

On the Watch-Tower

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Patience is a Spiritual Quality

The ambitious human being wants the whole world to know that he has done better than others. Part of the satisfaction that ambition gives is comparing oneself with everybody else: I have run faster than everybody else and got the Olympic gold medal. But the animal runs fast, unconsciously, and is not trying to impress anybody else.

Competition in this world is the source of enormous evil. In one of the essays of Madame Blavatsky, found in the booklet *Practical Occultism*, she points out how competition in the modern world is the source of evil. This is part of the world in which the illusion of time is strong. Ambition, desire, achievement, all these are expressive of the human mind, under the illusion of time. But in the higher world of the Master it is different; this sense of time does not oppress any of Them. The Masters know how to wait for things to grow according to the flow of nature.

Sometimes people ask: 'Why do they not intervene, and put things right? Can they not remove quickly some of the bad characteristics in the human being?' This is like asking: Why is the small plant not a big tree? If we are not thinking in terms of time, we will just be watching the plant

growing into a tree. We would realize that what we call a bad man will slowly or fast become a good man and we do not have to force him, model him, change him, and do all those things that human beings want to do. So what we call patience is one of the great characteristics which prevails in the world of light, which is the Masters' world.

They know what has happened and what will happen, because everything already exists in eternity. We are imprisoned in time, psychologically, but they live in the eternal.

In *Light on the Path*, this contrast between that world of light and the world of illusion has been repeatedly presented. Four times, we are advised: 'Live in the eternal'. And from that eternal point of view all the activities, particularly the psychological changes and attitudes which exist in the human being, and are based on time, are false. That is why it is *māyā*. Two sentences from *The Mahatma Letters*, written to Sinnett read: 'If any of you is so eager for knowledge and the beneficent power that knowledge confers, he has to be ready to leave your world and come into ours.' This is a serious question. If you want real knowledge, you have to leave your world. 'Let him come by all

means, but as a pupil to the Master, and without conditions.'

Progress in Relationships

The general attitude of the present day is to use everything in Nature for personal satisfaction. This approach seems like 'progress' to many people, but it means that natural systems will be continuously exploited and reduced. 'Successful' human beings want bigger, faster cars, and means of quick transmission which will eventually bring various kinds of problems to mankind. Does this really stand for progress? Progress means more contentment and happiness, better social justice, more personal freedom for every person and so on. This is an important question.

We are wasting a great deal of the limited resources available to us at present. Very soon we shall not have what we want because everything is being used up. Even now, the number of species and varieties in Nature is far below what it used to be. We know definitely that Earth can produce only a limited amount of resources and conveniences. By using these thoughtlessly, and when throwing away a large quantity of things carelessly, we are adding constantly to the problem.

Water, air and other elements which we need, are getting polluted, and they are far less available as days pass. Many people in different parts of the world do not understand the seriousness of using up the resources of the world. Keeping in mind what we think is necessary, can we institute entirely different ideas of what

true development means, not in terms of enjoyment, but based on real wisdom and love? How far can we contain our desires, ambitions and many of the worldly ideas we have about a good life?

The future may hold a new dimension which the human being cannot know at present, unless all the irrelevant factors are eliminated from his life. We have seen how the human being can grow into love, wisdom and beauty, but we do not make any attempt to go behind certain known problems and defects. For example, ambition which is a state of mind more than anything else, works more and more in everyone.

All people who try to preserve the sense of separateness are the same; it is sometimes dormant, but when opportunity offers itself, it becomes active. Therefore we live in this place, the world of struggle and not of peace, of frustration and rivalry and not of hope. Peace is something we cannot grasp as long as we live with false ideas, just as a blind man cannot imagine what it is like to have sight.

We live in a world in which there is a close relationship with everything that exists. In one of his letters, a wise person, a Mahatma, said Nature has built an empire in which there is a magnetic sympathy with everything that exists, even between a most distant star and some person or object here. If this is true, then separateness is a denial of an important truth.

We may progress a great deal in pursuing our illusions, but what happens if we progress fast in the wrong direction?

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We may reach a state which is the opposite of our goal! So the direction is very important and direction has been indicated by those who have proceeded before us. A Master says that illumination has been found by experimentation in all ages. This truth has been stated in different ways, suitable for the time and conditions which exist.

Restraint can be found everywhere in Nature. A coconut tree, for example, is a tree which grows straight up without any leaves, except at the top. There are millions of such coconut trees, without any branches to create a balance, and the tree knows somehow when it must stop; if it grew taller it may not be able to withstand wind and weather. Most non-human creatures know when to stop eating but the human being does not always know. They have to learn, which others do not. Perhaps the question of learning is more important than we realize.

We have to learn not to speak unnecessarily, and how to use the right words in different circumstances. We must not allow our thoughts to run here and there, interfering as it often does with more important duties. If we find anger arising, we have to learn to restrain ourselves and not begin to fight immediately with other human beings.

This is what culture means, and only human beings are capable of it, to put brakes on thought, words and deeds. We can learn to do this by using what we call intelligence, which makes us more capable and more benevolent if we know how to use this power.

Human beings have done horrible things thinking that they were doing good. The Buddha said that we should consider carefully what is really beneficial to everybody, which means to other people, to other creatures, to the atmosphere and to the earth itself.

So if we are concerned with the welfare of all, we can impose restraint on ourselves.

In the present age most people do not like restraint. We have wrong ideas of freedom. So we think we are doing good, when we may be doing wrong. When our nation presumes how another should act or live, is it really good, or does evil continue?

So, we must ask ourselves whether we have the competence to decide what someone else has to do. The natural way is for oneself to grow into goodness which involves chastity and a deep realization that all share in the good. We have to listen, reflect and meditate deeply in the heart about the changes which must occur in our own psychology and in our own consciousness.

The Beginning of Change

We all have relationship with people at different levels. Some are friends, some are higher on the evolutionary journey, some are subordinates, servants, and so on. But it is important to note that the position of each person is formulated by factors other than what we imagine. In some cases a good person may be paying a debt which shapes his karma. In all cases we will be related in one way or another,

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and we have to make the relationship beneficial not only to ourselves but to the other person as well.

The opposite of virtue is considered as vice, but vice is not like virtue at all as it is not part of the Ego or truer self. Vice is the absence of virtue. In all of us virtues of every kind exist, but some are dormant, others make themselves manifest at different times, in different ways. A steady state of virtue or goodness is slowly built in us as the defects are reduced and the virtue shines out more and more.

A time comes when one knows that there is a plan of evolution. Then we begin to change our character because we know that everything is growing but each is at a different stage. The sum of vices is less, when someone comes to know a little bit of the evolutionary plan, for he understands the process better. This is the time when the spiritual path is near. To do better is to understand better the Will of the One Reality. Then the person not only knows but learns to withstand shocks, because of the determination which makes it possible to tread the path. This is the reason why a good person can understand the evildoer, but the evildoer understands very little himself. Little by little, we have more confidence in our real Self. As one of the Upanishad-s says: 'If one is killed and I am the slain, yet am I also the sword of the slayer? None slays or is slain, because all are one. There is no first nor

last, no life nor death, because all are one in Him.'

This is absolutely true, but as humanity has not proceeded far, it is not understood at all by most people. Those who are somewhat ahead, ask themselves what is the purpose of life, of the universe. Some believe that there is no purpose and meaning in our lives, and suffer from not finding it. This is generally part of human life at present. It is only slowly that the human being realizes that what he conceived to be real is not so, this is the beginning of the truly philosophical enquiry. A new dimension has to be entered before the right answers can be found.

Many mystics and sages have given answers to important questions in their own way, but their answers do not answer anything unless the response comes from within a person. This means that knowledge has to replace 'I-ness'. The ordinary mind can never answer the basic questions of life. It does not know what is the meaning or purpose of existence.

As long as meaning is not known, the mystery of life continues to bring one back, again and again to life at the lowest level, that is the physical level. So the ordinary mind has to become silent. It can of course deal with the unimportant aspects of life, but that is not what is really needed. It is in the silence, from within, that the new understanding comes to birth, and makes an impact outside. ✧

That which is the finest essence — this whole world has that as its Self. That is Reality. That is the Self. That art thou.

Chāndogya Upanishad, VI.8.7