters, but body is free from dreams.

While witnessing a movie in a cinema hall, we forget that the scene being observed by us is not real. It is just a play of light and shade, more or less. Death of someone in the movie moves us to tears. Under the impact of various scenes, we even feel upset. We weep and laugh. In truth, the scenes grip us so much, that our entire life is spent in scenes. And the Beholder is lost in the process.

When we know the identity of the beholder (Self), all the scenes would merge into dreams. The pervasive universe around us, too, would be a part and parcel of the dream. The husband and wife, friend and foe would be actors of a big play. This world would become a play-stage. But that would happen only when we come to know the beholder, otherwise this play would seem to be a reality. Hence, the need of the hour is to step into the world of reality after stepping out of the dreamland.

## **FRAMEWORK OF FANCY**

Everyone is engulfed in some tangle or another, all his life. Generally, his life is consumed in contemplating ways and means for tackling these tangles. Some project of his may succeed, while another may fizzle out. When the second project becomes fruitful, the third one fails. Such ebb and flow persist throughout life, in unraveling some tangle or another. Everyone has to face different tangles. The techniques of resolving such tangles are also naturally different. But the goal to be attained is more or less the same. The desired goal is betterment and comfort of life. However, man fails to elevate his life or seek solace and relief. When some project is fulfilled he feels some temporary relief. All his schemes often fail in providing him permanent relaxation.

Actually, we adopt easy solutions to solve our problems without adequate attention. Hence, we miss perpetual felicity. We cross our hurdles for a while by superficial means. That is why we stay deprived of permanent bliss and experience only temporary relief. In case we ponder seriously and deeply on enduring avenues of solving our problems and focus all our energy on the problem in hand, we would be surprised to know that, all our tensions and tangles hinge mainly on the axis of avarice and anger. In view of this it is imperative for us to appraise our anger and avarice and make it a habit.

Such persistent probing can usher in a moment that may enlighten us about our identity to the effect that in our heart of hearts we cherish a cultured but fanciful framework, which is always illusive and which has dissuaded us from owning our own vices and perceiving our own blots and errors. Thus, what is needed, is to dispel fanciful notions. Success in this venture would blow off clouds of all our obstacles and hardships. We can then make our life smooth and serene. Would that we could do so.

## **FROM FEELING TO FEASIBILITY**

Occasionally, we observe that things turn out contrary to our wishes. At times during the course of our talk, one of our feet starts stirring unconsciously. But the moment, we feel its movement, the foot becomes stationary, automatically. In other words, certain acts are done by us un-wittingly. Ironically, we delude ourselves in believing that we are masters of our (free) will, even when our foot is shaking unconsciously on the footrest of our table. At times, fear grips us from within, even against our will. If we were the masters, we could foment fear or abort it ourselves.

Till now, we must have lost our temper, landed ourselves in agony and also felt repentant, times out of number. Even then we have not been able to rid ourselves of anger. Likewise, we continue to indulge in hatred repeatedly at our own cost. Nor do we bid good-bye to our ego that caused us distress so often. We go on repeating such lapses and also repenting and resolving to avoid them. Nevertheless fear, anger, hatred and violence, have become a recurring feature of our life. We fail to feel what after all is happening, let alone controlling such emotional eruptions. Does it not demonstrate that we are functioning like machines? Just as machines do not command themselves and do not even feel that they are moving. This explains why our life is enveloped in darkness and we are seething in woes and worries. Yet we feel, aggrieved if we are equated with machines. This hurts our ego. Conversely if we are deified as symbols of God Himself, what a thrill of peace and pleasure pulsates in us! This is so because it feeds our vanity.

If we become conscious of our mechanical conduct, we can then resurrect ourselves from the state of a machine. Seed is not a tree but it can develop into one. If the seed entertains the mirage of regarding itself as a tree, it forfeits the possibility of blossoming into a tree. When we realize that we are machines, we become fully conscious of our role as such. We then realize our true identity. We come to diagnose our ailment. And correct diagnosis relieves half of our malady automatically. Consciousness of our true identity of being human, strengthens us and brings about a transformation, which awakens our mind. And this awakening can never be mechanical. It is awakened consciousness.

The idea is that peace, truth and beauty can sprout in our life as also solace, love and righteousness. We can certainly reach the destination where our will prevails. Then we can deem ourselves as our own masters — as ray of divinity itself — God's own image. But all this is not a reality as yet. It is only the dream of feasibility and possibility, not actuality. Would that our true consciousness transmuted such a possibility into reality.

## **GLORY OF THE TRUE MASTER**

Words fail to describe the eminence of the True Master. If not impossible, it is certainly difficult to strike words for his glory. In short, True Master is the one who removes the dirt and dross afflicting the disciple's mind, who rescues it from bewilderment, from darkness, and satiates its longing. He is the one who makes his disciple spiritually awakened and illumines his mind with Divine Light. He is the one who makes him God-conscious, Self-conscious.

This world is a dense forest where man is required to fend for himself. In every field of life, he feels the necessity of a guide - proficient, competent and kind, who may enable him to reach the destination. Man would like to know the way to get rid of the intricacies of the world. There is a thirst in his heart, which he would like to quench as early as possible. The role of his parents, it seems, does not go beyond bringing him physically into this world. The father brings up the child and leaves him alone at the doorstep of the worldly tangles. As he grows in age and moves forward, the child comes under the ever increasing influence of tendencies like ego, jealousy, hatred, avarice and so on. And burning with these emotions, he becomes narrow-minded and selfish. This makes his life turbulent, troublesome and painful. In view of all this, one cannot deny the need of a guide to get rid of the worldly problems and complexities. However, a disciple must approach only a spiritual guide who is already one with the God Almighty.

According to the Sufi line of thought, one certainly needs the True Master in order to save himself from the world of materialism. No other person may be competent enough to rescue the disciple from this devil. Sufi poets have described the True Master as the fountainhead of spiritual enlightenment, while Sufi saints have mentioned him as the ocean of God Knowledge. Saints and sages have regarded the grace of the True Master as a means to cross the ocean of materialism. By following the word of the True master, they say, one attains the peace of mind, the state of bliss. They proclaim that with the True Master's grace one can cross the world of materialism, which is nothing but an ocean of pain and sorrow. The name of saint Malook Das is prominent among those who hold this view. Sufi poets like Noor Mohammad, Osman, Qasim Shah, Sheikh Rahim, Ali Murad and others have also eulogised the True Master, giving him almost the same exalted place. Similarly, Bulle Shah, Kabir, Dayabai, Paltu and many other Sufi saints like them, have also praised the True Master with great eloquence and deep sense of reverence. In view of this, if we drop the portions devoted to the glory of the True Master, all religious books or holy scriptures will appear to be mere clouds without water - dry, meaningless and insignificant. In the absence of the praise of the True Master, their value will certainly be diminished.

The True Master is held in the highest esteem. Since he reveals God to the disciple, no other person is considered to deserve greater reverence than the spiritual guide. The edifice of Divine Knowledge cannot be visualized without the True Master providing the foundation. He is the angel in human form. The True Master relieves man of his pain and sorrow, rather raises him above the same. He bestows a new life on man and makes him noble and pious. The spiritual knowledge and the guidance received from the True Master awakens the dormant virtues and adorns man with righteousness. It makes his life purposeful. It turns his thinking positive. The proximity of the True Master puts an end to his sins just as the proximity of fire destroys the dry wood. In short, as the disciple's faith in the True Master grows, he himself goes on imbibing the divine qualities

of the True Master. This makes him live longer, enrich life with more and more sublimity and enhance his reputation.

One should never find fault with True Master. One should never be arrogant with him. One should never insist on a particular thing. In case the True Master does not like a thing or is not happy over something, every effort should be made to win back his pleasure, to make him pleased. Nothing remains unfulfilled, if the True Master is pleased. One can find everything by pleasing the True Master. The Sufi saints declare that the one who has pleased the True Master, has pleased all the angels of God. The service of the True Master is a religious duty that brings solace to the mind of the disciple. One gets everything without asking for the same. Even to remember the True Master leads to happiness. One's heart is filled with divine light that removes the darkness of ignorance. All the worldly dust stands wiped off from the mirror of the disciple's heart.

It may not be out of place to mention here that the True Master loves all his disciples ignoring their failings and shortcomings. He wants their life to be more and more cleansed. If some disciples, however, think that the True Master is pleased only with them and they start considering themselves superior to others, they may have to repent and realize their mistake, because the glory of the True Master lies in the fact that he loves all.

## GOD IS LOVE

Love represents the pious instinct of heart, which enables one to realize oneness of God where there is no duality. In other words we can describe the vast impulse of oneness as love. Love is the practical expression of God which one can experience in one-self. Love is like a pure, sublime waterfall and whosoever comes in touch with it also becomes pure. As there is no difference between good and evil in the flow of the stream, the man with love knows no hatred, malice and jealousy. The external pollution immerses with the vastness of love as dirt of several streams merges with the water of the ocean. The man of love sacrifices his comforts and conveniences and finds total satisfaction in his unbounded love for the True Master. Love for the sake of love is the aim of a true lover who has no desire to get any compensation or reward.

On the face of it, love is nothing but complete surrender of one's sentiments and emotions. If there are no sentiments and instincts of love, there will be no attachment with the wife, children or other relatives. The beginning of love starts undoubtedly from worldly objects and relationship. During the process of love with the material objects, the idea "I am His" emanates. The concept of attachment and fascination is there but that is motivated by individual's self-interest. Where a person deploys his self-interest he feels somewhat satisfied. Such a love can be into one's wife with whom he does not have ancient relationship. One spouse hails from north and another from the south. They know each other only negligibly. But the impulse of surrender unto the other narrows down the distance to such an extent that they can not afford to live without each other. At the initial stage they can not bare separation for a day. This is the stage when one is confronted with the sentiment "I am entirely yours". This stage, however, does not last long. One starts feeling the presence of God because man cannot live for long on the basis of desires and emotions. Man finds himself incomplete without the Divine Love. Unless one attains it the vacuum and the incompleteness does not get fulfilled or satiated. He does not get peace and comforts and real bliss. The instinct of love after developing, reaches a climax where the concept of "I" and "You" disappears and one feels at one with the infinite ocean of love. This is the highest stage of self-surrender where "I" and "You" get united as ONE. The sex - like seed assumes the form of love - like tree, which culminates in the form of devotion - like fruit.

One cannot attain the stage of highest character without experiencing true love. This is the highest state of spiritual consciousness, which provides spiritual vigour and vitality. In fact all the progress that man has attained so far is because of love. Love makes the life purposeful, pure and sublime. The divine virtues of purity, perception of truth, sacrifice, fearlessness, devotion and fortitude are closely connected with the impulse of love. Even the animal folk are not deprived of the instinct of love.

How unfortunate that the man of today is perturbed and disturbed because of deviation from the path of true love and engulfed in the vices of hatred, jealousy and duality. This is the reason, why heads and hearts of people are melancholy, restless and depressed. The whole humanity, devoid of instinct of true love, is leading towards destruction. The constructive aspect relates only to the concept of love and one who imbibes love becomes an angel. If we could imbibe the instinct of true love we can lead a peaceful and purposeful life irrespective of one is rich or poor, urbanite or ruralite, living in a cottage or a bungalow. If our instinct of love transcending the vessel of self-interest starts perceiving God in every living and non-living object, one can see God even in the statues of stones. Attainment of love is attainment of God. All other means to realize

God are complicated, arduous and require hard labour. Love is the only instrument, which has admixture of comfort, convenience and peace. "God is love" is absolutely true. If love is understood in its true impact and inculcated in one's practical life then man can not only attain God but he can become God-like.

## "I" CONSCIOUSNESS

The use of the word "I" is presumed to symbolize arrogance. The latter i.e. arrogance is said to be the foundation of all perversities. Nevertheless, "I" commands such a high importance that no other word is used so frequently. As a safety measure, people may use certain courteous versions of "I". But even so, "I" consciousness lurks all the time in some corner of their mind or spirit. The latter concept (of the spirit) transcends all bounds of words and narration. Hence it is practically impossible to enjoy immunity from "I" consciousness. This fact is illustrated by the following example.

An ascetic stepped out of his cottage to see some friends. Just then a comrade of his boyhood turned up. The ascetic was delighted to meet him and asked him to relax in his cottage till his return. The friend, however, wished to accompany the ascetic to avoid boredom of solitude. As his dress had become dirty because of his long journey, he asked the ascetic to lend him a clean dress. The ascetic had with him royal robes once gifted to him by a king. He accordingly lent that royal dress to his friend for use.

During his visit to his first friend, the ascetic introduced his old pal and admired his qualities. Simultaneously, however, the ascetic blurted out that the royal robes put on by his friend actually belonged to him, not to his friend. This discourtesy naturally offended his old friend, who expressed his displeasure. Thereupon the ascetic expressed regret and promised to avoid such a lapse in future. During their visit to the house of the second friend, the ascetic praised his old companion but remarked that the fine attire of his friend belonged to the latter himself. This ironic remark of the ascetic again incensed his old friend and he made no secret of it. At this, the ascetic again apologized and pledged to say nothing about the dress again. On reaching the house of the third friend, the ascetic as usual eulogized his old comrade but added that he would say nothing about the regal clothes worn by his old friend as he had pledged to avoid any comment on this point.

The above episode may be real or imaginary, but it is not beyond bounds of human behavior. The "I" consciousness manifests itself in some form or another. Man considers himself a great scholar after getting high education. Regardless of his high or low status, one cannot help fabricating facts and fiction to display one's superiority.

In sum, education, riches and even renunciation seem to aggravate one's ego. This recalls to my mind the story of a sage and an ascetic. One day the ascetic told the sage that twenty years earlier he had kicked and renounced all his assets worth lacs and had become ascetic. The sage calmly observed, "Your kick does not seem to have hit its target squarely, otherwise it could not have lingered in your memory for twenty years." The sage continued, "Twenty years ago, you must be proud of your high riches. But after relinquishing the riches, you are proud of the act of relinquishment". The latter arrogance is much more poisonous, destructive, intoxicating and invisible. This type of arrogance enjoys immunity from any injury. Likewise, one's disappointment and depression (on deep insight) is sustained by an element of egoism. In fact, human egoism is but the upper layer of his personality. Man is incapable of keeping himself apart from the impulse of egoism though it generates superiority complex. It also induces him to humiliate and degrade others and engulfs him in various disputes and calamities. History is replete with evils of egoism. But man, instead of becoming wiser from such incidents, willfully ignores them.

Man continues to embrace egoism in spite of being conscious of the above painful facts. He longs for a peaceful life but forgets that this is impossible without discarding egoism. Nor can he achieve perfection without renouncing his ego. This ego-consciousness is indeed potentially founded on sorrow and arrogance. Instead of dispelling egoism by firm faith, man marches on the path of satisfying his insatiable desires. The latter know no terminus, but human life terminates. Ultimately man makes exit without realizing his ideals. Egoism, in fact, multiplies desires. Hence, one should curb them in the company of enlightened souls i.e. Brahmgyanis.

## **IMPORTANCE OF TUNE AND RHYTHM**

Every object of this vast universe seems to function smoothly and steadily under a stipulated discipline. A natural tune and rhythm appears to underlie all. The sun rises and sets according to a plan. Its rays reach us striking against the vast expanse of the atmosphere. These rays impart to the earth fertility. Morning, noon, evening and night move in an order. The moon and the stars, too, march at a prescheduled speed. A little hindrance therein would suffice to reduce the entire universe to ashes.

The flow of streams too, reflects this order that manifests itself in their sound of gurgling. The growth of plants also falls in the same order. A settled system and order is visible in sprouting of seeds, in the appearance of buds, their blossoming into fruits on branches.

The chirping of birds at dawn partakes of the same dispensation. During spring season, the cooing of cuckoos sounds so lovely. That, too, is associated with tune and rhythm. For the same reason, sweet chirping of sparrows, drones, ducks and parrots soothes our ears, based as it is on the tune. The call of the cow attracts the calf, as he is familiar with the distinct tune.

How can human body stay segregated from this order of tune and rhythm? Man, too, is bred in a prescribed system. His childhood, youth and old age reflect this. The usual flow of blood in veins, development and degeneration of human organs, the incoming and outgoing breath mirror the existence of tune and rhythm. Palpitation of heart is the essence of life by which the whole human frame functions. A little snag in this tune can cause an end of human life. Such snags give rise to many diseases e.g. heart disorder, low blood pressure, high blood pressure, etc. Every body is bound by a chain of activities in daily life i.e. rising, eating, working (hard) improving his capability, sleeping etc. Even this chain exhibits a discipline and regularity.

In view of these facts, tune and rhythm do underscore the importance of the order. In reality, system of tune and rhythm constitute life and creation. It is an attribute of life. Taking it as an essential part of life, everyone must organize the dynamics of his life. Only then, his life can prove helpful in maintaining this natural order - by relating his life to tune and rhythm.

## INTROSPECTION

Patience, thankfulness, perseverance are the words kept confined to saying, hearing, reading and writing. Application of these virtues in practical life is almost getting extinct. Life today depicts ingratitude, impatience and dissatisfaction. It seems as if everyone is busy in surpassing others in amassing worldly comforts and amenities. The man hardly finds time to understand the real purpose of life when he gets completely exhausted in his craze of hankering after material pursuits. The point worth consideration is "Why man of today is: ungrateful, discontented?" The Sufi saints have opined that the reason for this is that man today is not following the correct path or his life is not moving in a proper direction. If we accept the view point of the Saints, we can conclude that man is completely devoid of the art of keeping the 'balance of mind' intact.

The thoughts of a man have a direct impact in the process of introspection. We have an abundance of ideas around us. Ocean of thoughts is abreast, in front of us. All these ideas keep on revolving around us all the time. The particular idea which we give place to in our mind, similar thoughts start flowing to us. In other words these thoughts do engulf us. But we are capable of taking in only such ideas of a level at which we are mentally conscious. Our state of mind can lead us to peak heights and can bring us to degradation also. As it is difficult to climb up to the heights, but is easier for everyone to step downwards, hence man makes his life miserable by adopting easier path. Some people think that our good or bad actions are the result of our luck but this is not so. It is incorrect to link up good or bad actions with one's luck.

If we like to maintain our peace of mind, we shall have to endeavour to inculcate noble thoughts in our life and to get rid of the evil thoughts. One shall have to develop his mind to shed evil thoughts. We shall have to cultivate the habit of taking stock of our daily deeds. It is not possible straight away to divest the mind of evil waves. When we try to directly wipe out restlessness, we get more perturbed. In case we think that attainment of satisfaction is the aim, we can never get satisfied. It is also true that we do find it difficult to regularly take stock of our good and bad actions. In the beginning, we do hesitate to peep into over own mind and heart for self analysis. But as we start doing it, the task becomes easy with the passage of time. This is so because we start developing the ability to understand the reason behind dissatisfaction. The more we understand this, the more satisfied we feel in life. The regular review and introspection of our actions results in bringing virtues in life such as love, contentment and compassion. The knot of duality starts getting loosened under the regime of divine virtues. The sentiments of hatred and ill-will start diminishing, and disappearing and we feel pleasure in serving the mankind. Some people do confine the concept of pure and selfless love to lust and attachment which is improper. Love and peace and perseverance and purity of mind are inseparable. There can't be true love without purity of mind and thought. And, therefore, a kind and compassionate person can absorb the noble thoughts and actions. A stone hearted person is full of pride and pride is baseless. This illustration of a proud person can be compared to a flying kite without the chord, which considers itself to be higher than the woods and mountains. But this idea is baseless because the kite ultimately falls to the ground after some time. To conclude, it may be said that without treading the path of introspection it is just like having a pleasant dream to achieve and maintain the peace of mind and to lead a peaceful and blissful life.

## **LIFE - A PACKAGE OF LONGINGS**

Feelings are the foundation of human life. Throughout life, man endeavours to raise an edifice on this foundation. Hence it is hard if not impossible, to come across a person without feelings. Life is actually a Yajna (a sacred sacrifice), without aim. Man, however, takes material affluence as the goal of life. That is why he has to face hardships and tensions, and knows no peace.

Worldly amenities are not available without money. For earning money, therefore, man does not hesitate to adopt unfair means. Admittedly, it is not possible for have-nots to get rid of the craving for money. A thing not in our possession is supposed to give no solace. A rich person can realize any time the reality of riches. For the reality of any object can be gauged only by its existence and possession. Without availability of amenities it is difficult to know the limit up to which they are meaningful or irrelevant. Without possessing money, it is not easy to realize what money cannot procure, nor that the money collected by us is a worthless load. The intoxication of wealth can be dissipated only by its abundance.

Actually, man is never contented with a particular situation, as his life revolves around the focus of longings, which are indeed boundless. One craving leads to another — this endless chain goes on. Consequently, this delusion perpetuates his restlessness and distress. He consoles himself by the false hope that life is a constant struggle. Even after collecting a lot of outer resources, he realizes his inner emptiness.

After going through the agonies and bitter experiences of life, if someone sorely feels his emptiness within, he concludes that his splendid facade has nothing to do with his tranquility. The serenity sought by man, in fact, is already at his disposal, eternally. He vainly seeks it in a mirror. The image in a mirror is never real and true. Truth is omnipresent and eternal which he vainly seeks in the future. It is an inner attribute, but he searches it outside. Deep consciousness of his inner emptiness transforms man's life and imparts him steadiness. All the afflictions of life and the world become the avenues of his emancipation. Hell turns into heaven. All his cravings and ambitions becomes meaningless. The deep perception of one's inner emptiness then is the only route to redemption. When such a perception becomes intense and reaches its summit, the seeker himself is transmuted into search. Thus, on the foundation of feeling is erected a lovely edifice automatically.

## LIFE AND DEATH

By hook or crook we adopt all sorts of strategies to attain worldly amenities. We also delude ourselves by demonstrating our gentlemanliness. Thus we get engulfed in mundane affairs like a spider entangling himself in his own web. We do not step out of the worldly spheres till our health is OK. Thus we stay oblivious of our identity and our mission in life. We are, however, terrified when overwhelmed by some disease and death stares us in the face. Depression then looms large on our face. Our talk becomes acrimonious. In our bed we are assailed by various thoughts. Then our perception takes an introspective turn, away from worldliness.

During illness, the queries made by persons visiting us are generally on the same pattern. How are you? What is the state of your health? What do the doctors advise? While parting, they tender us un-invited advice for rest. Such guys include letter writers and those who wish to maintain relation with us. We, however, come to know from their style as to who has a soft or hard corner for us. We also come to know that those who have been unfairly treated by us, bear a grouse against us. Then we feel sore at our misbehaviour. We are also induced to become cautious in future. In the event of our recovery from illness, we may aspire to lead a better life. We can then pray to live long in order to adopt a noble style of life. Apparently all this seems to be desirable. After all, such an aspiration adorns us with higher human values. But the act of brushing aside God's will and praying for long life amounts to harping on one's own tune. Acceptance of the maxim of sagacious folk that all cravings for the comforts of life are the outcome of man's nescience, even the prayer for long life implies an element of begging or receiving. In brief, illness can give positive direction to our thinking and manifest pleasant improvements in our life if we survive.

God - realized mystics have a style of living altogether different from ours. They take this world as a carnival, theatre wherein they are only witnesses or spectators. Thus they have a good time and do not worry even about life and death. The reason is that they are aware of the inevitability of death. Death can be caused by some factor other than illness also. That explains absence of any reflection of disappointment on their faces during illness. Nor does illness affect their sweet tone. The mystics maintain their communion with God even during illness. They even divert the attention of doctors, nurses and their family members to spiritualism and do a noble duty. At this juncture, all their friends are anxious about their health.

The idea is that we should feel inspired by the lives of saints and sages. We must mould our heads and hearts towards a truthful life. It should also be our endeavour to embellish our life with high values so that we welcome death with smiles by leading a saintly-life. A

## MAN, DISEASE AND GRIEF

There are several diseases in this world and their remedies too. Everybody knows that there is some cause behind every ailment. Generally the cause of disease lies in incorrect diet, lack of prevention, irregularity and over indulgence. In case the disease is diagnosed correctly and one makes use of the right prescribed medicine and takes precautions, one often gets cured. We often come across cases in everyday life where we find that man himself is responsible for being taken ill. For example, if money is lost from the purse of a person, he gets perturbed. He thinks that he has neither pinched anyone nor done any misdeed, then why this loss he incurred. By getting mental worry and anxiety, his loss does not get retrieved, but he invites some mental disease.

It is generally noticed that as the examination draws nearer the student who has not learnt the lessons starts getting worried. Whatever little time he has for preparing for the exam, he wastes that in the wailing and telling his tale of woe to others. Although he can do some preparation during this time, but he fails to do so. By explaining the grief to others, he neither can learn the books nor he gets any support in qualifying the exam. Thus he wastes his time engrossed in undue anxiety and in weakening his mental strength.

It has also been observed that whenever there is any function in a family, the head is unable to maintain his mental equilibrium. He starts shouting and crying on trifling matters: "Not done this or that work still remains to be done". That way he not only leads to physical strain but also to mental exhaustion. In fact the work would be completed even without shouting and crying. Thus the man himself is to blame for his ailments.

Many people are aware of the cause of their disease but they are unable to cure it. If one advises the people addicted to the use of liquor or cigarettes, or addicted to the use of opium or any other intoxicant, he lists out the benefits of using them. Some justify smoking as it helps extricate gases and makes cleaning of bowels easy. It removes mucus. Some others justify taking liquor by saying that it helps in digestion and one gets energized and some others say that one gets rid of sorrow by using opium, and one gets intoxicated. In fact this short-lived strength and intoxication vitiates their inner vitality and real bliss and leads them to the door of death.

Hence it seems relevant to explain the relationship between the disease and grief. If a man suffers from physical ailment he gets pain of mind as well. Conversely if one has mental pain he gets physically paralyzed. This means that there is a deep relationship between man's physique and his mind. Nobody can deny the fact that the disease has impact on the body while the pain and suffering have a bearing on the mind. In other words one can say that pain is also an ailment, which is related to the mind and heart.

Today all people of the world are afflicted with grief and pain. Nobody finds himself in peace and comfort. It is a different matter that every person presumes that the others are happy and in peace. However, as one goes near the other he finds the presumption untrue. The point worth consideration is to find out: "Why man is engrossed in the disease of pain and suffering? why can't he get rid of the lust and desires?" The medical experts are also of the view that in 95% cases the diseases are related to the anxieties, doubts, worries, narrowness of mind and impurity of heart. In the minds of physicians and experts on the subject the question arises as to why anxieties, worries and narrowness of mind etc crop up in the mind of man.

In fact, what happens is that the man is deeply influenced by the environment around him and gets far off from the ultimate Reality. He starts emulating the lives of neighbours instead of leading his own life. He cannot relish the neighbour's prosperity. Therefore, he remains perturbed in spite of his own prosperity. It is a human nature to think of leading better life than what one is living. It is also human to have desire to excel others. This is not a bad instinct, as this propels the man to act but when this instinct assumes the form of rivalry and jealousy, then the whole thing goes wrong. Man engulfed in jealousy and rivalry starts crossing over the wall of patience and perseverance. He becomes sceptical about the entity of God and forgets to remember the great Giver of bounties of Nature in the form of breeze, water, flowers, fruits etc, and makes his life difficult.

It is the choice of a man whether to lead a life in peace and bliss or in pain and grief. If one seriously tries to understand the nature of life, he would find that the life is as vast as an ocean, always moving in an orbit . It hardly matters whether one is far ahead or lagging behind. Nobody has been able to claim that he has surpassed all others or he has gone ahead of everyone else in the world. As one knows the realities of life, he starts sharing the pain of others and tries to alleviate the suffering of others. One who starts relieving the pain of others gets relieved of his own pain and suffering. He starts imbibing the divine virtues of humility, politeness, service to the mankind, culture, poise, tolerance and constructive approach etc. In his life the negative thinking goes away and the positive approach steps in. He starts doing righteous actions, not bothering to get involved in the propensities of future and makes the journey of life pleasant.

### **MIND IN DISARRAY**

We are unable to maintain our true identity in society. Actually we are dominated by the doctrines and disciplines introduced by society to civilize us. We have to mould ourselves accordingly - consciously or unconsciously. Consequently an antagonism develops in our inner and outer personality. This creates in us mental distraction because we have to suppress our innate emotions. These emotions generate upheaval in our inner selves in order to manifest themselves. This explains our fragmented and divided composition, and our inner conflicts. We pose ourselves to be contented to uphold social conventions. But internally we remain agitated. This tension may possibly erupt someday beyond limits. We are advised to stifle our mental distraction lest every action of ours should reflect our inner commotion. This diffuses poison inside us gradually. The restraint exercised by us makes us all the more restless.

The popular ways and means of curbing our mental distractions provide us some relief temporarily. For instance repetition of some mantra generates a sort of stupor, which we deem as a relief to put up with inner tension. But such tension persists inside. Hence permanent riddance from mental distraction necessitates that we own our identity and liberate our pent up emotions. We must not deprecate ourselves. This process creates distraction. We should reconcile our internal dissonance, and give vent to our mental distractions. This is the only technique of overcoming distractions. Thus we should pump out our internal pollution. This operation of pumping out, if performed discreetly would yield satisfactory results. We would then imbibe a blissful state of mental repose and serenity.

## PERFECT HAPPINESS

Normally we think only of procuring food, clothing and shelter. But the question is whether we feel contented if we secure these. Does our sorrow end with the acquisition of the comforts and conveniences of life? Do the people whose basic needs are fulfilled feel contented? Are the affluent who have all the good things of life really happy? Even a man of little commonsense will answer these questions in the negative. Hardly any person in this wide world seems to be fully contented; not a single person appears to be absolutely happy. Those who appear to be happy or contented, when probed deeper, will be found to be not truly happy in some way or another. It is true that man is born and lives in sorrow and suffering, but is it proper that he should regard it as the aim and object of human life to go on suffering in the search of happiness or in the hope of attaining bliss, throughout his life.

If we ponder, we shall find that satiation of one desire gives birth to another and so on. In other words, our life is an endless chain of desires. Our mind remains ever engrossed in the chain of material pursuits and therefore it is never at rest. There is no doubt that whenever a desire is fulfilled, we feel momentary happiness. Again, we experience momentary joy in the interval between the attainment of one aim and the pursuit of another, because during that short interval our mind is at rest and in its place. This shows that for the short duration when our mind is at rest or in its place, we feel happy and contented; in other words, peace and happiness depends upon the state of mind. Thus to have a desire less mind is the only way of getting rid of or rising above sorrow and suffering in the world and converting the transitory peace and happiness into an abiding one.

Wherever we may be — at the shop or office —, we hanker after money; whether in the temple, mosque or church, we think of heaven or hell, sin or piety. In other words, we ever think in terms of material loss or gain. What is meant is that we are oblivious of our real self. The question is not as to what we are lost in, but what the state of our mind is? In fact, it is a great thing to be *onewith* our real self. It is easy to be with others; it is also easy to act according to the wishes of others but it is not easy to be one with ourselves and to follow our own conscience, at times, even in loneliness. If we could learn to be one with ourselves and to keep our mind in its place, we would certainly lead a happy life.

Holy men of different orders advocate different ways of stabilizing the mind. For example, the Sufis (mystics) prescribe *Samadhi*(Trance) or in their terminology, getting lost in the self or merging the soul with the Over Soul. The Scriptures, too, contain ways for the same purpose. Whatever method we may adopt, it is imperative to acquire the ability to keep our mind in its place in order to get rid of the worldly sorrow and suffering and to attain abiding peace and happiness.

Now we come to the vital question: On what one should fix the mind? The target should no doubt be God Almighty, the source of all bliss and happiness. But can we fix the mind on Him without knowing Him? Obviously not. Thus a revelation of God is indispensable for contemplation or communion with Him and the revelation is, possible only through the knower - the True Master. This is the simplest but surest way to stabilize the mind and to experience abiding peace, bliss and happiness.

## PIETY

Purity, piety and sanctity are different words from the same family. They seek to convey similar sense or meaning in different contexts. They are used to indicate the pleasant and comfortable state of mind on subjects that may otherwise vary from each other. For example, Piety may be another name given to the pleasantness found in natural bounties. For a human being, however, piety is not a quality to be acquired, it comes of its own, automatically. A religious practice or the style of dress can be regarded only the means to exhibit or demonstrate the piety one pretends. This is because the piety they display can only be seen; it is there only in the outward appearance. Even otherwise, religious practices and costumes seem to carry complications only, while piety relates to the pleasant state of mind. It will not be difficult to reach the goal of piety, purity or sublimity, if one understands Self in all respects. The one who knows Self, who recognizes Self, he is the exalted, the pious one. We cannot say he becomes noble, because the transformation will take place only where the state of exaltation or piety does not already exist.

Only the evil minded is required to become pious. Those who are pious, they are just pious. They just discover their piety or the state of being Sufi. And contrary to it, those who pretend or appear to be pious, ordinarily declare unto others that they are pious. Truly speaking, to be pious or a Sufi is so natural that there is no question to consider it necessary to announce or declare unto others that one is pious. It is another thing that piety or the Sufi trait shows itself only when one's ego is totally absent. Where there is ego, there is no piety at all.

The pretended piety manifests the finest form of ego only. Apparently it is associated with religious practices, costumes and sectarian considerations. And this is what leads to all kinds of complications based on dogmas, rituals, customs, principles, discipline and so on. On the other hand, true piety is totally free from such complications. It knows no religion; it is neither Hindu, nor Muslim; neither Sikh nor Christian, True piety is piety only and that is all. Similarly, a Sufi is a Sufi, a noble human being, and that is all.

## PRAISE

The faculty of liking one's praise exists in almost every human being. We can say that the desire to hear one's praise from others is a part of human nature. The instinct is, however, great weakness of the human being. Many times we find that a man who refuses to be allured by money, estate, wealth or any other charm, is easily exploited by people with vested interests when they hold a public function in his honour, garland him profusely and resort to his praise, rather flattery. In fact, listening to one's praise is a kind of intoxication which is so stimulating that one fails to maintain one's mental stability. So, with the wine of praise one can easily mislead a person and exploit him for one's own interest.

Those who indulge in the art of flattery are generally quite shrewd and clever. It is a hobby with them, which they apply to their own advantage quite successfully. They would invite a person to preside over a function or hold a public reception for him so that the latter feels so indebted to them that he acts like a captive. In order to grind their own axe, they may address an ordinary police constable as head constable and a head constable as a sub-inspector. They know the liking of the person they propose to exploit. During their conversation, they would, therefore, address him with titles as 'Saviour of the Poor', 'Noble Soul', 'My Lord', or call them 'A Great Leader', 'A Great Servant of the Nation'. To select the most suitable phrases and give them some new meaning as the situation may demand is a child's play for them. Sometimes, they would praise the person even for his most uncivilized remarks and describe him as a great philosopher and intellectual. They would rather ask him to repeat the remarks so that the person feels all the more excited and elated.

No wise person or a scholar can claim that all his wisdom and knowledge are the product of his own intellectual ability and this has nothing to do with the scholarly research and innovative works of the numerous known and unknown great writers, thinkers, philosophers and other learned men of the past. In fact, it will not be proper to give credit to a single person for the knowledge and wisdom which is the result of a forceful consensus of ancient luminaries, the great masters of the past. There is every probability that several people, known and unknown, may have a role behind the achievement of a particular individual. It may also be possible that a particular person might have tried to see that the crown of success is placed on his head alone and no other person should be found worthy of praise.

Man, however, is sparing not even a single moment in quest of praise. He is virtually mad to see that more and more people admire him, praise him, so much so that sometimes he himself drafts the news, articles and advertisements in his own praise and releases the same in the name of others. He doesn't realize that the ocean cannot be crossed by a paper boat. It has also been noticed that a person who is being praised by outsiders is despised by his neighbours so much that they constantly try to get rid of him. In this way, the person may not succeed in hiding the truth for long; he just cannot make the Ganges flow back to its source - Gangotri.

Despite all these facts, however, man continues to consider the one who flatters him, as his well-wisher, sympathizer, rather a close friend. Instead, he takes his critic as his enemy and starts hating him, whereas the truth is that the one who flatters him is only harming him. The one who resorts to false praise is neither a friend nor foe; he is simply bound by his selfish motive. His gesture of friendship or enmity goes only to the extent it

serves his self interest. On the other hand, a straight forward and frank critic gives an opportunity to man to reform himself, to improve himself. In this context, there is a saying that 'positive or truthful criticism is far better than negative or false praise.' For peace in the desert of life, therefore, one just cannot rely on the oasis of false praise.

Religion, sect, caste or community have no relevance for such incidents. They cut across all these considerations. In fact, we all experience such incidents often. However, we are carried away by them in such a way that we just do not try to ponder a while and know the facts or realize the truth. We can, of course, always find a way out or escape being trapped, provided we make it a habit to consider every thing carefully. Only a regular application of mind to all that happens in life and a careful action can lead us to the stage where we will consider false praise, commendation letters and welcome addresses as mere poison; where we will treat our sincere and frank critics as our friends and the flatterers as our foes. In short, for leading a peaceful and happy life, we must be careful about our thoughts and actions.

## **SELF-UNDERSTANDING**

Before we set out to understand others, it is imperative to understand our own self. This is what all our scriptures teach us. "Know Thyself" is the essence of Vedanta. Focus the light inside and many a truth will be revealed to you.

We call the self "I", and it is this "I" that takes us from pillar to post. We identify ourselves with this "I" and brush aside everything else. Our vision is restricted to this "I" and, as such, we lose sight of the light emanating from other souls.

The famous sage, Maharshi Raman was struck by this "I" and devoted his entire life in analyzing it. One day he had a strange feeling. He felt as if he was going to die. There was no one around to help him. He lay in a rigid pose, with his mouth tightly closed and limbs contracted. He acted, as if he was dead. But there was still something that was alive. Although his body seemed dead, yet something was still active and kicking. And that was his "I", which he called spirit. He got up and decided to realize that spirit. He spent the rest of his years in finding answers to the questions raised by his "I", his spirit. He became a great sage (Maharshi). Such is the force of knowing one's own self or the spirit, dwelling in human body.

The "I" or spirit is a complex being. It assumes many forms and disguises itself in many ways. A person who understands its complexities can find answers to varied complex questions, which baffle the human mind: "Who am I?" "Where do I come from?" "Who guides me?" "Where shall I go and what is my ultimate destination." If one can find answers to these questions, most of the ills that trouble man, will automatically disappear. The feelings of ill-will, jealousy, animosity, hatred and misunderstanding will not enter the heart at all. The pure spirit within will never harbour the hostile and intemperate thoughts and feelings.

The tragedy, however, is that no one tries to peep within. We repose faith in hearsay and then start misunderstanding others. We do not take refuge in our spirit. We do not seek light from the inner source of Divine Light. The result is a blurred vision and biased views. Ignorance leads to suspicion and disbelief in others.

The only way to understand others lies in understanding one's own self. If we take the inner spirit as the temple of God, we shall cease to misunderstand and mistrust others, knowing well that one and the same God dwells in others too. Anyone who is spiritually enlightened cannot be overwhelmed by thoughts and feelings of hostility, fanaticism, bigotry and misunderstanding. Switch on the inner light and, rest assured; your path will be illuminated.

## SPIRITUAL SURGE

Man is a mystery. So is his abode, the world, which is a part of the universe. The universe too is a sealed book. Generation after generation tried to unravel this mystery. They succeeded but only partially. Their prolonged quest failed to reach the ultimate conclusion despite energetic enterprise. Why? Why self-awareness has been denied to any creature? Why has man with all his much vaunted wisdom, not been able to probe into his environment completely? Doubtless, man's advent into the world is not because of his own will and intention. That is no reason, however, why he should be incapable of knowing his outer environment and his own self. Human birth is not a sheer chance as believed by modern science. Is man not the product of prior contemplation? Is he without a creator? Is his lease of life without any design or mission, despite the concept that all other objects and creatures of the world are worthless as compared to man, much less at par with him? The intellectual elite believe, and rightly, that every object and creature is associated with some role in the management of the universe. This human life cannot understandably be meaningless. The Indians were, in fact, pioneers in endeavouring to find solution to the aforesaid problems. Their perceptions are embodied in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita.

The Vedas are believed to have been divinely inspired. They exhort man, the individual Soul, to unite itself with God, the Universal Soul. Observance of certain religious rituals too has been declared beneficial by the Vedas. The Upanishads based directly on the Vedas, are progressive and conclusive interpretation and elucidation of the Vedas. The latter's peculiar merit is that they unfold a universal philosophy which makes the path of intellectual eminence smooth. This paves the way for rational and meritorious actions. The activating force behind such actions, however, is knowledge.

Though this process was gradual, yet the impact of change was transparent and meaningful. Such evolution of thought found its climax in the Gita, which enjoys the status of a divine lighthouse.

According to these speculations, the entire creation was the outcome of interaction between man and nature. The creation was developed by the creator through the 'medium'. The basic concept of the indescribable power of the 'medium' creation is believed to be the product of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

Man is manifestation of God. Hence the ultimate goal of human life is integration with God. All creation is a gathering of old comrades separated since long. An uncertain and transient thought wave became pervasive that spiritual eminence is to be found in worldly pomp and show. Doctrines and disciplines relating to spirituality came to be viewed as court summons. Human life was deemed to have a purpose akin to bliss. Transmigration of soul was considered inevitable.

Other countries like China, Egypt and Italy too tried to probe into divine lore. Similar harmonious thought waves, doctrines and disciplines came into vogue. Modes of worship in various religions and countries were antagonistic. Yet the ultimate goal was that it is possible to realise the supreme and lofty power i.e. God, by acting upto prescribed spiritual tenets. He (God) is competent to liberate the human soul from physical bondage. Despite conflicting techniques of God realisation, there was uniformity and unity in regard to the ultimate target.

Centuries before Christ, Taoism was prevalent in China. According to this faith, man is just a manifestation of the absolute and independent reality. This reality was declared as inscrutable power. It was admitted that the purpose of life was to integrate oneself with Tao consciousness by immobilizing emotions and extinguishing desires.

As per ancient Egyptian historical records, Hazrat Moosa had the privilege of mysteriously conversing with God on the mountain "Toor". The entire creation was acknowledged to be manifestation of God even in this faith. But God was believed to be an entity distinct from creation, above all attributes. Purification of human souls and immunity of human life from calamities and misfortunes was attributed as God's privilege alone.

The Greeks used to worship many Gods as the source of creating the whole universe. Aristotle expressed the view that man should become like gods and then merge with God. Certain mysterious religious conventions were also prevalent for linking man with his Maker. The Greeks believed that every human soul is a spark of divine glow. The goal of human life was merger with God.

The Parsis too inspired man to contemplate the absolute reality. Worship was considered as the means of divine illumination.

Buddhism enjoined Nirvana as the goal of human life. Nirvana could be attained by renouncing desires.

Christianity believes in religious experiences of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Anybody who adopts a righteous and pure life under the guidance of spiritual stalwarts acquires divine values and is regenerated according to his personal merit. But mere customary and mechanical morality as also similar good deeds are meaningless without spiritual consciousness to make amends for one's sins. The entire Christian world entertains complete faith in the existence and supremacy of God.

Islam is the formulation of inner perceptions of prophet Mohammad. This faith focuses on oneness of God (without a second) and Mohammad as His Messenger. God is invisible and above all attributes. Except this Absolute Reality all else is ephemeral and perishable. All persons, being manifestations of God should love one another as equals. They should identify God through the messenger. Scientific advancement has produced social and economic disparities as also political infirmities. Even the inventors of textile machinery had to go without cloth. Thus growing population, scientific progress and industrial development hampered blossoming of spiritual heritage. But the aforesaid historical facts cannot suppress the reality of harmony and synonymy in our inner fabric despite external discrepancies. In sum, different religions are only different branches of the same tree that seek inspiration and nourishment from the absolute God.

In view of the above exposition neither man nor universe is a mystery or a tangle. For illumination and resolving this mystery, what is needed is a God realized seer. Call him a true master, prophet, or Satguru.

## **STYLE OF VISION**

God has bestowed every human with ability to transform himself, if he so wills. He may turn his miserable life into comfortable, make his problems smooth. He may make his lowly life quite respectable. An elderly person, however, cannot regain his youth. It is contrary to the laws of nature. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. The contrary can not happen. In fact the laws of nature have been so framed by God that they are immutable from their original position, till eternity. Hence it is impossible for an old man to become young. Human life proceeds ahead, not backward. Nor is it possible to convert youth into childhood. It is however possible physically for him to make his self-created issues and problems pleasant, since they are not natural.

Actually, the movements of our body and facial expressions are but reflection of our inner state. Our happiness and grief, our bloom and gloom, prosperity and adversity, our overall circumstances are the outcome of our pattern of thinking and perception. They are all associates of our psyche. Hence if we change our angle of vision, our head and heart, intellect and ethics would change automatically. Our past life of whatever hue, can not be entrenched in status - quo-ante. This is evident from various illustrations before us.

Vivekananda was just an ordinary student. He made up his mind to change his life. He gave a positive direction to his style of thinking. And with Swami Ramakrishna's help and guidance, he achieved his goal.

Sadna, the butcher, was hated by the people. When he developed intense love for God, he was reckoned as a great devotee.

When Amar Pali, a prostitute, changed her innerself, she was regarded as the daughter of Lord Buddha. She toured throughout Asia and made many solid contributions to the welfare of the women folk.

Siddhartha, became Lord Buddha, when he adopted the highway of divine glory. History abounds with many similar instances e.g. Sant Tulsi Das, Rishi Balmiki, Sur Dass, Bhakt Prahlad and so on.

To sum up, whoever analysed and assessed his life, realised the reality of life, framed an outline for future life, settled the mission of his life and marched on the spiritual path with firm resolve, reached the destination ultimately. The underlying idea is that man can alter his personality as he wills.

## **SUFFERINGS - A POST MORTEM**

Human life is marked by sufferings; they start with the birth and haunts man till death. Man continues to try to get rid of the pain and sorrow throughout his life, but leaves this world without tasting success. One does not find a single person in this world who might not be suffering from one trouble or the other. There is very little difference between suffering and disease. While disease affects the body, the suffering engulfs the mind. The word 'disease' is composed of 'dis' and 'ease' (dis-ease), which means the absence of ease or comfort. In case we treat the state of being uneasy or uncomfortable as disease, then every human being will have to be counted as a patient. This is because man is never found satisfied with the status or the position he commands. Almost everybody seems to be worried, disturbed and strained. In other words, every human being is sick physically or mentally.

As regards the physical disease, one gets often relieved if the ailment is diagnosed properly, one takes the correct medicine regularly and observes the prescribed precautions strictly. Physical diseases come and go. It means medicines may relieve man from the diseases related to the body, but fail to provide relief so far as the sufferings of the mind are concerned. This, however, does not mean that pain and sorrow are the perpetual companions of man and there is no way out for his mental agony. Neither it implies that man should become desperate and accept or bear with everything as it comes, and cease to endeavour to get rid of his troubles. Man must continue his journey of life with steadfastness and perseverance, using all his qualities of head and heart. He must make constant efforts to find relief from his sufferings.

Not to be satisfied with what one is, is not a bad attitude. It is this spirit that keeps man moving, inspires him to strive. This is the spirit that opens up the avenues for man's progress. But since the likelihood of defeat and disappointment is inherent and can't be ruled out, it calls for some kind of relief or make up. It is true that the apparent reasons for mental suffering vary from person to person and it is impossible to discuss in detail the factors responsible for the same. But if we go deeper, we'll arrive at the conclusion that man is haunted by a constant fear of 'What will the people say?' In other words we can say that man spends his whole life to safeguard the delicate image of his false personality in the society. Apparently this fear lurks on the surface, but it is deep rooted in the human mind; it is closely linked with man's own perceptions. Ego is one such factor. Ego is generally aggravated by the false praise one receives from the people with vested interests. These elements keep man in delusion and he continues to nurture, wittingly or unwittingly, his egotism throughout his life.

It is in the nature of man to invite one trouble or the other instead of looking at life through the mirror of truth, knowing it, understanding it, keeping it under constant observation and remaining grateful to the Almighty for whatever comforts are available. This attitude makes life complicated and difficult only. The result is that man gets into the habit of cursing his fate. If man admits that his ego is the root cause of his sufferings, it becomes imperative for him to know: What is ego after all? Does it really exist or it is merely a mirage, a delusion which man tries to nurture by sacrificing without any solid reason the most pleasant moments of his life, allows the sufferings and hardships to overwhelm himself just by giving place in his mind to negative thoughts and feelings?

In fact the spirit of 'I am' is a symptom or sign of ego. Ego is just another name given to one's being conscious of the existence of one's entity. The feeling of 'I am' or the consciousness of the existence of one's entity is however baseless. It can be called only a delusion; because human entity is divine gift only. Man owes his existence to the Almighty. But guided by worldly considerations, he declares himself as the owner of what actually has been bestowed by God, gifted by God. Once man understands this reality, realizes this truth at any turning of life that he owes his entity to the Creator, the mass of ego stands removed from his mind automatically. His mind becomes as bright as a mirror. He rises above pain and pleasure and starts leading a peaceful and blissful life.

## THE GAME OF LIFE

Peace of mind is a rare commodity in today's world. In the times we are passing through, it is very difficult to heave a sigh of relief. The most erratic and unreliable elements in the society rule the roost. Incidents of physical assault and violence are taking place everywhere; people are generally selfish, fraudulent and deceitful. It is very difficult to rely upon any one. Every individual is struggling with problems; everybody is facing hardships. This world has been reduced to a battlefield, where the whole life is consumed in fighting against odds. Carrying the load of responsibilities, man feels wearied at last. He finds no peace, no happiness. In this struggle against hardships of life, some people ruin all their innate capabilities. Many find their wisdom rusted simply because they don't get opportunities to use it. It means, this tumult of life pushes many into the darkness of insignificance. And one treats life as a curse, when he fails to achieve anything significant despite the hardest labour he puts in with full conscientiousness.

On the other hand, a similar struggle turns people into great intellectuals. Many stand obliged with poetic genius. It leads some people to the highest peaks of wisdom. It produces men of letters of the highest order. Several become great philosophers. All such people, who face life with courage, consider it a boon. It means, that life for man can be a curse and a boon too.

In fact, life is a game that involves defeat as well as victory. It is another matter that nobody likes the defeat. However, one may not come across a single person anywhere in the world who may not be familiar with the bitter taste of defeat, because nobody is fortunate enough to find victory at all times. Sometimes defeat may turn into victory and at times victory may finally end up in defeat. To feel sorrowful over defeat and be proud of one's victory is a common thing. However, we must accept the defeat or victory in the game of life with the same smile on face. As a matter of fact, the present atmosphere is just not conducive for peace and happiness. Under these unpleasant circumstances we cannot dream of a healthy society. We must, therefore, accept what happens, compromise with the circumstances and learn to combat them.

No doubt, one requires double the courage and enthusiasm in order to revive the possibilities of a triumph after defeat. At the same time, it is also essential to have a stronger determination, more rational thinking, broad vision and also avoid the false sense of ego, because the circumstances are bound to remain beyond control if our determination is weak, ambitions unbridled and ego perpetual. Happiness does not lie in working like a donkey day and night. Even thinking too much and remaining anxious about everything shatters the happiness of life. It is no use going deep into every matter. For happiness we must forget certain things, while some others we must face, we must fight. In case we are rational in our thinking, firm in determination and do not stretch things too far, our circumstances may not be able to keep us their captives for long.

Generally, our problems are the product of our own temperament, our own nature. A hot temper, craziness and our anxiety to accomplish too much in too short a time, may put us on an uneven path only. We, however, tend to blame others. In case we change our own attitude, our own temperament, most of our problems may vanish automatically. It means, we can march on the pathway to glory only if we overcome our ill temper, narrow-mindedness and give up irrational thinking.

In fact, pleasure and pain are not related to the happenings outside; they depend on our inner disposition. In other words, we find happiness corresponding to our own thinking. In fact, the fascination of the worldly objects makes us selfish; we suffer from ego and fail to treat the game of life as game.

If we make up our mind to triumph over circumstances, we must not get entangled in the complications. We must try to get over the same intelligently. We should not allow the disappointment produced by the tumult of life to desecrate the temple of our heart. We must not allow our enthusiasm to go down. We must treat every defeat of ours as a stepping stone for success. We must treat every mistake of ours as a lesson to improve. In this way the struggle in life may become a boon. We may feel contented at every step. We may march through the journey of life decently. The flowers of noble qualities may bloom in the garden of life. Life may prove to be a valuable treasure and we may play the game of life with a smile.

## THE FEELING OF UNFULFILMENT

We are surrounded by various types of people in society. Attracted by their different personalities, we often try to imitate them. For instance, if our neighbour buys a coloured T.V., we too, tend to replace our Black and White T.V. with a coloured one. Similarly, if some one in our neighbourhood goes in for the latest model of scooter, we too try to get a similar one; our old modelled scooter starts looking cart-like. To go a step further, on seeing some one owning a big house, we too develop a desire to have one even bigger than his; on seeing some one well dressed, we too want to discard our present clothes and go in for those resembling to his. Even the newspaper we buy is not because it is to our liking but because our neighbour reads it. In other words we spend our whole life in the pursuit of such borrowed desires. Though these borrowed desires should be discarded but at the same time they can prove useful, if put to use in a healthy competition context.

Therefore, we should not desist from making efforts to fulfill our desires in life. We ought to seek necessary comforts of life, but should never look down upon our present lot. We should shun those comforts of life, which ultimately lead us astray. We should learn to exercise self-restraint under all circumstances. Feeling satisfied with what we possess, we should endeavour to fulfill our genuine desires in life, treading the right path.

If we ponder deeply over the desires we harbour, we would find that all these desires are insignificant, for they are all borrowed. Since these desires do not come from within but out of a desire to emulate others, they are bound to be un-real. Hence they remain suppressed in us and never see the light of the day. Exactly so, our desire of self-realisation does not succeed until it comes from within. We are, in fact, overwhelmed by the unending desires in life which crop up as a result of imitations of others; the result is that we remain deprived of the attainment of our real happiness. Of course, for attainment we must nurse a strong desire. May we, therefore, learn to cherish desires, so that we can struggle in life.

But generally we get ourselves so much entangled in fulfilling the so-called borrowed desires that it becomes difficult for us to discriminate between the real and the un-real. And to fulfill them, we often compromise to take recourse to right or wrong. As a result thereof, we develop base tendencies such as hatred, jealousy, malice and temptations. All these tendencies culminate in a down-fall and our whole life becomes miserable. Perhaps, we go on bearing with the discomforts in the hope of attaining the pleasures of life.

## **THE NAKED TRUTH**

How many times a day we change our face: whether we are in our home or office, in the market or a cultural gathering, congregation or solitude, we wear a different face in different situations and environments. While talking to our near and dear ones in our homes, to our officers or the peons in our office, to the shopkeepers or the customers in a bazar, to a literary person in the meeting or to a spiritual soul in a spiritual gathering, we put on a different face. In short, we change our face according to the situation or the impression we intend to give about ourselves.

The question arises: Why do we change our face so frequently? Why are we unable to show our real face—what we really are? Isn't it that in trying to project ourselves as great beings or imitating great people, we forget our real self and thus by changing our face, we hide the truth and reality? May be we forget what we really are and what our real face is. Nursing hatred in our hearts, we may be pretending to love; concealing beastliness in us, we may be talking about God. Just as an ugly man deceives by covering himself in gorgeous clothes, in the same way, we may be inwardly evil but outwardly projecting a handsome image. We may be deceiving by covering our weaknesses and evils under the garbs of morality and civilization. However, we may conceal hatred, beastliness and wickedness from others but we cannot hide the same from ourselves; we can conceal nothing from ourselves because to our soul, we are stark naked as a new born baby. Hence, isn't this self-deceit, an escape from the realities of life and isn't it a symptom of lack of courage and confidence?

If there is hatred and malice in our heart, why do we conceal it? If there is beastliness hidden in ourselves, why do not we admit it? If we are evil within, why do we deceive ourselves by pleasant appearance? To hide the facts and realities of life, why do we need the mask of false image and false morality? And what is morality? What culture and civilization demand of us? Instead of wasting our time and energy in pretending to be moral and civilized, we should change our way of thinking and try to understand what the reality is and what we really are. By pretending to be moral, we cannot change the realities of life, though we may temporarily become oblivious of facts. The facts remain facts. The facts in themselves are neither good nor bad. They are facts. As such, instead of covering the facts with the veil of civilization and culture, if we face them as they are, we can turn a new leaf in our life. So long as we do not face the facts, — the naked truth —, we cannot see our real face and maintain our real image.

## **THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE**

A man's life is unable to go beyond his sensual experiences. He hears with the aid of ears; he sees with his eyes. However, his speech is conditioned by his capacity to think. Any person can have different views, manner and style of speaking. In other words, comprehension of the same event. However, generally the interpretation accepted by the majority is considered correct. For example, we do not know when the idiom of 'hearing from one ear and throw out from the other' came into existence but we know that it is accepted universally. However, we use this idiom when we imply that due importance is not given to another's speech or advice. In this context, a person can take this idiom to mean that since both ears are parallel to each other and are connected through a common passage. But reality is different. Our ears are in communication with our brain, which acts like a tape-recorder. It records every spoken word. Our ears are always opened. We are forced to hear sounds whether we want to or not. These have both desirable and undesirable effects on us. Similarly, our brain also works as photographic camera. Whatever we see with our eyes, an imprint is stored on our mind forever. And whenever a similar object appears in front of us, our mind is able to recollect the past image and compare them both. Hence our all our movements and actions are guided by our thinking and comprehension based upon past experience. If we ponder deeply we shall come to the conclusion that in any age people's thinking is guided by the environment in which they are or were living. Thus we must view the present atmosphere in the same context. The present environment is suffocating, restless, treacherous, full of envy and hatred. This condition must be accepted with an open heart and considered the result of unhealthy environment. But none of us is willing to accept this reality. We waste the entire day in criticizing others and commenting adversely on the ills and bad conduct of society at large. If we analyze our day's activities carefully, we shall be surprised that we are unnecessarily and mercilessly wasting our time in useless pursuits. We are constantly wasting our time in useless pursuits. We are constantly filling our mind with dirt. If we are in office, we waste our time in routinely discussion with our colleagues the news published in the daily papers. During lunch interval, we waste time in discussing weaknesses and ill-deeds of our bosses.

We also habitually discuss how to get goodwill of our bosses to serve our selfish ends. The same situation exists in the business environment. There we remain busy in discussing novel ideas of hoodwinking our clients with our business associates. We waste a considerable period of our life in inventing ways of becoming rich overnight. We try to create an impression of being totally honest and above board in our neighborhood. However, in the heart of hearts, we are jealous of neighbors' prosperity and try to make schemes of bringing down their prestige.

Even though our conduct is not above reproach, but we try to detach ourselves from present unsavory atmosphere and do not accept any responsibility towards its existence. We keep on cursing the ills of society as if we are not a part of it. The existing state of affairs demands an explanation from us and we should think dispassionately about it. We should heed our conscience. We should ignore what others are doing but ponder over our own conduct. After all, man is considered the most superior being on earth due to his intellect and sense of discrimination. The world has never been without good and ideal beings. Their company can be a source of inspiration for leading a good life. If we sincerely decide to lead a thoughtful life and try to move according to dictates of our conscience, we can transform the poisoned and hateful environment and make the world a happy place to live in for ourselves, for our children and set an example for others to emulate.

## **TOLERANCE - A PANACEA**

Tolerance is a rare commodity these days. This virtue is hardly found amongst the men and women of today. Instead, intolerance has grown like the wild weed, all over the world. People have become hard-hearted, stubborn, non-yielding and narrow in outlook. There were times, when people of different views, temperaments and faiths lived together like one well-knit family. There were no jealousy and feelings of enmity. Mutual faults or weaknesses were either ignored or brushed aside.

But times have changed. The very concept and meaning of tolerance seems to have undergone a change. Tolerance formerly meant ability to endure, disposition or willingness to tolerate or allow permissible range of variations in life style and thinking. But, of late, new dimensions have been added to its meaning. Tolerance now covers new areas and ranges like the religious tolerance and political tolerance.

These days people have grown intolerant, uncompromising and rigid to their thoughts, feelings and views. No one is prepared to put up with others' views and ideas. "Each one is law unto himself". Things have gone so worse that even the teenagers are not prepared to tolerate the time-valued and proven views of their elders. May be it is due to the effect of western civilization or the winds of change sweeping all the world over. The dearth of tolerance has created many problems. The whole texture of our society seems to have been shattered. The whole present day tension, bickering, distrust, envy and confusion seems to stem from intolerance.

Man, they say, must fight even if he has nothing to fight for. If he has no weapons, he will fight with fists and stones. The malady, therefore, lies in the very mind and fighting instinct of man. These days you dare not ask any body to behave or mind his words. If we differ with somebody, he will become our opponent or enemy. In buses and trains if we un-intentionally brush with some-body, he will look upon us with bloodshot eyes. Even if we profusely apologize, he will not be pacified. This is of course, a minor thing. But of late, things have gone worse.

Look at religious intolerance. People know that there is only one God and all roads lead to Him. But fanatics and zealots will always paint a different picture. They will try to establish that their own God is the best. None of them have seen God. Let us differ with a person or his political views, but we would like to eliminate him, altogether. The world has been rocked with many a political murders in the recent past. Gandhiji, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Mujib-ur Rehman, Zia-ul-Haq, Kennedy and Bhutto are the glaring examples of political intolerance. Where are we leading to? To chaos and law of jungle? This malady of intolerance will certainly lead mankind to the abyss of ruin and destruction.

The only remedy lies in the inculcation of the spirit of tolerance. Let us learn to endure with patience what does not suit or appeal to us. Bear with those who hold different views, put up with those who irritate or provoke us. Listen to those who have unsavoury things to say. Let us not stifle the voice of reason. Do we not take bitter medicines to cure deadly diseases? Did Lord Shiva not drink the cup of poison to please the Devas, after churning of ocean? The famous story of the tolerant saint and the intolerant scorpion is so well known that we need not repeat it here.

Finally, look at the flowers. Do not they bear with the thorns? Look at the sunshine. Does not it put up with the shade? Does good not live alongwith evil?

Tolerance is certainly a great virtue. Let it flourish and spread like the banyan tree which provides shade and shelter to many a weary traveller but itself tolerates the scorching heat.

In short, tolerance is the panacea for all ills.

### **TRUE WELL-WISHERS**

On meeting a friend or relation casually after exchange of greetings, we generally commence our conversation with the remarks: "How do you do? Is everything fine in your family?" And then usually response is that God is gracious on them and all is OK. Exchange of such words has become customary with us. This operation can be labelled as a mere lip service, as it is devoid of truth. Which family is fine? Who prays sincerely for whom? Who is conscious of God's grace?

In truth, we are all dis-satisfied with our life. We all have to face adverse problems and situations. We make persistent endeavours to make circumstances wholesome throughout life. The status quo, however, stays on. Serious and discreet thinking over the basic cause of our failure and dis-satisfaction would reveal that we have adopted an erratic style of life. In case we concentrate on changing ourselves, instead of changing our circumstances, we would achieve the cherished goal.

The process of changing ourselves does not mean an escapist attitude on life, but contemplating life as a test and a contest. If we are determined to succeed in life, we shall have to admit everybody around us as our well-wisher. We would have to earnestly practise this art regardless of hostile and abusive attitude of any and every body. Only then we would sail through life comfortably. A philosopher rightly said that our foes teach us more than saints and enlightened personages. We should be grateful even towards one who places thorns on our path. With such a perception, we can remain satisfied even in adverse circumstances. A serious and sagacious speculation on our domestic problems and hurdles would enable us focus on these issues, would dispel all our difficulties. Even stone blocks in our way can serve us as staircases. We can thus enjoy the relish of contented life.

## **UNCOMMON PERCEPTION**

Possession is regarded by the possessor as his ownership. That is why we often hear phrases of ownership e.g. my house, my car, my scooter, my servant. This shows one owns a thing about which he speaks. Many such instances can be cited. The point for consideration, however, is whether such a perception (thinking) is proved genuine on the touchstone of reality.

In case we are gripped by the objects for which we strive and bear hardships, it is not surprising that we are always haunted by the risk of their loss. We continue to safeguard them. Gradually those objects take us for a ride. We don't realize that we start looking after and serving those objects. Though their owner, we become their slaves.

It is undeniable that the owner does not go to the servant. It is the servant who seeks the owner. Things do not come to us. We pursue things. This means that our ownership conceals behind it the factum of serfdom.

We are masters of the servants in our employ. But our mastery hangs on the existence of servants. Our mastery terminates with the exit of servants. Obviously the key of our mastery vests in the servants - not in us. For without the servants we can't be masters. How can we then be masters without those servants? It is quite funny that the servant is delighted at the death of master as no body wants to be shackled as slave. On the contrary, the master cries on the death of the servant. In the circumstances, the point for consideration is: Who among the two is the servant, the tearful master or the rejoicing servant? In truth, the one who is the master of none, is the very owner. For nobody's ownership cannot be demolished. Independence is imperative for ownership. A subservient ownership can be no ownership.

The objects have nothing to do with this concept. They are not blame worthy. They know not whether we apprehend the objects as our masters. How can objects enslave anyone? It is we who become slaves. Our perception and style of thinking drives us into their tentacles and domination. We can not become masters of objects so long as we crave for them and we do not get rid of craving. Our continuous craving would keep our slavery intact.

We can liberate ourselves even if we are handcuffed; on the other hand, we would be captives even with lots of gold ornaments around us. As a matter of fact no creature is more crooked and eccentric than man. Human life is queer indeed. He alters the designation of slavery to mastery. And changes the nomenclature of chains to ornaments. Change of names does not, however, change reality. Truth always endures as truth. To sum up, our mastery or slavery is determined by the pattern of our living. It is associated with the style and mode of our perception and life. If we comprehend this facts, we can liberate ourselves from the bonds.

## WAY OF LIFE

We cannot deny the fact that life is a mystery, which cannot be understood in its entirety. No one fully comprehends the reality of life. It is for this reason that no scientist or philosopher has ever been able to define life totally. Why human life is as it is, no one has been able to answer this vital question. However, this does not mean that owing to such complexities we should shut our eyes to it and attend to day-to-day work half-heartedly, so much so that we regard going to bed at night and rising up in the morning as a compulsion, taking bath, eating, drinking or going anywhere as a trouble or feel glittery while discharging other duties, or go on cursing the circumstances throughout life and regard life as a burden under the impact of material and external circumstances. To go on cursing the circumstances or lead life reluctantly is nothing but doing injustice to it. To lead life disinterestedly is to render life meaningless.

In the circumstances, if we ponder, we will come to the conclusion that shirking toil or performance of duty is the basic cause of our boredom and depression. Work and toil is the peculiarity of human nature and when we do not discharge this natural obligation, we feel depressed and bored. The wish to do something can be fulfilled by action only. It will not be out of place to mention here that we should not only do work, which we wish to do, but do all works with equal interest. In other words, we should do even work thrust on us with interest. In case we develop the habit of doing every work with interest, we can be free from hatred and discontentment, because work in itself brings joy, peace and satisfaction. Performance of work has its own importance in life. By performing one's work, one's courage, joy and self-confidence find growth. Contrary to this, those who do not work or discharge their duties, suffer from fear and restlessness. Such people, whichever status of society they may belong to, neither succeed nor experience peace, happiness and contentment in life.

It is true that human life is a struggle. Both happiness and sorrow are its integral parts. We cannot lead a life free from happiness and sorrow. However, it depends upon us to lead it joyfully or sorrowfully. It is so because to be joyous or sorrowful or happy and unhappy is dependent on our internal state of mind and not on external circumstances or amenities at our disposal. Despite poverty and hardships, labourers are found to be jolly and carefree and unaffected by adversities. In this context, Dale Carnegie made a significant observation, when he said: If there are two persons and both performing the same kind of job, having equal wealth and enjoying equal respect and prestige in the society, yet, in accordance with their mental attitude, one may be joyous and the other depressed. Thus we can be happy even without a change in our work and environment. By changing our mental attitude we can transform sorrow into joy and failures into success; we can cheerfully face obstacles and surmount difficulties in our way. All that is needed is to bring about a change in our mental attitude: to think positively. Life is a wall. On one side of it is cool shade and on the other scorching sun. All that is required to be done is just to walk into the cool shade from the scorching heat. If we learn to lead life like this, it would prove to be a boon of peace and happiness. And such a state can be easily imbibed in the company of saints.

## WHERE ARE THE PROBLEMS?

'Problem' is a common word. Generally we apply it whenever we are in a fix, fail to understand some thing and take decision, face a difficulty or find things complicated in our day to day life. Since there is no dearth of such situations, we use the word rather repeatedly and extensively. But to define the word in such a way that it denotes its meaning or conveys the sense in full, is certainly difficult, if not impossible. In other words, to define 'Problem' itself is a problem.

Nobody appears to escape 'Problems' in this mysterious world. Perhaps 'Life' and 'Problem' are complementary to each other. The whole life of man is spent in search of solutions to problems. And at the same time life is no life in the absence of problems. It has no meaning, no charm. It gets stifled and loses momentum. In fact, nobody can deny even remotely the importance of problems in human life.

When we fail to think of a solution to our difficulty, it becomes a problem. Problems thus are from our own ignorance, our own intellectual deficiency. Whenever there is a problem, we find ourselves connected with it, involved in it. We get so close to it, unwittingly of course, that there is no distance, no difference between the problem and ourselves. In a way we become one with the problem. Without us problem appears to have no identity, no existence of its own.

In such a situation we are unable to look at the problem in detached manner and think of the solution neutrally. So we start thinking; What to do? All our intellectual ability fails to solve the problem. This is where we realize the need to consult someone else. In fact, we find our-selves compelled to do so. When a doctor falls sick he cannot treat himself since there is no distance between him and the disease. The doctor cannot diagnose the ailment thoroughly. He must, therefore, go and consult some other doctor. Similarly, a distinguished surgeon, who might have carried out a number of operations successfully, finds himself unable to operate upon any of his own limbs. Not only that, he is too feeble even to operate upon his own wife and his own child. His hands tremble, because they are his close relations. He loses self-confidence.

Just as a doctor fails to diagnose his own disease, a surgeon cannot carry out the operation of his own wife or his own childs, due to loss of self confidence, similarly we find our intellectual capacity or wisdom to be too inadequate to solve our own problems. On the other hand, we have a solution for every problem, which is not our own, which belongs to others. It means, our intellectual capacity or wisdom continues to function when others are in difficulty. We are able to consider the problem thoroughly and without any kind of bias because in such a situation there is a distance between us and the problem. The doctor himself is not sick, it is some one else. On operation table is not the surgeon's own wife or child but some other patient. Thus every individual can be a good and useful adviser to others and not to himself or herself.

Problems are there even for a child. They, however, become ineffective when he is grown up. Man forgets, about them even though he might have left them unsolved in his childhood, Similarly, youth has its own problems and the man tends to forget the same when he grows old even though he might have not solved them while he was young. Often it happens that the problems that baffle a young man so much that he becomes prepared to commit suicide appear to be so simple, so trifle in old age that the man laughs at them.

In this context, if we look at the matter a little carefully, we shall come to the conclusion that in life we seldom solve problems. We only go on putting them off, carrying them forward. Our effort is only to reduce their seriousness. But the fact remains that postponement or carrying forward does not solve the problems as such. They only change the place. They stand slightly shifted or moved away from us.

If we consider the matter a little further and more carefully, we shall realize that we can understand or appreciate the problem better when we look at it from a distance. More the distance, better the view, clearer the problem. We also realize that weaker the mind, stronger the problem. A man with weak intellect will find his problems correspondingly hard for him. It shows that our problems are our own creation. They are the result of our own intellectual shortcomings. It is our own mind that provides roots to the problems and nurtures their growth. Thus the basic question is not that of problems, it relates to our own mind. If the mind, the creator, reforms itself, the problems that surface from it are bound to disappear automatically.

If we adopt the company of saints, use the talent and other God-gifted qualities of head and heart and thus rise above our usual level of thinking, we may discover a new focal point within ourselves from where we can view things in altogether a different manner. While standing there we can look far beyond the scope of the problems. If we stretch the canvas of our mind a little we can watch the problems from a distance like spectators. Once we become spectators we realise the reality marking the problems.

And now we are in a position to advise ourselves, although there may be no need to do so.

## WHY NO SLEEP?

Hard physical exertion for eight hours is an imperative requirement enjoined by nature. Only then we become entitled to normal sleep and relish physical freshness. Sleeplessness often attacks only the people who command the basic necessities of life, earn a lot and don't have to work. The poor guys who have to struggle hard for earning a living are not victims of sleeplessness.

It is a settled reality that man was basically a hunter. The weapons then available were bows and arrows, not pistols and guns. For procuring food, man had to chase animals all day long. Even then availability of food was not certain. Many a time he had to return empty handed, idly exhausted. This proves the necessity of hard work for man.

In fact, sleeplessness is no disease. It is associated with our style of life. This simply indicates that we are not fully meeting the requirements of our body. Idleness is contrary to the law of nature. What really happens is that we relax the whole day long and hence know no sleep at night. We go on changing sides while in bed. Even changing sides is a sort of exercise and to some extent fulfils a natural need. Thus we do get a little sleep towards morning. We, however, interpret the unconscious act of changing sides as the struggle for having a little sleep. We fancy sleeplessness as a serious illness and are inclined to seek shelter of doctors in vain. Drugs can induce fake and artificial sleep but not a natural one. Our efforts fail to fetch sleep which comes automatically.

“We used to sleep even on stones Now we know no rest even on velvet beds”

A popular proverb on the point: “The beggars enjoy sleep better than kings, manual workers better than intellectual workers” To sum, our body demands exertion of eight hours. It rests with us, how to do such physical exertion. If done earnestly, we can wipe off the complaint of sleeplessness.

The dispensation of nature leaves no room for discrimination between the rich and the poor. It is unnatural that certain people amass abundant wealth while others suffer in penury. Currently the number of sleepless persons is multiplying terribly fast. In future it may become a serious problem. For, machines are replacing men everywhere. And machines neither apply for leave nor ask for interval for tea. A single machine can perform equal to one hundred or even one thousand workers. Apparently in future machines would tackle all jobs and would spell idleness for man. This would entail dangerous results.

The rich consider it below their dignity to work hard because they are free from the worries of boarding, lodging and clothing. All desirable things for which the poor toil are already in their hands. Why labour? If the victims agitated due to sleeplessness realize that their sleeplessness is due to the basic cause of lack of manual exercise and their cozy life, they would be ready to do anything to get rid of the agony of insomnia. A big revolution can be ushered in if the rich, if so many rich people commence working for eight hours daily. This would transform the entire social environment and remove the gulf between the rich and the poor, or at least reduce the distance between them. Then our self-created walls would be demolished. For, the rich would then work to provide food for the hungry and drugs and other things for the needy. Such philanthropic activities would rid the rich of torture of sleeplessness and foster spiritual awakening in them.

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