



SAY WHATEVER YOU MIGHT

DR. HUKAMCHAND BHARILL



SAY WHATEVER YOU MIGHT

(ENGLISH VERSION OF HINDI BOOK)

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

We have great pleasure in publishing the English version of a collection of stories written by the versatile Jain Scholar Dr. Hukamchand Bharill and published earlier under the title "AAP KUCHH BHI KAHO". This translation has been prepared by one of our old students Shri Padmakar Munjole Shastri, M.A. (Eng.) in lieu of paper IV and V for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy (ELT - English Language Teaching) by the University of Rajasthan.

Earlier the publication of its five editions in Hindi and also one each in Kannada, Gujrati and Marathi itself speaks of the great interest the society at large has shown in these stories. We received several letters of appreciation and praise for them from learned scholars from different parts of our country; a few of which we published in short in the earlier editions.

We are confident that the enlightened readers in English too will find these stories thought-provoking, enjoyable and inspiring.

We heartily thank Shri Padmakar Munjole for permitting us to publish this English version.

We are also grateful to Professor Jamnalal Jain, Indore and Shri Rajmal Jain, Jaipur, who reviewed the translation and made the necessary corrections.

Our thanks are also due to M/s. Jaipur Printers Pvt. Ltd., Jaipur who have printed this work in nice form.

Nemichand Patni

General Secretary

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Great men in addition to their reformatory and revolutionary changes in society unconsciously make greater contributions even in the far removed spheres of life. Thus, it will not be farfetched to say that Shree Kanji Swami who by interpreting the scriptures in their right perspectives awoke the misled followers of Jain religion from eternal slumber. Surprisingly, he has also made constructive contributions in the field of linguistics. He did so in more ways than one. Firstly, a bulk of Jain literature has been translated into many Indian languages like Kannada, Tamil, Marathi and Gujrati. I would never have made it a point to mention his name in the light of linguistics, had his contribution to linguistics merely been confined to the branch of translation. As a matter of fact, far more important than this is his introduction of a new register in the area of mysticism. A spiritual experience of the soul is an idiosyncratic phenomenon that cannot be easily captured in a language. Despite that, he introduced a register that nearly visualises the abstract and subtle goings on in the soul during one's spiritual experience. Ironically enough, it is this aspect of his literature that lands translators in difficulty. It makes the translators job more complicated and akin to tight rope walking. It is not wide off the mark if I call Dr. Hukamchand Bharill an original translator rather a creative translator, who, having internalised the spiritual message of Shree Kanji Swami, has externalised with creative force in the form of a work of art; SAY WHATEVER YOU MIGHT, a collection of stories.

Each story highlights a different aspect of spiritual life. Being mutually exclusive the stories meet at one common point : the root cause of all miseries is the ignorance of the true nature of one's self and the root cause of happiness is the rise of right knowledge of one's self. Emotions fall outside the pale of spiritual development, Bharat, notwithstanding his victory over the six continents and the untimely emission of the divine voice from Vrishabhanath, is unable to make himself look upon as a fortunate one; despite the name and fame, he regards himself as unfortunate and the eater of the left-overs. This is not a stylistically exaggerated account of a prejudiced writer. The very things are like that. The enlightened souls have in true sense hallmarks of greatness. The feeling of devotion is totally immaterial to whom it is orientated. Both of the monks, Pushpadant and Bhootbali stand for true devotion. But discrimination has not been disparaged to the background, and at the same time they never let the pendulum swing to the other extremity. They are well acquainted with the role of scriptures and traditional values in the life of seekers of salvation.

In the concluding speech of the village woman, we come across the fact that both practical wisdom and theoretical knowledge are complementary to each other.

The truth is above all and it has nothing to do with caste, creed, class and colour. The futility of these imposed identities is exposed by Shree Kanji Swami who for the sake of truth snapped his ties with everything and everyone of the community and determined to take on the adversities. Rash actions always stem from misunderstanding of the situation and they quickly cause sufferings to individuals and community alike. Finally, be it a spiritual sphere or non-spiritual one of life, discrimination has a significant function and it can never be undermined. These are the intellectual rays that radiate from these stories.

Finally, I would like to mention what made me to take up this book for deissertation at the M. Phil. level. I have been a student of Dr. Hukamchand Bharill at Todarmal Jain Siddhant Mahavidyalaya. So I was looking for an opportunity to offer him constructive tribute. Besides, I always wanted to utilize my learning for spiritual transactions so I arrived at the conclusion that I would take up "AAP KUCHH BHI KAHO" penned by him. Dr. Rajul Bhargava was my guide who did not just delightfully accept my decision but assured me of every possible co-operation. This boosted my morale. I am grateful to Dr. Hukamchand Bharill, whose inspiration has led me to take up this spiritual job. I also express my sincere thanks to Mrs. Rajul Bhargava and look forward to her guidance in future. Last but not least, I express thanks to Shri Mohanlal Jangid who facilitated my efforts at School at Bassi (Rajasthan).

Translation is a terminal competence. The flip side of it is; the going always gets tough but the tough never gets going. I don't know how far I have been successful in my attempt. I hope the enlightened readers will derive joy and spiritual comfort from the principles enunciated therein.

Munjole Padmakar Shreekant

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SAY WHATEVER YOU MIGHT

When the humble 'salutations' broke the meditation of the ascetic, auspicious blessings spontaneously came out -

'Be spiritually uplifted.'

Looking at the gloomy face of the multimillionaire, the ascetic asked -

"What is the matter ?"

"Hiding innermost feelings, the rich man replied -

"Nothing - I have come to offer my humble salutations."

"Your arrival at this unearthly hour and your sad face tell me all. It is futile to try to hide it, nor is it required."

"Oh saint ! nothing to hide but..."

"But, why the hesitation ? When..."

"Saint ! I am not able to see you in this pain nor can I bear it; this insult on nudity is intolerable."

"What kind of pain ? I am immersed in spiritual bliss."

"Leprosy has afflicted your entire body."

"This is a changing condition of lifeless matter. I have hardly anything to do with this body. It will last so long as it happens to be in my contact. It would change as it is destined to in keeping with the rise of virtue or vice. I am engrossed in a mass of knowledge and happiness of pure consciousness which is different from the body."

"Well, these are metaphysical words. But, at least, you should do something for this - this is my humble request."

"What ability do I have to do anything about this?"

"What can you not do? You are a king of arguments who squashes the pride of false debators. Your voice has such a tremendous power that its mere articulation causes the things to come into being. The world has witnessed this many a time. Your words are charms in themselves. We have witnessed their miraculous effect many times. If you desire, the leprosy will not stay for a moment longer."

"Multimillionaire, you are under a great delusion. There is hardly anything like this : *One never achieves what one desires, Sanatkumar, an emperor, who had attained liberation in the same birth suffered from this disease for seven hundred years in the ascetic phase of his life. What to say of me !*

Over and above, why should I get rid of this, when it is not detrimental. I have not forsaken the world to cherish a desire for anything, but I have accepted nudity to give up those very desires. Don't trap me in these irrelevant and worthless feelings.

It is rightly said in the scriptures that an ascetic should not develop intimacy with laymen. They trap us in futile things. There is no inner inspiration from them."

"Please, do something, if not for your sake, at least, for our sake. I can't tolerate your suffering. This is a great insult on nudity."

Hardly did he complete his words when the ascetic began saying -

"One is not able to do anything for others. How is that there is insult on nudity ? *Nudity is a characteristic of a soul not of a body. If a body gets distorted how is that it is an insult on nudity ?*"

The ascetic went on preaching, but the rich man hardly listened to him. A constant stream of tears flowed down from his eyes. He grew emotional.

Having noticed this, the ascetic said -

"The cause of your chagrin is beyond me. Please, tell me plainly what the matter is."

The rich man spoke in a choked voice -

"Yesterday, the royal court was crowded. Some anti-religious people ridiculing the religion of nudity, said that the nude ascetics used to be lepers. When they have no capability to maintain the health of their own body, what good can they do to others?"

Since I found this beyond my flesh and blood, I said-

"This is a lie. Nude saints can never be lepers. They can do everything."

I was so overcome by emotion that I lost control and said everything that occurred to me. I thought of you when they told that they had seen a nude saint who was a leper, but..."

When they incited the king he said -

"I will go myself to offer salutations to the ascetic."

"Oh man ! such an attachment to religion is not proper whose flurry of excitement makes you unaware of the truth. *One substance can neither harm nor benefit the other substance. This is not an insult on nudity ; rather it is a great honour; it is because the very nature of things is like that. It expresses freedom of not every individual but of every atom.*"

The ascetic preached for a long time about the true nature of substances, and an independent existence of a substance and its self-controlled changing phenomenon but it brought no relief to the rich man.

Although he said nothing, his eyes expressed his heart. He spoke no words but he told everything with his eyes that were shedding tears and his choked throat. He was looking at the ascetic without blinking. He wanted to have his morale boosted by the heart of the ascetic filled with compassion, but in him he noticed nothing less than unpossessive non-attachment.

• • •

The people were trickling in to have a 'Darshan' of the sky-clad ascetic Vadiraj who was staying in the cave on the hill near the city, for the king himself with his courtiers was coming to have a Darshan. When the ascetic heard the noise made by the huge gathering outside the cave, he came out. They raised victorious slogans to the ascetic. His body emblazoned with the golden hue of the rising sun, he was glugged with non-sensual happiness, peaceful, serious and with a shining face, free from passions, and nude like a newly born child having a fearless countenance.

All of them were looking at one another in surprise. The stream of tears was flowing from the eyes of the rich man, but this time they marked his happiness.

The faces the people who ridiculed the saint showed a sudden blankness but they could not speak a word.

The ascetic took his seat on the clean rock situated nearby. The king with his courtiers sat on the floor. People sat wherever they could.

The people were silent. At their unarticulated request the ascetic was filled with compassion for them and as the divine discourse started emitting, the ascetic said -

"Every soul is in itself a supreme soul; a supreme soul is not a different one. Potentially every soul is in itself a supreme soul, but, since they are unfamiliar with their true nature they become miserable and stranded. Those who know it, realize it, firmly engross in it, enjoy and

merge into it, become a supreme soul in the form of manifestation as well.

Every soul is a supreme soul, who is low ? And who is high? All are equal. Every soul has its own responsibility for its good and bad deeds. None can do good or bad to others and undergoing such passions of doing good and bad this soul itself gets trapped in the cycle of virtue and vice. Both virtue and vice cause bondage alike. If virtue is in shackles of gold, vice is in shackles of iron. But shackles are meant to bind.

'Dharma' means the true nature of things, and any idea to bring about change in them is false, arrogance, is the cause of suffering and actually it is suffering in itself. *The function of right knowledge is to accept the series-bound-modifications objectively and dispassionately; the feelings of joy and sorrow in them is neither justifiable nor needed.*

God is the knower and seer of the universe, not a creator or a destroyer of it. One who knows the universe dispassionately and in an uninfluenced way can be a god. *The way of becoming a god is to know the universe dispassionately.*

Let all souls know their souls and recognise them, engross into them, enjoy them and achieve infinite happiness."

Overwhelmed with happiness at his divine speech, the king rose to his feet and folding his hands started speaking humbly -

"On account of your presence our land has been blessed. When merely your 'Darshan' can destroy the pain of transmigration, what to mention of your speech?"

The ascetic smiled and said -

"Whose land? The land belongs to the land. Until today it has belonged to none and will belong to none. The

annihilation of the transmigration can be brought about only with the experience of one's own soul. Nobody has, liberated nor will liberate, by virtue of having somebody else's 'Darshan'. One's own supreme soul that is totally separate from others, and meditating upon it can end the woes of the mundane state of soul. Having its 'Darshan' is right belief, knowing it is right knowledge and meditating upon it is right conduct. Thus knowing, believing and meditating upon it can destroy transmigration."

The king, by kneeling before the ascetic, showed his respect to what he had said, and, being unable to resist the temptation of his curiosity, he asked -

"We have heard that you were a leper..."

Hardly did he finish when the ascetic said -

"This body had it certainly but not me. I am a god enshrined in the temple of the temporal body, and so are you. If a temple gets damaged, the god inside it cannot be damaged."

"Well, how was this temple buttressed up?"

"I don't know. Even I don't know when and how it was damaged. Following the rise of vice and virtue all these things take place in a fixed series; what should I know? And what should I worry about? I am happy in myself."

"Have you not done anything for this?"

"What could I have done, in the activities of the others? Where is the need?"

"Devotion, hymn, incantation..."

"Devotion to god is a part and parcel of my routine activities, and it is one of the six requisites. How can it be related to this?"

An ascetic should not be trapped in the irrelevant and worthless feelings, regarding the body. What effect can they bring about? All these feelings directed towards

doing, are starkly impotent : they can neither create nor destroy anything ? In the natural course of things if they coincide at some point, false beliefs from the beginningless period become intensified."

"Have you not done anything ?"

"I have not desired this either. Had I a desire for it, it would have been proved a curse on my asceticism. Look here ! there is still leprosy in my little finger. Had I been able to cure this why should have I left this uncured ?"

The people who were listening to their discussion exclaimed simultaneously.

"Blessed is he ! Blessed is he ! He is real asceticism!"

Everyone including the emperor was overwhelmed. The critics were also changed. One of them said -

"Had he been a fanatic ascetic, he would never have resisted the temptation of reaping advantage of projecting himself as a great one even at the cost of Jain religion."

The other one said, "You are right, those that are after name and fame have distorted the basic form of religion."

The third one said - "It is immaterial what the ascetic has said, but this foolish world would highlight it in terms of a great miracle."

Whatever may come later on, right then and there a blind devotee touched his feet and exclaimed loudly -

"Say whatever you might. We take it to be your miracle!"



AN UNFORGIVABLE OFFENCE

Acharya Akampan grew grave when the great Muni¹, Shrutsagar, a monk of immense scholarship and erudition, reported the debate that had taken place between him and the courtiers. Acharyashree², even though well-versed in the tendencies of human-kind, could not conceal his doubts and the suspicion of unpleasant things to come flitted across his face. Although he said nothing, yet thoughts were more than evident. *Rich in natural simplicity and the very embodiments of straightforwardness, great spiritual beings cannot keep anything secret.*

Although not a word was spoken, still the grave silence was in itself eloquent. The language of silence in no way less powerful than the articulated one. It only needs someone to understand it.

The learned monk Shrutsagar did not take long to understand the seriousness of the situation for he was expert in the art of face reading.

Acharyashree's deeply thoughtful countenance had greatly agitated him, therefore, he could not remain silent for long.

"Oh, revered one, forgive me ! Is repentance possible for an unthoughtful offender ? Order me."

"It is not a question of repentance but of the safety of our union. *Is there any evil doing that is impossible for depraved person ?*

-
1. An ascetic, here a Jain monk belonging to an order where clothes are also forsaken.
 2. A suffix or prefix of respect signifying greatness as well.
-

When the embodiment of pridelessness, Shrutsagar found himself unable to bear insult on nudity, what can be expected from those that are not even nominally in touch with the religion of pridelessness ?

Pain of humiliation will not make them feel relaxed. *A humiliated man becomes more rash than an enraged snake and a hungry lion. Today the union is in danger.*

As he was relating, he grew still graver.

Shrutsagar trembled from within at the gravity of Acharya Akampan. He realized that what he had thought to be his victory was such a great unforgivable offence that it even proved painful to Acharya Akampan. He felt this very profoundly that the Acharya's mind was not busy in looking for the ways of repentance as he would have done on any other occasion everyday, but was being consumed by compassionial feelings for the safety of the union. Quick decisive Shrutsagar took no more time in arriving at a conclusion and bowing at the feet of the Acharya he said -

"The union will not suffer the consequences of an unthinking act of this unwise man; I will pass this night



exactly at the same spot where I had debated with Bali and the other courtiers. For this, I beg your permission."

"No, never, this is not possible. As far as the consequences are concerned, however great this offence might be, it is your devotion to religion which is the cause of it. Insult on nudity provoked you. Moreover, you were not aware of my command to maintain silence with everybody, and particularly any kind of debate was forbidden with those four courtiers; so my conscience does not allow me to grant you such a severe repentance."

"Your Holiness, it is not a question of repentance but of the safety of the union. It is you who taught us that *discipline and administration are never governed by the heart but by wisdom.*"

"I know the values of Shrutsagar's life better."

"None is so valuable as to sacrifice the union for his own sake. How could we overlook your maxim that a judge, while *meting out punishment should not consider the qualities and usefulness of the guilty.*"

"Do you know that persons like Shrutsagar are very rare in this world? Society must assess his value."

"Monks are beyond the limitations of society. An ascetic should *acquire an ocean of restraint from the ocean of scriptures. I have broken the restraint of speech. The talkative can never achieve the greatness achieved by the observers of silence. I have broken your order. Mine is an unforgivable offence.*"

"But my order was not known to you."

"But the ocean of scriptures should have possessed, at least, this much wisdom that he should have restrained from getting entangled in futile debate with the people on the way. My act of indiscretion will be remembered until the end of the era but it is beyond my flesh and blood that history should point out the fact that the strong

attachment for his dearest disciple made Acharya Akampan shaky as well.

Whatever I have done I have done it, but I would never let one belittle even a little bit of magnanimity of my teacher.

The Acharya will have to fulfil my obstinate demand."

Acharya Akampan grew still thoughtful. Taking his seriousness and silence as a sign of acceptance, Shrutsagar offered his salutations at his feet and in an unspoken way started begging the blessings of his teacher.

Blessing Shrutsagar with his trembling hand, he said -

"It never crossed my mind that upon whom once I conferred the title "Shrutsagar", one day I would have to grant him such a severe repentance.

Dear Shrutsagar ! you have emerged successful in the test of knowledge more often than not. Today it is the test of your meditation. *Although continuance and discontinuance of life are controlled by the series-bound-modifications yet I wish you stability of meditation.*

You have conquered the others so many times, go, and conquer your own self, at least, once."

As he was uttering these words he became graver. He kept looking at Shrutsagar who was going away obeying his command until he disappeared from his sight.



WAKEFUL WISDOM

The event had taken place two thousand years ago when Acharya Dharasen deeply engrossed in his soul in the deep caves of the Girnar Hills found his meditation broken. It was the last phase of the night and he became worried about the preservation of the tradition of the scriptures. He started thinking -

"Now I have grown very old, but so far no competent disciple has turned up who has the ability to acquire the entire tradition of the scriptures of Lord Mahaveer which I myself have learnt from my teachers. On account of the marked deterioration in the cognitive skills of men, the scriptures can no more be preserved just by committing them to memory. Now the only way to preserve them is to commit them to writing; but I don't know how all this can be brought about. How much of my life is left now ? I will be free from worries, if I happen to find a competent disciple whom I will order to commit the scriptures to writing. *How can my thinking alter things ? What is to happen will happen.*"

As he was pondering over the matter, he went to sleep, and dreamt of two strong, active, young white oxen which approached him and were bowing at his feet.

At once he awoke. Acharyashree, who knew the meaninglessness of 'Vikalpas'*, thought that his dream had struck the keynote of the imminent realization of his Vikalp.

• • •

When Acharya Dharasen in the state of deep meditation raised his eyelids, he beheld two young and

* Temporal, unformed ideas.

enthusiastic monks bowing at his feet. They were saying humbly -

"May the salutations from monks thirsty to drink the scriptural nectar at the lotus feet of Acharya Dharasen, the master of the second 'Shrutskandh', be accepted."

The Acharya though rigid from without but soft from within began to say -

"Nothing goes unattained provided one has the necessary competence and the perseverance to reach their goals, but all this comes from inner devotion."

Having understood what the Acharya had obliquely pointed at, they said -

"On their part, the introverts will not lack in devotion and have no disregard for supreme efforts, but it is up to the Acharya to measure their competence."

"This was the response I expected from you".

"These followers are obliged to the compassion of the Acharya".

Offering mantras to both he said-

"Go, accomplish these mantras in the cave situated on the summit of the hill opposite me. When they are accomplished, two celestial goddesses with proportionately beautiful parts will appear.

Both monks were non-plussed. They began to think-

"Appearance of celestial goddesses with proportionately beautiful parts ? What have we to do with them ? What Acharyashree"

The Acharyashree who knew their mind said -

"Don't be trapped in the Vikalpas and don't squander away your time. Do what has been told to. Go..."

"Stop, stop for a while, listen to one thing attentively. Don't rush to me if you happen to entertain any doubt. Your soul is your true teacher. Don't forget this great contrivance. Now go, don't be late..."

• • •

The ascetics who were well-versed in accomplishment soon saw the two goddesses appear. But they ceased to be proportionately beautiful; one of them had her tooth projecting outwards and the other had only one eye. At this, both plunged into anxiety. They started thinking -

"The Acharyashree told us that goddesses with proportionately beautiful parts would spring into existence. There is something wrong, why should we not go to the Acharya and know it from him ? No, no, while we were leaving he directed us not to rush to him if there was some doubt or the other. He also advised us to keep it in mind that '*the self was one's true teacher*'. So we have to find out the cause on our own."

After close scrutiny of the hymns they came to know that while one hymn had fallen short of one letter, the other had one additional letter.

"Should we correct the hymns according to our own wisdom? Might this boldness not be a rash act of youthfulness to correct the hymns offered by the Acharya who is rich in the tradition of scriptures; who had received them from the tradition of his teachers that had enjoyed superiority in age, knowledge and experience as well ?"

After a lot of deliberation, the ascetics came to the conclusion that they would correct the hymns according to their wisdom and got engrossed in meditation.

Success touches the feet of the diligent as well as the intelligent. The beautiful goddesses appeared and began asking 'Can we help you ?'

"No, the possession of servant and service are not desirable to us. The purpose of our accomplishment was just to carry out the orders of Acharyashree."

• • •

Both the young ascetics were present at the feet of Acharyashree. Blessing the bowing young ascetics, the Acharyashree said -

"I am blessed to have Pushpadant who has teeth like flowers and Bhootbali who possesses unprecedented power."



They were surprised to hear their novel names, but seeing the change in their bodies they understood everything. They wanted to narrate everything that had happened, and to forgive them for their offence of correcting the hymns. The Acharyashree said with seriousness -

"You need not narrate everything; nothing is beyond me. I needed talented introverts that were polite, rich in wisdom and to whom the scriptural wealth received from

forefathers can be offered. Wisdom can never be attained without politeness, but thoughtfulness and talent cannot be dispensed with either; without them acquisition of knowledge becomes impossible. The firm faith in a teacher has also a significant role to play, but it ought not to reach the level of fear, otherwise it would contort wisdom.

Solutions to problems should be sought from one's own wisdom, for a teacher will not be available at all times and all places. Even traditions cannot provide solutions to each and every problem because the problems would not prop up in keeping with traditions. Over and above, social values keep constantly changing.

Wakeful wisdom is above all, but it should not cross the watermarks of politeness and propriety; it is a deadly sin to do anything in the name of wisdom, for unrestrained thoughtfulness proves pernicious to the tradition of the scriptures of our forefathers.

It is a duty of wakeful thoughtfulness to rule out ills that come into being under the influence of temporal and spatial factors, but it must be dovetailed with full awareness.

The reason of my happiness is that you have corrected the hymns from your wisdom but did not transgress propriety and politeness. You thought a great deal before correcting the hymns. You were not dismayed under my influence, and you were not egoistical when you successfully accomplished your task. I had expected disciples that were simple, rich in decorum, polite and of balanced wisdom.

Now, I have made up my mind not only to offer you the knowledge of the entire scriptures but also confer on you the title of Acharya, and get rid of my worries."



HAPLESS BHARAT

After receiving three auspicious messages in a row, the entire Court was thrown into ecstasy, but Emperor Bharat kept himself isolated like a leaf of lotus from the water.

It was not that the achievement of omniscience by Rishabha Deo had not filled his soul with joy; certainly it had; he was sublimely ecstatic.

But the fact was that the message of the birth of his son went without bringing any reactions on his face. The moment he got the message of the emergence of the Emperor's Wheel he looked very thoughtful and solemn; all his joy vanished like camphor.

The entire Durbar, not familiar with the heart of Bharat which was reflected on his face, was deeply immersed in happiness. But nothing went unnoticed from the Minister-in-Chief who was gifted with the faculty of keen observance. *There is nothing that is beyond the realm of cautious wisdom.*

After the dispersement of the Durbar the Minister-in-Chief meeting Bharat in seclusion said -

"Can this petty servant know the mystery behind the gravity of the Emperor on this rapturous occasion?"

"Does the Minister-in-Chief need the mystery of heart to be expressed through speech?"

"This servant considers such a strong confidence in him to be an incomparable treasure, but *who has the capability to avert the process of the series-bound-modifications.* The emperor ought to ponder over this greatest reality. *It is a duty on the part of a man of right*

vision to accept the happenings dispassionately that come about in the fixed series."

"Attachment is not bound to accept the reality that belongs to the arena of belief - the reality about modifications can never be averted either. This hapless Bharat is fed up with the congratulations constantly trickling in on his good fortune."

"Fortunes look like misfortunes if they are not congenial to one's interest. The fact of the emergence of the Emperor's Wheel which the world thinks the greatest rise of fortune has rocked the Emperor who considered it as a hindrance in listening to the voice of Jina. I know that better, but the ocean should recognise its immense seriousness. To say anything in addition to this, this servant thinks unbecoming for he is well aware of his limitations".

"Bharat is thankful to the Minister-in-Chief for his timely advice."

• • •

After the ritual of Mangal-tilak and before setting out to accomplish the victory, he touched the feet of his royal mother, Yashaswati Nanda. A stream of tears wet her feet.

She noticed premonition in the tears shed on the auspicious occasion of setting out to accomplish victory.

Sustaining herself, she said in a high pitched voice-

"The royal mother desires to get at the cause of the weakness of the would-be architect of the Bharat Continent, the fortunate son of Rishabh, because she finds it inauspicious."

"Call Bharat whatever you like, but don't call him 'fortunate'. This hapless Bharat is envious of those hundred brothers and the citizens who will have the luck

of listening to the divine voice of Rishabh Deo three times a day (and each time of 1.5 hours). But at the same time your hapless son would be involving himself in the politics of appeasement, payment, punishment and division and leading the operations of the war."

His inner conflict rocked her from within. She at once became very grave but spoke no word. Bharat replied to what her sincere silence pointed at -

"My explanation might not be acceptable to the glory of the royal mother, but it must be acceptable to the affectionate mother of Bharat..."

No sooner did he finish his words than the royal mother's courage was augmented and she said, "Dear son, I do understand your agony but the Bharat Continent of Bharat should be one and should not be disintegrated into six parts."

"Bharat recognizes, what is worth doing. *It is wisdom, not heart, that has the ability to bear the buffets of duty.*"

"It is beneath the dignity and grace of the Emperor to bring tears to his eyes."

"Even in the presence of his mother?"

"It isn't a matter of a mother, but of the royal mother!"

...

The spies set by Bharat had been active every moment to capture the mood of the public in Aryavrat. Wherever the military encamped, top level diplomatic discussions on the information obtained by the spies, would take place at night.

Presenting the report of that day, the head of the bureau of spies said "Yesterday's event has made possible what was not possible even after heavy battles over the years. Today the entire Aryavrat is praising the fortune of Bharat; all are full of joy at his fortune."

"What came about yesterday ?"

"Your Majesty went to Rishabha Deo to offer salutations at midnight. It was on account of you that there was an untimely emission of the divine voice of the God."

"How is it related to politicking. It is a purely personal matter of my own interest."

"Politics seeks its spirit from every sphere. It is not all in all just to win a piece of land but the heart of the people for the integrity of the country. The Emperor ought not to overlook the fact that the people who have absolute commitment to religion give in under religious opportunities."

"No, I don't want to seek political advantage out of my personal devotion."

"This is your greatness; whether you like it or not, it scarcely matters. The rise of fortune always flows good."

"I don't want to be accused by history that even Bharat's act of worship was a political gimmick."

"No body has his desire fulfilled up to this day. Today everything is echoing the glory of your fortune."

"Mob psychology is very strange. Those who are fortunate enough to listen to the divine voice of the God three times a day think themselves deprived of fortune and a person like me who has, so far, only once listened to it is fortunate ? Very surprising."

"Change the topic, merely dwelling on it agitates me. It escalates the pangs of deprivation of the voice of God."

"Whenever the people offer me congratulations on my being fortunate this hapless Bharat can not receive them delightfully. Is this all what fortune means ?"

"No, no, never, let the world think whatever, but Bharat ceases to be fortunate, and hapless he is !" ❀

THE EATER OF THE LEFT-OVERS

Today, Yashaswati Nanda was thrown into excess of ecstasy, why not ? When her son was returning with the achievement of victory over the six continents, the slogans in praise of Emperor Bharat, the world conqueror and the king of kings, rent the sky. Although Bharat with his army had made no entry into the city, the slogans in praise of his victory could be distinctly heard in the upper stories of the palace.

Though the royal mother occasionally got information about the victory, no mother can be satisfied with mere information.

When Bharat, revered by thirty-two thousand crowned kings feeling a sense of responsibility, made his way into the palace, he eyed his mother who was accompanied by family members at the main gate with a blissful pot.

No sooner had Bharat bent to touch her feet than she embraced him; but she hardly noticed any anticipated glory on his face and zeal and enthusiasm in the activity of the victorious Bharat. Rather, there was gravity caused by the burden of responsibility.

The royal mother was a little dispirited. But sustaining herself, she said -

"Bharat, what is the matter ? "

"Nothing. The royal mother's order has been carried out. Now Bharat's Bharat is integrated."

"But your heart"

"Heart is not a piece of land that can be won by power, glory and under the effect of the virtuous deeds.

A winner of mind assumes not divided continent but the undivided soul."

"What is the matter with you ? Why are you talking incoherently ? "

"What is wrong with me ? Nothing, they are no mere incoherent utterances but the supreme truth ? *It is the assumption of the soul in an integrated form that makes life meaningful.*"

"Do you know, you are the first emperor to enjoy the power of six continents."

"No, mother, I had also been under delusion on the occasion of my victory. When I went to have my name written on the popular rock it was full of names of other emperors on it who had enjoyed rule over the six continents. I had my name written on it by dint of erasing one of the names; only then the fact dawned upon me that the land that I took to be fresh is left-over. I am not an eater of untouched food but of the left-overs.



It was then that I realized the mortality of name. I thought, 'Will my name be there for ever ?

No, never, in future some emperor will erase my name and will have his name written in its place.

Mother, I am an eater of the left-overs."

The royal mother said with firmness "No, never. My Bharat can never be an eater of the left-overs."

Bharat said in an effort to make her understand -

"Mother, facts cannot be fabricated by emotions. Your heart which is brimming with affection for me is unable to accept the truth; Reality and appearance are judged not by passion but by thought."

"The Mother of Bharat can become emotional but not the royal mother. The royal mother knows the meaning of left-overs."

"Can Bharat also know that ?"

"Why not ? Left-overs are acquired by begging, not by strength. He has not got the empire in alms. This can never be called the left-over."

"Animals quarrel over left-over food. Eventually he who wins it, wins it with his might."

"No, it is a harvest of your virtuous deeds ?"

"Left-over food is also a harvest of virtuous deeds. It is not easily available to everyone."

"You are arguing ?"

"Mother, it is hardly a question of argument, but of understanding. Moreover this is not the achievement of my might either; justifiably the empire belongs to Bahubali who had forsaken this land after winning it, and it is me who is prepared to enjoy the empire abandoned by him. There is no match between us."

Am I not still an eater of the left-overs according to your definition ?"

"Blessed are you ! Dear son blessed is your detachment, so long as the sun and the moon continue to exist the world will praise your detachment."

"But, mother, can this also be the truth ?"

"Why not ?"

"Is it detachment ? Can the detachment of Bharat match with that of the sons of Vrishabh like Bahubali and Vrishabhsen ? Please tell me mother ! Please !! Is Vrishabhsen born of you, and who accepted an ascetic life from revered father Vrishabh Deo and became his first Ganadhar ? Is he less fortunate and detached than this Bharat ?

Can this Bharat, an eater of the left-overs, match the detachment and fortune of Vrishabhsen and Bahubali born of Yashaswati Nanda and Sunanda respectively."

"Son...?"

"Mother, your Bharat might not have hold over his attachment, but his knowledge and wisdom can never hoodwink him. Bharat might not be able to give up the emperorhood but he will not feel proud of it and nor will he enjoy it.

Emperorhood is not his glory ; it is his helplessness, mere helplessness."



THE CONVERSION

"Although man enjoys special privileges over animals, he is not completely free from adversities; although animals are bereft of parental property, they have not been subjected to the slavery of traditions. Man known to be civilized, inherits property but he also inherits slavery to conventions.

When I have forsaken the property I inherited and developed no attachment to it, how long can I be fastened in the sectarian shackles ? I should have broken them with the dawn of supreme truth upon me, but strange is the attachment for one's fellow beings that has kept me shackled till today.

Being a member of a particular sect, it is easy to impart knowledge of truth but a revolutionary change in its members cannot be brought about. How complex sectarian feeling is ! Having accepted the fact that they are treading the wrong track, the mere idea of forsaking it shakes their very being. *Though finding the boundaries of an enclosure unbearable, the idea of transgressing them makes the ordinary people tremble.*

I have squandered away so much of my time in dreaming about changing with herds. A lion-like boldness seems graceful on the part of revolutionary truth seekers. Thinking about his fellow beings strait-jackets his boldness.

The followers never stand by; their task is to follow him. I mistook the followers for companions. That is why I have been kept trapped by them against my conscience so far. None is a companion; when I set out alone on my path, the followers will stand out, the true followers will definitely follow me.

Why should I be entangled even by a subtle thread of attachment ? Those that want to follow me let them follow, those that do not let them not. What have I got to lose thus ? I am different from the others and am unique element of consciousness. What have I got to do with foreign matters ?

Today I will tell them everything clearly. There is no need of even telling them. The same old persuasions again; 'Please put off your programme for a few more days.' The list of imaginary adversities will be reeled off - all these things have exhausted me. The valuable moments of manly life have been atrophied in such an entanglement. Now I can no longer bear the burden of these things.

When I need no companion, then why should I tell it to anybody ? Fortunately enough, tomorrow is the auspicious birth anniversary of Lord Mahaveer and luckily I have a picture of Lord Parswanath. So I will throw away the mouth-cover before the picture and declare myself a vowless lay follower of the Digamber Jain Religion.

If I reveal my heart to the people, first of all, they will not be prepared to accept it; and even if they are prepared they will stray into chalking out a long list of programmes ? *Religion of soul should not be displayed but realized.*

This place being sombre, lonely and peaceful matches with my ideas. It seems that the five factors responsible for causing a change are present. The high intensity of passions bespeaks that the time is ripe. The substantively, spatially, temporally and qualitatively convenient affairs reveal the fixed orderliness of change."

The mind of Kanji Swami, a spiritual and effective speaker belonging to the Kohinoor Sthanakvasi Community hailing from Kathiyawad had been constantly

flooded with these ideas. As a result, he did not have a wink of sleep till morning.

Although he did not have a wink of sleep, weariness on account of not sleeping could not be seen on his face; rather there was a special glow. His glowing face distinctly revealed that already some marvellous thing had taken place and was due to take place. *Everyone cannot read the face for it requires a keen intellect to do so.*

• • •

The ideas were translated into action and 'Saint Kanji' was converted to 'Adhyatmik Satpurush Shree Kanji Swami'. The news of conversion spread like forest fire throughout the length and breadth of Kathiyawad and caused commotion in the Sthanakvasi community.

The matter became the talk of the town everywhere, in villages and in cities. Hectic activities began to bring him back by hook or by crook. The entire atmosphere had been terribly charged with excitement. The strokes of tempestuous excitement were at work to violate decorum.



People would come to him in droves; they would preach to him, urge him and threaten him; but they did not affect him because he had not chosen this path without thinking; he had speculated over years and stuck to this track. So far as threats are concerned, they further fortify the decision of great men. As he was prepared to risk his life, who could destabilize him ?

• • •

A group of powerful and reputed persons came to him. It comprised all types of people that had the ability to bring him under their influence or make him deviate in some way or the other. There were some to appease him and also some to threaten him; there were polite as well as arrogant people, there were hardliners as well as softliners.

One of them said "You have not done the right thing. The result would be very serious."

Swamiji said calmly -

"I know better what is right and what is wrong.

As far as the result is concerned, I am no longer unfamiliar with it. I never bother about the result you are talking of; the result of what I have undertaken to do would be the destruction of infinite transmigration. *This birth of mine is meant to destroy the births and not to support any community or faction.*"

Making a dig at it another person said -

"The birth will definitely be destroyed. After all, without food, how can this life subsist ? "

"I have not forsaken my home for the sake of food. At least, I need not mention it to you that there was no dearth of food in my home. *You are talking about food ! For the sake of the elixir I have now received, I can throw away the wealth of an emperor and the magnanimity of the Tirthankar like a piece of straw, not to mention of the community and its greatness ! I have found a way to assume a state of bodilessness; why should I bother about this body ? "*

Threatening him the third one said -

"We will see, you cannot live on mere talks, we will see who comes to you, we shall never let our community go to pieces."

Swamiji's grave and sincere personality was not used to such a language for, so far, he had listened only to his praise but his seriousness assumed the form of overlooking silence and turning the leaves of the Samayasara he was lost in its introspection.

Thinking that the matter had nearly concluded, the fourth one said -

"No, My Lord. They have no knowledge, so they are talking nonsense. Please, don't take it seriously. The matter of changing the community has wildly excited them. So they have lost control over themselves. Don't be offended at what they have said. We shall do exactly what you ask us to do. Read the Samayasara as much as you can and read it out to us too. We shall listen to it and understand it, but don't cast off the mouth-cover. The rest of the clothes have been still retained as they were. Now it is just the question of the mouth-cover."

Kanji Swami, an ocean of kindness, became compassionate at this polite language and in a choked voice said -

"This is not a matter of little significance but it is something very grave. This is a symbol of adopted perverse belief. If you want to understand reality, and if you want to destroy the births in this life, you have to give up the insistence on this. It ceases to be a mere question of a mouth-cover but that of the perverse belief beneath it."

Feeling happy, the fifth one said -

"My Lord ! It is right. This is exactly what we are urging you; give up the belief and retain the mouth-cover. This is only a compromise."

Swamiji said to them firmly -

"There is no such way out. *When the belief has been eradicated, the mouth-cover cannot be retained for a limitless period ? Such is the nature of things. What can*

anyone do ? Now I cannot betray myself any longer. It is not possible for me to bear the burden of that which I neither understand nor trust. It is impossible not only for me, but for everyone who is a man of wisdom."

At this firm decision the sixth one said -

"We have to protect our community, come what may."

With the sense of disregard Swamiji said -

"Well, go and protect your community and let me protect my soul."

At his firm decision and fearless disregard all of them said simultaneously, "Are you adamant about it, to remain unmoved ? "

The words spontaneously overflowed from the mouth of Swamiji :

"Unmoved ! Unmoved !! Unmoved !!! . . . "



THE LITTLE FOOLISHNESS

People were jealous of Pandit Sumatichand and Seth Dhanpat Rai, because of their true friendship. Seth Dhanpat Rai found himself uncomfortable in the absence of Pandit Sumatichand and he in Rai's. Now they had been nearly retired from their business, even when they had been in business, they used to take meals together for, at least, fifteen days in a month. It made no difference who had his meals where, but it was a must for them to have their meals together, and since this had worked out naturally, the activity was totally delinked from any invitational formality. But their wives took strong exception to the fact that they should have been informed, at least, that would not have kept them waiting without taking their food. But the two friends were helpless. They would have definitely informed their wives, if their meeting had been pre-planned.

If the Sethji was not at home then he would definitely be at the scholar's home, it was certain; one could ask anybody. The same was certain with the scholar. If he was out he would be at Sethji's house. None felt the need of searching them at any other place.

Their friendship might be anything for their families but it became a boon for society. Their joint reputation could attract the majority of people towards them. Whatever decision for the welfare of society this couple would take, it was in no time translated into action. They found no stumbling blocks in coming out with decisions regarding any good deed. They would never argue for the sake of argument, and the scholar accepted what Sethji proposed and vice-versa.

...

So far, the things were going well, but one day, when the scholar arrived at Sethji's house at his usual time and knocked at the door, none came to open the door for some time. It was not because there was nobody inside, but because the noise of shouting inside was deafening. It looked as if there was a quarrel going on inside. This might be the reason why his knocking at the door went unheeded.

The scholar stopped a little while, at the door and the noise inside attracted his attention and what he heard was that Sethji was rebuking his wife in a high pitched voice. Sethji went on warning them that if they spoke so again they would be in distress. He was saying—

"Don't you know what kind of a relation I have with the scholar ? We are one soul inhabiting two bodies."

When the scholar heard his name he grew concerned. He understood that they were talking about him. He thought "What has made the richman mention his intensity of intimacy with me to his family members ? Are they not 'familiar with the nature' of their relationship? There must be something wrong." Thinking like this, he stopped knocking at the door and diverted his attention to what was going on inside. By lending his ears, he was trying to listen to the whispers of the ladies.

He could not make out much of their speech, but he inferred that something had been lost and Sethji had lost his temper at the scholar's name being mentioned in that connection. He thought that he had better go back in such a state of affairs.

As a matter of fact, his family members did listen to the knocking on the door, but as there was excitement none turned his attention to it.

This was exactly what Sethji wished that the door should be opened when the dust had settled, for he

thought that the scholar might have arrived. When the situation returned to normalcy, Sethji opened the door, but there was none. So he made his way towards the scholar's house.

• • •

The scholar had left that place, but he did not make his way towards his house. He kept wandering hither and thither for some time in excitement; when he was restored to normalcy, he thought he had better go to Sethji as he did everyday at that time. He thought that the seeds of doubt would soon sprout. He went to Sethji's house but he was out. On enquiry, he came to know that he had just gone out. He might have gone to the scholar's home. Like within him, he found gloominess without in the house as well, but he kept waiting for Sethji. When he noticed the swollen eyes of the richwoman sitting beside him he asked her -

"What is the matter with you ? Aren't you well ?"

"I am well. But...?"

"But what...?"

"I don't know what is wrong with my husband, he gets wildly excited over trivial things ?"

"Have you had any talks today ?"

"Talks, mere talks would have made no difference. It had slipped from my mouth and he blew up. He spoke anything that came to his mind. I have put up with that in the past but now it is beyond my..."

As she was narrating, she broke down. Consoling her, the scholar said -

"What was the matter ?"

"Nothing serious. The younger son of my elder brother was playing here yesterday. All of a sudden his gold bracelet disappeared from one of his hands. We

were looking for it. When the brother asked me who had visited the house that day, it unconsciously slipped from my mouth that no one had visited except the scholar. Soon he blew up and started raving. I kept quiet, otherwise anything would have happened.

I never accused you of lifting it. It never crossed my mind that simply by uttering your name I would land myself in such terrible trouble.

The brother asked me and I simply told him unintentionally. What difference would it make whether I mentioned it or not? Other people would have accused. He may stop my accusing but how can he prevent the society from doing so?"

She went on talking about irrelevant things for a long time but when scholar heard the pin-point of the matter, he started feeling giddy; he could not hear any more. All that he heard at the time of knocking at the door became contextually clear.

The richwoman stopped talking, and when the scholar became aware of himself, he said, being free from tension -

"Have you lost one bracelet or both?"

"Lost only one, the other one...."

As she was saying, she fetched and showed it to the scholar. She said -

"Last year we got them made of four tolas of gold. The goldsmith who lives next doors has made them. He is the only person who makes this kind of design, and we never go to any other person."

She was continuously speaking. The scholar took that bracelet in his hands and observed it minutely and left saying -

"It seems that Sethji might have gone to my house."

...

When Sethji went to the scholar's house he came to know that the scholar had gone to his house. This information soon led him to the conclusion that it was none other than the scholar who had kept knocking at the door. He unsuccessfully went on searching him here and there for long enough. He was tired and went back to his house as if someone had returned after performing the funeral rites of his kith and kin.

That was the gloomiest day in their lives. A few days passed in this way, and there was no meeting between them. Their dispirited condition caused gloominess in their homes as well.

On the fourth day, the scholar came to Sethji's house and handing over the bracelet to him he said —

"I have found it in one of the pockets of my coat. It seems that while the child was playing near me, he might have put his hands into my pocket, and the bracelet might have dropped inside. Please give it to the richwoman and let that make her happy and put an end to the family quarrel."

• • •

Sethji was non-plussed to see the bracelet and to hear his words. He had never imagined that the things could develop in such a way. His conscience was not ready to accept the credibility of the event. He was thinking whether he was dreaming or the things were really happening. The recovery of the bracelet brought him no happiness at all but it caused him unbearable pain because he was going to lose a friend who seemed more precious than the glory of an emperor. This pain was so terrible that he could not put up with it and he fainted.

The scholar also found himself unable to face the situation but when Sethji fainted, his way was clear. At once he left the spot and made his way home, looking downwards with a heavy heart.

It was beyond his imagination to leave Sethji in such a critical condition, but his wakeful wisdom compelled him to take that step.

...

Still they were leading their lives but they were as good as meaningless. They continued to drag their living dead bodies. The vigour and vitality had gone. Those that would not take them to be old till yesterday, found them grown old within a day. Now life was cumbersome for them. It was a part of their everyday life to pray to God to end their lives as soon as possible.

The things were the same and were going on in the same way, but social activities got a deathblow. Everything came to a grinding halt. There was no cleanliness maintained in the temples as it used be in their time; none was there to look after the dispensary and the religious school. The festivals came round and went uncelebrated. No enthusiasm was witnessed anywhere around. Nobody knew why they were not getting encouragement and inspiration which once they were getting from them.

On account of his disturbed psychological condition, none in the house would say anything to him, but they used to whisper among themselves which Sethji happened to hear.

One would say - "He was posing to be a great scholar, but he had no hold on himself."

Picking up the argument another would say - "No, no, my brother it isn't like that; he didn't lift it deliberately. The child himself dropped it into his pocket; he returned it the moment he came to know it, otherwise..."

As he said it, there would be a burst of laughter, and all the family members would join him. And Sethji had a terrible experience as if the floor beneath his feet had given away.

Again someone would say - "Look, how he cooked up the matter ! He poses himself to be a great scholar. Even he has no wisdom to make up a story. It never occurred to him that who would believe him."

The second one would say - "What could he have done ? When he thought he couldn't get away with it he returned it - otherwise he would have been sent to jail."

The third one would say "We would have sent him to jail even after returning it. But we were afraid of father. The hollowness of the scholarship would have been revealed."

At this, the fourth one would say - "Father gave him undue respect. Thought him to be a God. If anyone said anything against him, father use to fire us right in his presence as if we had no commonsense. We would keep quiet, otherwise..."

No sooner had he finished than another one would say, "He had cast a spell on father otherwise he would never have run after him like a madman. Now he is keeping quiet."

...

The news slowly circulated in every nook and corner of the village. People started talking about it at every place. Thus, their life became still more miserable.

Such talks provoked the wrath of Sethji to a breaking point but there was no way before him. If he too had been angry with the scholar, he would have joined them, but what could he do since his conscience never took all that for granted. He made up his mind to meet the scholar, at least once all alone.

The things with the scholar were much worse than with Sethji because it was his act of stealing that had come to light : Yet he still had his learning as a prop to live by. Now his world was made of literature and

scriptural writings. Although the event had buffeted him badly, yet he reaped one advantage out of it. Now he would no longer squander away his time in useless social activities and also in carrying out futile gossips. He got a golden opportunity for studying and thinking, otherwise in keeping with his nature he would never have free time all through his life.

His family members often asked him but his reply was the same that he had given to Sethji. People neither believed his words nor his act of stealing the bracelet. They developed an indifferent thinking that the disease had no remedy.

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When one day suddenly the richman came to his house, each failed to recognise the other because they were physically reduced to half their size within a few months.

Neither was surprised at their inability in recognising each other. They had lived together for a long period and still they had not understood each other rightly. If it had been so, Sethji would never have gone to the scholar to find out the truth. When his family members were unable to understand him, how could the other people understand him ? To know is easy but to understand is difficult; because understanding has depth but knowing does not have that depth.

The richman asked him even indirectly, but he could not make him disclose more than what he said when he handed over the bracelet. It was as if his was the heart of the matter. *He had come across a lot of strange happenings in the scriptures; now he was himself undergoing the experience of them.*

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The event had taken place in the beginning of winter. But even the biting cold of January had not made the atmosphere so cold as the event had made the social

atmosphere cold and dull. The Panchayat was nearly dissolved. The cries of the orphans went unheard. There was nobody to find solutions to the problems of the widows who were in distress. The social activities had come to a grinding halt.

Time was passing as usual – summer followed winter. The tree that suffered amputation from its roots starts turning dry even in winter, not to say of summer. It is only the rainy season that provides a little support to it.

As the summer came to an end, the downpour gave solace to people by way of providing them coolness. Thirst of the earth was quenched and it became excited.

The drains were being cleaned up everywhere. The dirt and rubbish filled in them and there was no room for water to flow. It made their cleaning up not only necessary but also compulsory, otherwise water would flow inside the houses.

The drains of Dhanpat Rai's house were also being cleaned up. It was drizzling and boys were rejoicing in the shower. The surrounding atmosphere turned so pleasant that old men were behaving like children. They would come out to see whether the servants were cleaning the drain properly or just passing their time, and in the very process, they too enjoyed the shower; but this pleasant atmosphere could not liberate Dhanpat Rai from his gloominess. He kept muttering in his room. It was difficult to say whether he was performing prayers or burning with jealousy. He was muttering something.

But when he heard the voice 'bracelet', 'bracelet', he rushed out. So many times he had uttered the word 'bracelet, bracelet' in his dreams that the word 'bracelet' had become a great hymn for him, and so it was natural for him to rush out hearing the voice 'bracelet'. But what he saw was unthought of, marvellous, and as a matter of fact it was a boon for him.

What he saw was the bracelet that had been lost, instead of which the scholar had given another one, explaining that he had found it in his pocket. The servant went on shouting –

"I have found the bracelet, I have found the bracelet."

Everyone was staring at it in great surprise.

Now they had three bracelets. The matter became clear to everyone. They were silent. They had no explanations to give. There was silence everywhere. Sethji with his hands on his forehead was sitting looking down.

The sky became clear and the downpour had stopped. The doubts were also dissipated like the clouds. The sky over the village was also clear but the streams of tears from the eyes of the people were still flowing. The news got around the village, and people were coming in droves and were thronging there.

• • •

When Dhanpat Rai became attentive, took the three bracelets and made his way towards the house of the scholar. The relatives as well as the people of the village followed him. It turned out to be a silent procession.

They went to him and all the three bracelets were laid in front of him, and everything became clear to him. They kept looking at each other for a long moment but none said anything; the quiet and the dead silence was revealing everything that could never be expressed through words. The scholar rose to his feet and fetched the fourth one and kept it in the middle of the three bracelets.

People had listened to his nectar-like discourses all through their lives, but to what extent it had proved effective was known to them only now. This event thrilled their inner hearts. Breaking the silence with tears in his eyes Sethji said –

"Why have you done this ?"

Replied the scholar peacefully and seriously -

"I did what I thought right; this was the only way I found to get out of that unfortunate situation though it was well known to me that it could not lessen your suffering. I too suffered, but I kept everything within me otherwise it would have precipitated such consequences that might have made our lives painful and full of suffering. Now let it be forgotten."

He had hardly finished when Sethji's wife who was deeply filled with anguish, started saying -

"Oh God ! My little foolishness has caused such a great disaster. Being disrespectful to one enlightened being not only have I earned the sin of being disrespectful to infinite enlightened beings but also disturbed my husband's peace. I made his life painful."

The people sporadically talked about it for a few days, and then everything returned to normalcy, but the scholar's indifferent feeling was not converted into enthusiasm. The richman too no longer enjoyed his company as he had done before. *Physical injury can be cured but spiritual one can never be.*

Now there is neither the richman nor the scholar, but this story is being narrated and will be narrated as long as grandmothers relate stories to their grandchildren.



UNTYING THE KNOT

"Look here ! I am handing over to you these two rubies, keep them safely."

Uttering these words, Seth Jawahar Lal, a renowned jeweller of Jaipur, laid only one ruby in his wife's hand. She was struck with surprise and said -

"Two ? Where are the two ? This is only one. Aren't you well ? "

"Well, you are talking about my health, how can I be well now ? I will be happy as soon as I wind up my life."

"Why are you talking like that ? Everything will be alright. The doctor was telling me."

"Don't take the doctor's words seriously. They keep repeating the same things until one passes away."

"It seems that you are hopeless to the hilt. On account of the senseless worries you have landed yourself in this miserable state of affairs."

"I am not worried about myself but about you and about this ruby."

"After all why should we worry about these rubies? You have earned thousands of rupees and also

* In Hindi language proper names of members of the masculine gender have 'Lal' as their ending which means 'Ruby'. Chetanlal is a proper name that means 'Living Ruby'. Now the author has pun on the word 'Lal'. Thus one is a ruby and the other one is Chetanlal himself. Thus naturally both are valuable in their respective spheres. When the richman told his wife that he was handing over to her two rubies, as a matter of fact, he meant the two rubies in the above mentioned way, which his wife was unable to understand. The sense of this punning runs throughout the story.

squandered away thousands. This is like mere dirt on the hand. You will again earn thousands of rupees when you have recovered from your illness. Is there anyone as keen and experienced as you in Jaipur ? "

"Stop talking like that. What does it mean? *Experience and wisdom have nothing to do with earning and squandering. They are regulated by virtue and vice.* If it is not so, do tell me. I had nothing when I came to Jaipur, neither shelter, nor capital, nor experience. Then I did not have commonsense as much as I have now. I was successful on whatever I laid my hands. Mere touch of my hand would turn soil into gold then and now it is quite the other way. Where have experience and wisdom gone ? What an inexperienced and untamed man earned was squandered away by an experienced and wise man in no time. Now only these two rubies are left with me which I am handing over to you. I desire to die peacefully."

The richwoman was frightened at this and said, "Has your sight been really affected. Repeatedly, you are saying two rubies for one only."

She was very much afraid of it. It had been heard by her that one's sight became weaker as the end neared. He perceives two in one and four in two.

But neither his wisdom nor his sight was perverted, yet he was on the brink of breathing his last.

He called his only son Chetanlal who was a late born child and placing his hands on his head, he went on saying —

"Listen ! When this boy grows up give him this ruby. I have bought it by selling out the rest of my property with an idea that he would not fall short of capital to run his business. Keep it in mind; it is the costliest. I think he can run a business properly with the money he will get by selling it. Bear in mind...."

While he was saying those words he breathed his last. His voice was discontinued. His neck fell to one side but his eyes were wide open.

...

A man does not possess the patience to put up with sufferings and to enjoy happiness that a woman possesses. In addition to the ups and downs in the financial condition that Jawaharlal could not bear, she also bore with equanimity the death of her husband. She was handed over the responsibility of bringing up her son and she devotedly committed herself to that task. She had no money. The richman had squandered away all he had earned in his life. He had also directed her to hand over to the son the ruby that he bought with the savings.

It was her responsibility along with her son to safeguard this ruby also.

She meekly accepted the things as they were, thinking that it was her destiny. *Men rarely possess the potentialities of women to struggle with misfortunes.*

The richwoman who once had servants at her disposal and had never done physical labour, took up sewing and embroidery and prepared papads. She would never beg before anybody. She brought up her son with full devotion. She herself would take a poor meal but she never made her son want anything.

...

Time slipped away fast. Now the son was grown up. One day he said to his mother "Mother, now I don't want to continue my study. I want to work."

Placing her finger on her mouth, the mother said -

"My son, don't talk like that. A son of a jeweller never prefers service. Yet you have not completed your

studies. So far you have passed class X. Complete your study first then...!"

"No mother, this is not possible, when a jeweller's wife does physical labour why can his son not be a servant? What else can I do? I can no longer put up with your plight."

"Son, don't be a servant. Run a business."

"Business! Mother, without capital how can I run a business?"

"Son, no, we are not short of capital."

Having said this, she went in. He was surprised at her words. He failed to make out as to what his mother was saying.



After a little, she came out with a dusty bag in her hand and began opening it before him. After removing one layer after another she found a shining ruby. Handing it over to her son, she said -

"Son, this is the most valuable ruby. Your father gave it to me and told me to give it to you when you were grown up and became wise, you would start a business with the capital you would get by selling it."

Handing over it to you, I become free from the burden of his debt. By selling it you can get money and start a business efficiently and earn name and fame like your father and be successful."

...

He showed it everywhere in the market but none was ready to pay the expected price. So both the son and the mother came to a conclusion that they had better sell it in Bombay. They would get its proper price there.

• • •

When he reached and tried at the jewellers' market in Bombay the merchants there too set the same price. Chetanlal was unfamiliar with the style of the dealings of jewellers and he also failed to hide his inexperience in the area. Some agents were after him from the beginning. When he got rid of them some evil persons started dogging him.

He became alert and thoughtful at the dubious dealings of the persons around. Shri Manikchand, the owner of the oldest shop 'Hiralal Pannalal' a jeweller, was constantly keeping an eye on all goings-on. Finally, he sent for a clerk to call after him.

When he tried to show his ruby to Manikchandjee, the latter said affectionately —

"Please be seated. I shall see it. Drink water. A jeweller's deal cannot be carried out in a hurry."

With his affectionate treatment he won his heart.

As he wanted to go back after having sold it, so he drank water and showed it to him. The richman took it in his hands and saw it and asked him —

"Where are you coming from ? "

"I am coming from Jaipur."

"Who is your father ? What is the name of your firm ? "

"I am the son of Shri Jawaharlal, who was a jeweller."

"The son of Jawaharlal ! He used to stay here. He is one of my close friends. He has not been coming since

long. Nor has he sent any message. Why did he not come? Is he not well?"

...

Seth Manikchand looked as if he had receded into the past. He remembered the days when Jawaharlal used to come to Bombay and as a result there would be hectic activities in the market. His mood would control the index of the market.

Now, he could neither look at the ruby in his hand nor at Chetanlal seated before him. Who knows what he got lost in? He became conscious when Chetanlal told him about the sad demise of his father and he went on expressing his sorrow in several ways and raking up the past, he started asking him many things.

When he came to know everything he became thoughtful. He kept seeing Chetanlal and sometimes minutely judging the ruby. He began reflecting on the nature of the world and on the transitoriness of this mundane life alternately. Sometimes he lamented over the misfortune of Jawaharlal and sometimes on his own.

Chetanlal was reading appearance and disappearance of different emotions on his face, but he found himself unable to fathom the depth of those emotions.

When a great deal of time passed like this, he became discouraged and breaking his chain of ideas in the middle, he asked - "Oh richman! How much will you pay for this?"

He said sincerely —

"I do not have as much wealth as to pay for this. I am ready to sacrifice all that I am in possession of, but I am not that lucky."

Chetanlal found his words very pleasant but at the same time they looked absurd. He could not make out it

that in the market the merchants set its price so low and this man, the owner of immense property and renowned jeweller, was setting its price so high. After all what would be the mystery ?

He thought that the richman might be having dig at him, but the richman's seriousness did not allow him to think like that.

When he was unable to get at it all, he mustered up courage and said -

"What is your order for me ?"

"Order? No, I can't order you. If you wish I can give you a piece of advice."

"Please, say it."

"Now it is off season. You will not be able to get its proper price. So, you have to wait for a few days when the rains are over, the merchants will come, and you will get its proper price."

"Is it not possible to stay till then ? "

"Why ? "

"To be frank, we have"

Hardly had he finished when the richman spoke out—

"Dear son ! Don't worry about it. I shall see to it."

"No, this is not possible."

"Why not ?"

"I know you are the son of Jawaharlal. You don't want to be under anybody's obligation. Isn't it ?"

"No"

"No, no, I know it all. Think of me as your father for six months."

"What are you talking about ? "

"I am right. After all, I am not fortunate like your father."

"Fortunate like you ? "

"Let it be. Return to me everything you borrow, after selling the ruby. Being a friend of your father, at least, I have this right on you."

The richman kept the ruby inside a safe and locked it and he gave the key to Chetanlal and said -

"Right now, send this key to your mother by registered post. Put your signature on the slip and seal the safe."

At his affectionate behaviour Chetanlal could not speak out and carried out his advice as if he had been hypnotized.

The richman had arranged for his lodging and board and afterwards ordered the workers that they should not sell or buy anything without consulting Chetanlal.

The time swiftly passed. Soon the six months were over. Chetanlal carried out the commercial transactions of lacks of rubies. Now he had developed into an expert jeweller.

The season was on. The merchants began trickling in from outside. The market was in full swing. Thinking it to be a proper opportunity, Chetanlal said to the richman -

"Now it is time to sell the ruby."

"Now I think it is not necessary for me to sell it. You are expert now. Fetch the key from your mother and sell it."

Having got the permission, he immediately wrote to his mother to send him the key, which he received within a period of eight days. At the instructions of the richman

he broke the seal and opened the safe. He took out the ruby and was non-plussed to see it. It was a grain of glass. Tears started flowing from his eyes.

The richman's shop was situated on the seashore. He at once threw the piece of glass into the sea and started weeping.

Soon there was dead silence in the shop. The people understood nothing. Pacifying him with his hand placing on his head the richman asked, "What is the matter?"

He started shouting -

"You cheated me, told lies and landed me in debt -"

Seeing all this the people started talking amongst themselves. One of them said - "The richman has changed his ruby."

Another one said - "How is it possible ? On his own hand he kept it, locked it and sent the key to his house and sealed the safe and he himself has opened it."

The third one said - "This was all sham. Everything is possible these days. Despite keeping it sealed the things will disappear."

The fourth one said- "Where did it disappear ? "

The fifth one said - "It has been exchanged. What difference does it make whether the things have disappeared or are exchanged."

Digging at it the sixth one said -

"Had it disappeared the thief would have been caught. Everything has been manipulated in such a tactful manner that neither should he be caught and nor should the wealth be missed."

• • •

Here everyone was talking about it. There the richman who was aware of everything tried to make him understand and said -

"What is a lie ? What is fraud ? What is a loan ?"

Chetanlal said impatiently -

"You told me that this piece of glass was the costliest and by paying thousands of rupees for six months you made me a debtor. Now how can I pay your debt ?"

"Foolish boy ! I had called Chetanlal the costliest. Now tell me, one who can differentiate between genuine rubies and spurious within a brief period of six months, is he not invaluable ? Your father, who carried out the business of stones throughout his life was not able to judge ruby you judged with the experience gained in six months. Do you understand your potentialities ?

So far everyone has judged the lifeless rubies, not the living Chetanlal. I judged Chetanlal and told his value."

"Why didn't you told me clearly at that time ?"

"Had I cleared it, you would not have believed it. *So long as one is not able to judge, borrowed knowledge will be of no avail.* Had you believed it, it would have disappointed you and as a result you would have retreated to make efforts. You would never have become a jeweller."

The fact unearthed by others will not prove as beneficial as by oneself. Time has also its own importance.

When Chetanlal became normal he asked -

"My father who was so experienced, after all how did he commit such a mistake ?"

"Intellect works in keeping with fate. When one falls on evil days even the minds of intellectuals become perverted. What you are thinking now entangled me that day. But whatever has turned out has turned out well. The same delusion has sustained you and your mother till today. Without it your mother would have broken down."

"In spite of knowing all this why did you call my father fortunate and yourself unfortunate ?"

"That was right and still I take it to be true."

"Why and how ?"

"One who has got a son like you in comparison to an issueless person like me, is definitely fortunate. But if you want, you can make me fortunate and clear the debt."

"How can I make you fortunate ? I want to get rid of the debt. Is there any way to do so ?"

"Way is there but I won't tell you."

"Why ?"

"If you do not accept it what then ?"

"Why not ?"

"If so, then promise me."

"I promise you."

"I would like to buy you paying all of my property. I want to make you an heir-apparent of my property. The idea crossed my mind the day I saw you. And the idea has now become intensified. Will you accept it ?"

"But you never told me about it."

"I told you many times; if you couldn't understand, what can I do ?"

"When ?"

"Have I not said that I could not pay off the cost of this ruby even by handing over all of my property ?"

"So you said."

"Thus, I was estimating the value of Chetanlal."

All the events of the past became clear to him. Now he was thinking that *one could not get at the mystery of an enlightened man's saying. Even we can't imagine the depth of their utterances.*

Who knows the worth of persons like Chetanlal who wander in streets and are turned out at every step. The entire world is after lifeless matter. Is there any family that is without a Chetanlal ? There is no dearth of Chetanlals but definitely there is dearth of such persons who can understand them and guide them. We are ourselves Chetanlals but we do not recognize the fact.

To be so is a matter of great significance, but understanding and realising it is also important. I am myself a mass of knowledge and an embodiment of happiness but without knowing this take myself to be a pauper.

If we want to annihilate deprivation of spiritual knowledge and spiritual happiness, we have to know ourselves, realize ourselves and discriminate the self from the others. It means we have to give up wrong beliefs.

Kabir has rightly said —

Everyone has a ruby,
And there is none without it;
One is deprived of it,
Because he does't know that he has it.



THE MYSTERY THAT IS WOMAN

As a man's face is an index to his inner self, so is the village well a reflection of the character of the village. The way a palmist reads the temperament and traits of a person's character from the lines of his palm, in the same way gossips at the village well give us an insight into the character of the village. The village well is a veritable open court of women.

As the ropes tied round utensils to be dipped in the well, run fast through the groves carried out by use, in the same way the tongues of the women at the well run in groved circumstances. The cunningness and the strategies employed in the receiving and the dissemination of dialogues is par excellence, superseding even that used by agencies employed for such work. The sound understanding of human nature that is in evidence in these woman water-carriers cannot be seen even in graduate journalists manufactured by universities.

A village well is in itself a wonderfully strange place, but if it is near a footway so much the better. The women at the well take no time in understanding that the traveller's request for water is not motivated by thirst, but by a curiosity to know what is going on. They entangle him in their seemingly innocent net of words from which he cannot easily disentangle himself and the women derive great pleasure out of the other's misfortune.

A woman of such a village well could not help being surprised when she saw a herd of camels in the distance, with piles books loaded on their backs. On the first camel sat a tri-marked scholarly Pundit, and behind him was a caravan of book-laden-camels. When the rider's camel stopped at the village well pretending to be thirsty,

the woman could not contain her curiosity. Bringing him water to drink, she asked -

"Oh tri-marked merchant ! Where are you from, and what goods do you carry ?"



Laughing at her innocence, one said "Does the Pundit appear to be a merchant to you ? He is not a merchant, he is a scholarly Pundit, the king of Pundits."

The woman said with extreme indifference -

"May be he is. But what goods does he carry ? We are interested in the goods."

"Do you call them goods ? They are not goods but they are scriptures. They are written by the Pundit."

"What is the name of these scriptures ?"

All of them said in one voice -

"The Mystery that is Woman."

"Oh!" she said in surprise.

When they saw that the woman was impressed, they started praising the Pundit and the woman was overwhelmed.

She said with extreme humbleness, in a voice of submission and respect that she would feel miserable if such a great scholarly spiritual Pundit passed by their village without being honoured by their hospitality. She further pressed them to have lunch at her house along with the great Pundit. She would do whatever she could and would honour the Pundit with gifts befitting his status. She pleaded to get an opportunity to see this great spiritual man and to benefit from his genius.

• • •

When they saw her extreme devotion and sense of worship they took her to the Pundit. She bowed in respect as to a god. What more does a Pundit need ?

Praise is such a weakness of the human character that the highest are unable to withstand it. Those who are not even melted by the fire of criticism are affected by the sweet coolness of praise.

* This great Pundit, who had pondered on books like a university bookworm, had read about woman psychology, written about woman psychology, but had never tested it. How could he when his knowledge taught him to think of them as gateways to hell, when his intelligence prevented him from even looking at a woman for she was evil ? In his view, only books were to be studied and so he had studied them extensively.

When this Pundit who had not even looked at a woman heard the sweet praising words from the tender throat of the woman, he did not take long yield to her request.

He accepted her invitation, and stopping his caravan there, followed the beautiful woman's footsteps submissively.

• • •

The Pundit, an expert in the art of understanding the augury, was very hopeful of his future because it was

considered auspicious to see a woman carrying a pitcherful of water, and specially when she was a married woman.

The Pundit was overwhelmed by the fact that he had an extensive effect on the masses; this was an example of it. Immersed in such thoughts he soon reached her house; he was made to sit on a pedestal and was worshipped with incense and earthen lamps. He was asked to take rest while the woman prepared the lunch.

On one side the Pundit was taking deep dips into the character of the woman and on the other was the illiterate woman engrossed in her household chores.

• • •

After having finished most of the cooking, the woman came back to fan the meditating Pundit; she asked in these humble words -

"Oh mighty one ! Have you written all these yourself..."

She was not able to complete her sentence when the Pundit assumed a preaching tone -

"Yes, I have written them. I have thrown light on the various aspects of the character of a woman. I have psychologically tested the characters of Kaushalya and Kaikai, Sita and Surpnakha, Radha and Kubja, Mandodari and Manthara.

What is not there in them ? There is nobility and control, frivolousness and cunningness, love and the acting of love. I have tried to delve deep into their innermost recesses and lay them bare before everyone's eyes. What more is there to say —

"The fate of man and the character of woman is not known even to God, not to speak of man."

This learned treatise will prove to be a question-mark on the truth of the above saying."

The Pundit was showing off his learning in a very fluent sermon and his only audience, the lady of the house, listened to it and was overwhelmed.

When the king of pundits took a pause to breathe, the woman found an occasion to put him a small question-

"My Lord, I presume you are a sublime scholar ?"

"Yes, that I am. I have not silvered my hair in the sun. My life has been spent in unearthing the difference between the soul and the supreme soul. To dissolve ourselves in that supreme soul is our main object and so I know every throbbing vein of it."

"Oh, my Lord, do souls also have veins ?"

The Pundit laughed at her foolish curiosity but addressing her tenderly, he said -

"Daughter, you will not understand. The soul doesn't have veins but to understand the veins means to go to the depth of the matter."

"We all know that the soul has been called immortal in the *Gita* and it is called impure in the *Gommatsar* and pure-intellect in the *Samayasar*. A lot has been said in the scriptures but, my Lord, what is the soul like ? You must have seen it."

"Yes, I have. I have seen everything in the scriptures, I have spent my whole life looking at them..."

...

No one knew how long the sermons lasted, but they were surprised to hear loud knocking at the door. The lady of the house said fearfully -

"My Lord, we are doomed !"

The unconcerned Pundit said -

"Why, what has happened ? Who is knocking at the door ?"

"My short-tempered husband; who else ? He is always angry; we are doomed, I had bolted the doors to prevent dogs and cats from coming in, but I fear he has heard us and grown suspicious."

"Suspicious of what ? We have not said anything that he should not have heard."

Trembling with fear she said, "My Lord, you are an expert of woman character but I think you are unaware of a man's nature. Will it not be enough for a man to merely see his wife locked up with another man ? He will naturally be provoked."

You and I have sat here so long behind closed doors. Will an Indian husband ever be able to bear it ?

A great godly man like Ram born in this soil had to forsake his wife Sita because she had stayed at Ravan's house for some time. What evidence did Sita have to prove her chastity ?

Then, my husband is not Ram. He is the father of Parshuram as far as wrath is concerned. I fear something terrible.

Whatever might happen to me is bearable but I am concerned about what will happen to you.

The wretch will beat me, kill me, what more ? He will not drive me from home because he is not Ram. Ram had many wives but he has only one; where will he go without me ? I am concerned about you. He will not leave you alive.

I remember the day when such a thing had happened. His real brother - my own brother-in-law had locked the door and we were gossiping inside. I had opened the door at his first call but he was so angry that he killed him. I had pleaded but he did not listen to. I begged for his life, but his heart did not melt even for his own brother. In the end, I had to bury his dead body in

this very courtyard. He didn't leave me either but gave me such a beating that I was confined to bed for months. My veins still ache."

...

As she went on drawing a dreadful picture, the Pundit grew more and more fearful. He was wet with perspiration. He could not utter a word; his tongue stuck to his palate. And outside, the voice of a man and the knocking at the door incessantly grew louder.

Seeing the Pundit terrified, she said, "Quickly my Lord, hide in this box. There is no other way out."

"What ? In this box...?"

"Yes, in this box. You will have to sit here about an hour. After taking his meals, he will go to the fields; I will take you out then."

The Pundit was in a fix and even before he could think she took his hand and pushed him into the box and said -

"Look at the brutality of men. They themselves can have different relations with different women; if they even see their woman talking to another man they become mad. Then they do not stop to think that women are made of the same flesh and blood as men are."

She locked the box and swung the key at her wrist and then walking happily, she opened the door.

When the angry husband asked her the reason for the delay she smiled and said -

"There was a man; when I hid him, I opened the door. How could I open it before ?"

The husband was provoked by her seemingly innocent answer and said, "Why are you joking ? Why don't you tell me the truth ?"

The woman grew serious and said "You consider everything I say a joke. Why should I joke with you ? I am telling you the truth. If you don't believe me, see for yourself, he is locked in that box."

And she threw the keys in front of him.

The Pundit saw stars in broad daylight; he could smell some deep strategy in this. He had never imagined such an aspect of womanly behaviour even in his dreams. He was thinking that it does not take long for time and conditions to change. A little while ago he was enjoying a walk in dreamland and now he was imprisoned in hell. Just a moment ago he was worried when he would be free from his hiding, whether he would be free at all or not. So when he heard the tinkling of the keys he saw the possibility of immediate release, but the freedom now was more terrible than the imprisonment. A moment ago, he was restless to get out and now was afraid of it.

This incident of womanly guile made him forget all his learning contained in the books lying on the back of camels. Even in his wildest dreams he had not thought that the writer of books on woman psychology would see it in this form in front of him.

Although the husband could not believe what his wife said, his mind was still rocked by suspicion; was there really someone in the box ? This doubt grew stronger every moment.

When his intelligent mind took control of his doubting heart, it did not take him long to arrive at the conclusion that - so what if there is not, what is the harm in looking ?

To put his decision into practice, he bent to pick up the keys. No sooner had he done this than his wife laughed aloud. He could guess she was making fun of him, and he moved away like a child from a snake.

The husband felt ashamed at his foolishness, and in order to make him feel more ashamed she kept laughing for a long time. When she knew that his ego had been shattered, she expressed herself in angry hateful words-

"Has God made your heart of only atoms of doubt? I have lived in your house for so many years; still you do not have confidence in me; you are now a father of four! What do you think of yourself? You roam here and there, come back home late; and if I take a minute longer to open the doors you make such a hue and cry! If you doubt me so much, why do you keep me with you? Why don't you kill me? You want to see your wife a Sita, but you yourself would like to stay a Ravan.

Oh God, why don't you kill me? I cannot bear it any longer.

"Oh mother, Oh father! Why did you not kill me as soon as I was born. I cannot bear this lack of confidence. I will ..."

And when she started crying loudly, the lion-like husband became like a lamb.

...

Even the sermons of Punditji are not as effective as tears of women. They are so cunning in clothing their language in tears that even great religious men start thinking themselves as evil doers.

That simple, pure hearted farmer husband of her started thinking of himself as a great sinner. Even then, when her dramatic anger did not subside, he steeped himself in despair.

...

The scene changed. The cunning wife took the form of martyred wife and expressed regret at her untimely anger. She begged the mercy of god for having pained her husband's heart.

By her dramatic behaviour she transformed the painful circumstance into one of serenity.

...

The scenes on the stage were changing very fast, and the Pundit's stream of thoughtfulness too was changing quickly. By the time he had analysed and interpreted one scene, it disappeared. The pupils of his eyes could not focus upon the quickly changing emotional scenarios on the stage; sometimes humour, sometimes passions, sometimes warlike, sometimes tearful, sometimes tender, sometimes calm; every emotion came to a fullness. Although everything happened within minutes, yet it did not seem incomplete.

The Pundit had never experienced such a fast speed of life. The woman whom he had thought to be slow moving with elephantine grace, outdid even a jet aeroplane. He was greatly perplexed.

...

The farmer returned to his fields after meals. The woman opened the box and said sarcastically -

"Are these cunning strategies of womanly behaviour mentioned in your books ?"

Wiping beads of perspiration, the Pundit said -

"No, I have seen all this for the first time."

"No ? Then tear all your books off, burn them. The women you have characterized do not belong to this world; they are fancies of poets; they are born in the emotional palaces of ascetics and become puppets in the hands of writers. The repartee of the tender tongue, its freshness, impishness and cunning develop only by living among these cruel men.

The valour and the courage that we have are not to be found in your imaginary woman."

Now the illiterate brave woman was sermonising, and the spiritual scholar sat in a fearful, humble form like a child in his first standard.

When her sermon was over, the ashamed Pundit said —

"Then all that was not true, was not a fact ? Was it only a drama ?"

"It was drama and also the truth. Although it was a drama, it was the truth, and the truth was dramatised."

"Oh mother ! I do not understand what you want to say."

"Now you address me with respect; and from daughter I have become mother."

"Yes, I think so. When I came, you looked daughter-like. What happened in the middle made you a romantic heroine and now you are the incarnation of the mother. If I am not dreaming, then this is the truth.

A woman passes through all these stages but it takes her about sixty years to do so. But in the past few minutes you have surprised me by acting it all.

Oh mother ! the truth, the drama, I do not understand anything."

"It was a drama because I was acting, it is the truth because my husband could not detect any falsehood; I had no time to tell him and this was the only way to test your learning."

"Then are you a writer; have you written any drama."

"No."

"But you just said that you had."

"Yes, this I did on the spur of the moment. There is no need of a script to enact a drama. Who says that dramas must be written ? If I had told my husband he

would merely have acted and it would have been far away from reality. Acting is acting; there is no truth in it.

If you had known that you were an actor or the audience, you would not have played your part so well nor seen what you saw. Consider this as a comedy, and appreciate the maturing of emotions in it. A drama is a drama till the audience consider it truthful, after that it loses its power of interest.

I am an actress, but I cannot act to the bidding of others. I am an actress, but not for sale, don't act for others; whenever I act I do it for my own pleasure."

"Oh great one ! Today I understand a lot."

"Right, then tell me what you have understood."

"This that what I knew till today was hollow."

"You have understood rightly. I wanted to teach you a lesson. If not a teacher, at least, you proved to be a good student."

"I want to become your disciple from today."

"If this is so then listen to the Convocation Address :—

In order to get the right knowledge books have a specific place, a specific use; but they are not the be-all and end-all. I do not say that we should not study the scriptures, but I would like to stress that one should not be completely dependent upon them. We should utilise our own store of knowledge. Before coming to any final decision about anything, we must not only look to what the scriptures say but we must also ponder over the thing itself; otherwise we will not have the occasion of looking at the material truth.

This becomes even more meaningful in connection with the soul. In order to understand it we have to go through the determined four stages :

To study the scriptures that demonstrate the nature of the soul; Listen to the great spiritual teachers in order to feel it; and to translate it into a concrete idea, we must analyse and introspect about it by the various formulated methods. If one does not go through all these stages, specially of feeling (experiencing) it, all the rest is meaningless.

That is why I say, look, know, and feel before you write."

"Absolutely right."

"All right then, take a bath and finish your ablutions, take your food and go your way."

"No, no. I have to learn a lot from you."

"No, this is not possible. A sign is enough for the understanding. I do not wish to run an institution, but my household."

...

When the Pundit joined his caravan his companions asked him -

"What did you get, my Lord ?"

He replied very briefly -

"A lot; not a lot, but everything."



THE ROOT OF MISERY

Dear friend Shanta,

I received your letter. You asked me why I did not bring him round. But neither you nor I knew the fact that the spiritual cannot be brought round by appeasement. If they are brought round in such a way, then they cease to be spiritual beings.

Common people have these kinds of weaknesses whom a little humour or by shedding tears one can deviate from the path of their duties. But one who is free from these weaknesses is a spiritual being. Unlike ordinary men, they never become quickly excited. They thoughtfully lift their feet; if once they lift their feet they never retreat. Thoughtfulness is not a plaything but it is their life : they lift their feet not just to walk but to march ahead.

Though they lift their feet after a long interval, they do so thoughtfully and advance towards their destination with determination.

What happened at the well on that day is distinctly in my memory. You might have imagined that the same thing would have happened with me that used to happen at the well when Shrikrishna used to broke an earthen pot; but no, all that was an uncontrolled act of adolescence of a spiritual being; but here he was present like a bold and serious "Maryada Purushottam".

Things turned out this way. It was the 'Ashtami night'. The moon was rising. The sound of whistles made by the policemen was often heard. Sometimes a dog gave the impression that it was awake. Sometimes coughing of the old men in the neighbourhood broke the silence of

the dead night, but snoring of the woman in the next door appeared to merge into the silence.

Everything was silent, but the storm was rising in my heart. I was thinking that enough had happened, now it was high time to come out with a final decision. This way such a long life could never be spent. When nobody wanted me ... Nobody spoke with me with decorum, then my patience was stretched to limits.

What can I do ? There is no way before me. Death is the only device to get out of this ruck, but, if life is hard, death too will be far from being easy for me.

I have to choose one of the two - either a rotten life or death...

Life and death started dancing before my eyes. Only these ideas were fleeting in my mind-life or death-death or life.



Eventually, I set out without making any noise. Escaping from the policemen, I was going ahead but was

unable to betray the dog that was in the state of half sleep. It honestly carried out its duty of keeping people alert by barking; but who felt the need of turning their attention to it ? First of all, nobody had listened to it. When it fell on somebody's ears, he changed his side thinking that one would be in distress on account of these dogs; even it is difficult to sleep.

I was going fast and I found myself at the well. Looking above, I was saying with folded hands - "Oh God - Today - I am - in your presence "

Hardly had I completed my words when a voice came from behind-

"Oh you dier in the name of God ! Stop a little while; give thought to what God says."

I looked back and was surprised. The shadow was speaking -

"Don't be afraid of me, I have not come to save you from jumping into the well, but from the terrible well of transmigration. For me, already you have jumped into the well, but I don't want that your invaluable manly life should go futile.

This kind of death will never bring you peace but you have to suffer infinite misery in hell. This is not the actual way to attain happiness, but this is an escape. The indian ladies that look upon Sita as their ideal should keep in mind that a feeling of detachment owing to ill-treatment by her own people meant not suicide but self-realization for her."

"I listened to it, and as a result, my way of thinking changed. Being overwhelmed, I moved ahead to touch his feet but he retreated. Staying at distance, he said -

"Both of us are dead for each other. I too had become free from this labyrinth, though everything was going on smoothly. Your getting inspiration for liberation

has naturally liberated me. On account of my attachment to you I have come to show you the path I myself have chosen. Now you are free, you can choose any way you like."

Oh sister ! What should I write to you ? How much should I write to you ? I appeased him a lot but it had no effect on him. He was like a stone.

I kept saying -

"Please, forgive me once, such an error will never be repeated. Now let us go home; we will live happily, affectionately !"

But he said peacefully -

"Happiness, happiness ! You still dare to call it happiness with which you were perplexed and came to jump into the well; you were struggling like a fish to get out of it.

Think a little bit, the house which we have left, how can we make an entry into it ? That life is impossible, impossible."

I said indistinctly in fear -

"My Lord ! It was you who told me once that you enjoy the right on my body and vice-versa."

"I might have said it, I told quite a bit many times, but you turned a deaf ear to it. It was you who first made the breach of agreement. You think that I have right on your body but how do you have a right to destroy your body like this ? Tell me - do tell me ? Why are you silent ? Have you any explanation ?"

When I was disappointed I said -

"Now, will you not like family life any more ?"

"Oh, never, never, with such an unthoughtful fellow! It hardly matters that you are not a spiritual being, but you are even not a human being, who stooped to sub-human behaviour, who is not considerate to others. It

doesn't matter, but you are inconsiderate to yourself, who has no fear of Hell and Nigod."

"Yes, my Lord ! you have led me out of dark; will you not show me light ?"

I could not say nothing more, and only listened this much -

"Now I am going."

When I awoke, I was thinking that I got nothing from the spiritual being who was so close to me; the man whom society thought to be competent in everything and a torch-bearer, I thought him unfit for me. I became prepared to give up the shelter of his feet that I got; which the society thought a shelter to live.

Sister ! I often remember his words : Man may be great, he may become a spiritual being, the world may touch his feet, but his wife finds in him some or the other shortcoming. She can't accept him to be fit with the purity of heart. She carves out such an idol of her husband in her imagination that no husband has proved genuine on that touch-stone till today.

This non-feasible imagination is the root cause of misery.

Sister ! So far I thought that right wisdom proves fruitful at any time it dawns upon us; but it is of no use if it is not there in time, because what is the use of crying over the spilt milk ?

Alas, when he was with me there was no wisdom. When there is wisdom, he...

Let it be, what is done is done. What can repentance do ?

Please, write to me occasionally,

Yours affectionately,

Karuna

Dear Shanta,

I got your letter, I wrote to you my story at your request. You want to publish the story for the sake of oppressed ladies, but I had no intention to expose my life to others. If a few sensible women get themselves corrected in time, I will think myself blessed.

I allow you to get this story published in any popular magazine.

Yours,

Karuna



Yours affectionately,

Karuna
