



The
Folly
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folly of the wise

Capacity to think is an exclusive characteristic of man. This forms the basis of his ability to deliberate, imagine, analyse and take decisions. The ability of other living organisms to think is confined to food, survival and procreation. They cannot think beyond this on topics like better lifestyles, world order or the future of civilizations etc. Off and on some of them can be seen vying for a larger share and attacking each other on account of conflicts but that is about all. They somehow expend their lives and die in due course.

chapter 1

Man has been endowed with the capacity to think. He is capable of learning from his past experiences, making effort to meet his current needs and making the future more comfortable and pleasant. He attempts to follow traditions and rules that govern ethics, religion and society. Cooperation is his other special characteristic, on basis of which, he works for mutual benefit and does what is needed for development and enhancement of comforts and happiness. It is these mental characteristics that have in course of time lead him to his distinct abilities like desire, determination, courage, initiative etc. and elevated him to the highest pedestal in evolution ladder.

However, there is also an associated inadequacy in human beings. Man tends to emulate what he observes around him. He embraces the beliefs and actions of others in his vicinity. This tendency engulfs him to such an extent that he often loses his ability to discriminate between right and wrong. Imitation becomes a practice and this tendency overcomes all others. It soon becomes a habit and the urge to imitate becomes his second nature. Many a times this makes him so intransigent that he loses his inclination to see different points of view and, simply based on prejudices, tends to oppose them. These prejudices and failure to understand the other point of view leads to disputes. Wastage of human effort, labour and resources on such disputes and oppositions can be contained if discretion is practised instead of blind imitation.

Man has made numerous discoveries and inventions. He has drawn many intelligent conclusions and taken far-reaching decisions in various areas. But, all this progress has failed to check the growth of misconceptions. Man continues to base his conduct on convictions that are of hypocrisy or dubious veracity. So often, the wise man shows irrationality in his conduct.

Misconceptions of the Intelligent Mind:

If we analyse and classify human habits and beliefs, we find that man is more superstitious than he is discerning. He is wise and yet, more unwise. From certain perspectives, other creatures are better placed, as unlike man, they do not engage in the mess of right versus wrong and live their lives in harmony with nature.

There are so many prevalent misconceptions that one can hardly categorize man to be a rational being. It is difficult to believe at times how well-read people and those running large businesses can ever be so irrational. It is necessary to pick a few topics and deliberate whether the prevalent beliefs and practices are indeed correct.

When people think about themselves, their prime concern is their body. They associate their self-identity with the body. They continuously strive to assimilate more comforts for the body and make it strong, charming and gorgeous in all respects. But, this belief in supremacy of the body is misplaced. For if this was

indeed true, why is it that nothing remains of the body after death? In spite of all preventive measures why does illness and old age take its toll on the body? How do some people retain memories of an earlier birth? Why some people are gifted with special talents right from the birth? Why even co-genital twins, brought up in the same ambience by same parents, have altogether opposite natures and personalities?

Answers to all these questions lie in the fact that body and soul are two distinct entities. Both mingle along well and it is also seen that upon separation the existence of both gets concealed from normal perception. That body and soul are separate entities, is an absolute fact. Unfortunately, most people either do not accept it or are unmindful of this distinction. Otherwise, they would not have been wasting all their time in pursuit of pleasures linked with the body. Attention would have also been paid to the responsibilities associated with development of the soul. Such lifestyles would have been adopted that would have liberated not only self but also others. Driven by sensual passions and false pride, man has instead been treading the road to decadence.

Had there been the realization that youth is the time for striving to rise to higher planes, why would anyone have spent those days in wasteful pursuits? Why wouldn't he have rather utilized those days better and lived an ideal life? Why wouldn't his life have been a model for others to follow? The confused perceptions about associating self with the body and not the soul, is what leads to the

situation where hardly anyone lives a life that can stand the test of ideals. It is usually too late by the time one clears this perception and realizes that the life, which he had been living was misled or was a sheer wastage of a rare, precious opportunity.

Mighty Enemy in Nearest Vicinity:

One vice associated with human life is gluttony. Every living organism takes food in natural raw form. No organism spices up its food by cooking, roasting, frying, adding spices or sugar etc. Man learnt the art of cooking, preparing delectable meals and in the name of taste, started eating all that was unworthy of consumption. This gave rise to numerous disorders of digestive system, many diseases and the reduction in the lifespan. Instead of indulging in this vice, if proper vegetarian food habits were adopted, then consumption of food could have been cut down to half. Even the expenses and effort spent in cooking could have been saved. Digestive disorders could have been avoided, energies could have been conserved and an opportunity could have been created for living a longer life. But, man prefers to be a slave to this vice. He keeps indulging in gluttony and invites weakness, and untimely death. What else could one call this behaviour, but imprudence?

People live in houses but they do not care to construct them in a way that it is properly ventilated and sunlight can reach all corners. A simple hut makes sufficient provision for elementary

human needs but it is seen that people who have riches instead prefer to live in huge, over-furnished houses lighted with artificial lights and kept closed for air-conditioning. Their avarice and grabbing of land deprives millions of others of even bare minimum space of living. Those who can afford adequate space too often live in houses that, especially in the urban areas, are dark and suffocating. As a result, they live in houses that are rotting with seepage, bearing children and accumulating filth around them. People long for lavish food, but sufficient attention is not paid to balance of vital nutritious elements and to cleanliness of food, water and air. Not only the external atmospheric pollution, people's own houses, routing and eating habits too cause serious damage to their health.

Had man lived in harmony with Nature, had he not adopted abnormal diet, had he not restrained his exposure to clean air and sunlight, he could have avoided the torture resulting from varieties of health hazards.

Diseases are disconcerting as they bring along several hardships like physical pain, loss of working hours, increased load of expenses, inconvenience to other members of the family, chance of infecting others etc. Good health is natural. It is God's blessing that He has granted to all the living organisms of His creation. Man is the only unfortunate creature to have taken undesirable steps of breaking Nature's discipline and inviting host of diseases. It is said that one bears the fruit of one's Karma after death. While

this may be true for other actions but disobeying Nature in one's lifestyle is a sin that certainly invites punishment in this life itself.

Intoxication is another sort of defiance against Nature. Those addicted to Tobacco, Cannabis, Opium, alcohol etc enfeeble themselves, fritter away their money, jeopardize the future of their family members, suffer humiliation and eventually become victims of diseases like cancer etc. They feel uncomfortable themselves and live a neglected and humiliating life of a 'criminal' amongst their friends and relatives as well.

In spite of the awareness about all that has been said so far, people neglect the laws of Nature. Is this their wisdom or their folly? Other living organisms do become victims of divine demur but can never be disgraced for treading the wrong path. But, the man's deeds seem to suggest that he has deliberately adopted this defiant position against Nature. In such a situation, it surely raises a question mark on his sagacity.

Failure to understand the importance, nature and meaning of life and draining this supreme resource for disdainful purposes also has far reaching consequences. Precious life is exhausted on futile tasks. Moreover the burden of sins resulting from the misdeeds (triggered by ego, selfishness and avarice) gets piled up. Consequently, one suffers the penalty of a downfall and eventual collapse in this life and beyond.

wealth: unnecessary accumulation and misuse

No doubt, man is wise! His dexterity in generating and accumulating wealth is unmatched. Even if he misses out on a few opportunities of making money due to lack of skills or adverse circumstances, he does not lose courage. He would consistently keep trying. It is a different story if the gamble doesn't pay off but man on his part leaves no stone unturned in becoming as rich, in as little time, as possible. When he fails to earn using honest endeavours, he is often seen resorting to unfair means.

chapter 2

Where should this accumulated wealth be spent? On what should it be spent and how? On this topic as well, man's decisions are no less perplexing and worthless. Earning through unethical means and thoughtless extravagance are both dangerous. Both of these have disastrous consequences that would cause one to lament forever.

This situation arises because of undue importance that is given to money and because wealth is believed to be the sole source of satisfaction. It is a fallacy to accord all the success and progress to money. This fallacy results in all the knowledge and efforts of this invaluable life to be targeted towards acquiring wealth. Man gets preoccupied with it to such an extent that he is unable to put any thoughts or take actions towards other important purposes. As a result, all the other aspects of human development and evolution remain neglected. Loneliness prevails. Unfortunately, even the wealth accumulation is never as successful as is desired because there is a limit to how much one can acquire. Therefore, one has to continue to compete at every step. Everyone vies for a bigger share but it is purely by coincidence that some people succeed while others fail. Had capability been the corner stone, things might still have been under control. People would have worked to increase their abilities and would have been successful in earning more but situation is very different in today's economic scenario where cunningness is everything. But, even after all this effort, providence still has the last laugh. It is possible that even a hard-

working person may remain empty handed and might have to remain satisfied with a small share.

One must do an introspection to judge whether it is worth ignoring all the other important aspects of life, for the sake of amassing wealth. Should one get so preoccupied with pompousness alone? Careful analysis shows that survival and provisioning for the family requires a very little sum of money. Man's natural needs are very limited. A little food is enough to take care of his hunger. Clothing to cover his body is not expensive either. Members of the family could also be made capable of fending for themselves and to practice simplicity. The life could move along smoothly if the whole family learns to limit expenses.

To attempt to save for the future is a folly too when man can use his body and the brain to earn throughout his life. If we create the value system in our family where the old are respected and the weak are cared for, then that itself can take care of old age. Problems arise only when no preparations have been made for old age and becoming dependent on others is considered the only available option. And, when the body begins to weaken with age, it is perceived that the ability to work and earn is beginning to diminish. One then starts accumulating resources that would help live through the old age without having to toil hard. Simultaneously, another big mistake that one makes is that of instilling an ardour in the successors, to take the possession of that

wealth when they grow up. This amounts to making the successors lethargic and remain dependent all their lives.

Everyone who has been assisted by his parents in childhood and youth should be taught to virtually return all the favours done to him. The youth should pay back to the parents and the society for all the help and support in the form of taking affectionate care of the former in their later ages and in the form of cooperating in constructive activities of social welfare.

This spirit of gratitude needs to be inculcated from the very beginning, on either side, that just as one takes care of the young ones, the elderly should also be provided with all the comforts and respect. That the successors should be inheriting everything from their ancestors is an unethical practice. This practice is seen prevalent in many families, especially in India. As a result, successors of the wealthy are busy conniving how to snatch away as much as possible from the parents. It is also commonly seen that by the time one indeed grows frail, all the wealth that had been accumulated for old age is lost to such unworthy successors. This unfortunate situation arises because of unwarranted wealth accumulation which was done for old age and which was left for others to snatch away on first available opportunity. Why should one let this situation arise in the first place? Why not earn only as much as is necessary for subsistence? Successors should be taught from the beginning that whatever has been done to make them self-sufficient is like a loan that needs to be paid back to the parents in their old age. If this belief is appropriately instilled in

both the parents and the children then there is no reason why anyone, out of fear of old age, needs to toil all his life to amass wealth and eventually have it transferred to his successors.

Nature produces only as much as is necessary for all the creatures to live conveniently. If some people strive for more wealth then its direct impact would be that they will cut into others' share. To build a wall at one place, one needs to dig a hole at another. If anyone wants to be rich then it will be possible only if lots of others are forced to live in necessitous poverty. Resultant inequality, whenever and wherever it arises, will give rise to envy and enmity. Unwarranted wealth invariably gets spent on evil habits, pomp, luxury and adultery, which has disastrous consequences. Drinking, loafing, lethargy, intoxication, flaunting of wealth, futile expenditure are the typical acts of those who accumulate more wealth than necessary. These evil acts in turn demand even more money and thus starts a downward spiral that makes man stoop lower and lower.

When one enjoys the riches and the other rots in poverty, the disparity is bound to give rise to jealousy and anger. It also results in increase in thefts, banditry and other such reprehensible acts. The poor tend to emulate the rich and when they cannot earn virtuously they resort to unethical means. Eventually, many adversities begin to crop up because once an environment of evil tendencies has been established, others tend to flow along. Hence,

unwarranted accumulation of wealth gives rise to many undesirable and vicious instincts in the society.

The habit of subsistence within limited resources provides those benefits to everyone, which are available only to the noble-minded, who practice simplicity. Only equality can cultivate unity. Unity bolsters harmony. Only in harmony is it possible to live a happy and gratifying life. To maintain harmony in family and amongst friends and to mould their character and thoughts in conformance to human dignity, the basic recipe is to present self as an example of subsistence within limited resources and to cultivate an ambience for adoption of certain ideals. What is absolutely essential is economic probity.

If an initiative is taken to live life prudently within limited resources and a system is instituted to maintain expenditure to the level of an average citizen, then apparently a base has been established for progress in other aspects of life too. Promotion of true knowledge is wealth in itself - a type of wealth that is beyond comparison with any other. It requires Swadhyay¹, Satsang², contemplation and rumination. To enrich one's experience, it is also necessary to establish public relations. But, one finds time for the same and the desire for it arises only when one understands the importance of harmony over wealth accumulation. With true knowledge, anyone can become discerning, prudent and intelligent and can assume a more refined personality than is ever possible with accumulation of wealth.

Similar to true knowledge, other means of developing one's personality are virtuous charity, generous service and collaborative efforts for collective progress. With these, one gets an opportunity to uplift the downtrodden and help those in trouble to become self-reliant. Upon adopting these virtues, one derives extraordinary satisfaction, and receives people's love and respect. As his endeavours are proven worthy, he gracefully treads the road to all round development. All the great men in this world have tread the same path. Selfless charity is like sowing seeds on a fertile ground, which grows into a tree that yields fruit all our life. But, such charity is possible only for those who can get rid of the lust for wealth. Those who are trapped in this lust can never think of anything except their own selfish interests. They would never find time for anything else.

Healthy body, balanced mind, righteous conduct, efficient management of family, charity, organized and progressive social system etc, are the issues on which every man should be paying due attention and should put his best efforts towards their implementation. This is possible only if sufficient time is devoted to the cause. It is possible to concentrate the mind completely to this cause, if one stops applying all the energies behind chasing excessive accumulation of wealth. If one is engulfed in a mania of wealth accumulation then what else can he do? But, if the target is only to take care of the bare necessities then it can be achieved with only a few hours of labour and that would leave sufficient time for a good resolution of other important problems in life.

Subsistence is not difficult. What is difficult is to satiate the lust for wealth, to bridge the gap between what one has and what one longs for.

The belief that money can buy everything, is totally misplaced. The truth is that money cannot buy anything except articles for comfort and leisure. The real wealth is an illumined personality and a refined combination of excellent qualities, deeds and culture. If one possesses these precious 'resources' then one can easily project a good image of oneself in front of others and can earn the love, cooperation and respectful support of everyone. These qualities act like magnets whose pull makes one rich in genuineness, talent and intensity. The one who has this wealth can take care of minimal requirements of life and can easily earn enough money to avoid stalling of any necessities of life.

It can certainly be termed a folly of the wise that man chases wealth, which in reality is of negligible importance, to such an extent that complete peace of mind and strength is lost in this futile task and all that is essential for all round development is hampered.

why ignore education?

'Education is a means to get a job'. This is the definition of education that is etched in everyone's mind today. Even while studying, children start aiming for a job. Parents, too, educate children only so that their children will get a good job and will be secure from the perspective of earning their livelihood. Parents believe that upon getting a job, their children will be able to earn a fixed monthly income that will ensure carefree existence and will not have to lead a more non-deterministic life when running, say, a business of their own.

chapter 3

People also dream of getting senior positions that will provide better salary and more comforts. They believe, it would not only earn them more respect but also give them an avenue for secondary income through unfair means (e.g. corruption).

For someone who likes to daydream, this would all look very enticing but if one looks at it from a practical viewpoint, this is all eyewash and is far from reality.

There was a time when the number of educated people was very limited. The British Empire had to get their work done with the help of local population and hence with minimal education people were inducted into jobs. Often anyone who had studied even a little, used to find a job. But now, the situation has changed drastically. There are lakhs of students who are completing their education every year. How can so many students find jobs every year? Neither as many people are retiring every year nor sufficient number of new jobs are being created to ensure jobs for all these students. In such a situation, the students who have been studying only in the hope of finding a job will be disappointed. The number of educated, unemployed people is rising day by day. For every vacancy, there are thousands of applicants. Only one out of them gets the job and the others have to face disappointment. After trying for years, when people cross the age limit for the government jobs, they start queuing up for jobs in the private sector. It is almost impossible to get good salaries in the private sector since there is a

lot of competition amongst this large number of unemployed people. One is forced to compromise and settle for lower salaries.

The biggest problem facing such individuals is that of mental dissatisfaction. A senior position in the government sector is the only dream they live for. They feel shattered when they fail to realize that dream. They are left clueless as they never cared to learn a skill that could help them live independently in the event of not finding a job. Neither they nor their parents would have ever put any thought on the complex situation that arises upon not finding a job. When they hit the impediment, they fail to find a solution and in absence of that their situation becomes similar to that of an insane individual. Inferiority complex engulfs them and they feel suffocated. They had been chasing a mirage and are now forced to spend the remaining days of their life in frustration.

This is a problem of not one or two individuals but the society at large. Its resolution requires fresh thinking and determination. It has to be acknowledged that not everyone can find government jobs. Senior positions and high salaries are all the more unlikely. If these facts are digested at the very onset then other solutions can be found and a new course can be charted out.

In the childhood, the body and the mind are not developed enough for a child to think about earning a living. Childhood is the time to focus on developing strength of the body and increasing mental ability. From this perspective, education is necessary and suitable. But, at this stage one should not start

thinking that good job is a certain outcome of education. Rather, one should start considering options other than finding a job and the other ways of earning a livelihood. Focus should be to determine what work can be easily taken up in a given situation and the independence in earning livelihood should be given prime consideration.

There is a lot of scope for every industry in our country. If cottage industry is embraced with appropriate improvements then it can easily stand its ground against industrialization. While factories can produce large quantities, they also have high cost of production because of interest on loans, breakages, thefts, damages etc. Consequently, the price of goods produced in factories is considerably high in the market. Layers of commissions make these goods even more expensive. Such botherations are a lot lesser in small industries. Swadeshi movement needs to be started again with a new vigour. Like Khadi, if other handicrafts are also promoted and people change their mindset and start embracing ordinary homemade items over the glossy factory produced items then the trend of cottage industries can be revived with new intensity. Lakhs of educated people, artisans and vendors can get ample work and make a new beginning.

In the name of business, primarily all that is done in our country is to put up a shop to sell manufactured goods. This is not as useful as actually producing goods. Sales can provide employment to

only very limited number of people. If there are a thousand shops in a town then with the logic of one owner and one employee per shop, employment for about two thousand people is all that these shops will provide. Even a single supermarket can provide employment for almost similar number of people. Focus should be on manufacturing that can provide livelihood to lakhs.

In addition to cottage industry, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry are two industries where a lot of improvement is possible with the help of science and technology. There is vast scope in Carpentry and Blacksmithing as well. If manufacturing of bricks and tiles is also included in the scope of potters, in addition to manufacturing of pitchers, then this industry too has the potential of providing employment to a large number of individuals.

The real purpose of education is character building. Resolution of complexities in personal and social life should be accomplished through education. Basic purpose of education is to make students expert and proficient in topics like how to nurture harmony and righteousness. To fulfil this purpose, educational institutions need to put in whole-hearted efforts. Parents too should start admitting their children to schools with this objective. The system of education which today focuses only on jobs needs a complete revamping.

Because of frequent transfer in jobs, the circle of friends and neighbours gets broken. New rented accommodation needs to be found, which drains a large part of the income. The service that is due to the motherland remains unaccomplished. People need to migrate from villages to cities due to lack of jobs in villages. Considering all this, education needs to be linked to children's future. What should they become or what should become of them? In finding answer to this question, it is best to keep the topic of jobs out of the discussion because in days to come, it will become more and more difficult to find jobs. To feed oneself, enough work is available in the villages itself where the cost of living is low and life is easier with the love and cooperation of kith and kin.

The land where one is born and brought up is akin to one's mother. Just how one serves one's mother, it is also a duty to serve one's motherland. Surely there are numerous sources of livelihood where one is born. Cities are becoming costlier, dirtier, more unhygienic and centres of evil intentions because villagers are migrating towards these cities on a very large scale. If villagers remain settled in their villages, it is possible to improve the situation in villages itself. Migration of educated people from villages to cities is equivalent to the brain drain from a poor country like India to developed countries in search of better salaries. This brain drain benefits the foreign countries but creates a shortage of talented individuals in India, who could have helped in making our country more developed and prosperous.

In Gurukul tradition of the olden days, bookish education was limited to the bare minimum that was required to resolve problems one faced in one's daily life. The pool of knowledge is vast. Even multiple life times may not be sufficient to cover it all. If education has to be made meaningful, topics that are never practically used in life after school must be dropped from the curriculum. In the crammed curriculum followed at schools today, many important topics get left out while lots of futile nonsense gets stuffed into the students' heads. Futile, because it does not serve any purpose even the purpose of earning a livelihood is not met with this kind of education. In such a situation, there is an urgent need to rethink on children's education.

What is learnt and taught should be useful even if one does not find a job. If such knowledge and experience cannot be earned from the current education system, then the Gurukul system of education needs to be adopted again. Compared to the amount of money and time that is spent on education in Government schools, it is possible to run schools based on Gurukul tradition and throw light on practical problems of life, at a much lesser expense. Not only can such education focus on behavioural aspects but also on building skills that would allow people to earn their livelihood, while staying back in their villages.

An important aspect of education is the hostel life. Environment at home is typically not conducive to enhancement of one's qualities, actions and character. To lift one's values to a higher

plane, one needs the right kind of environment. If parents and families are unable to create such an environment, then this should be accomplished through hostels that can also regulate the students' daily routine.

It is unfortunate to see such rampant negligence in a field like education, which is responsible for the future of the children and families. The past styles and patterns in education are followed blindly without analysing whether they resolve the problems and if they do not, what alternatives can be constructed. Drastic relevant reform in the education system of the country is the dire need of the hour. It requires immediate attention and action – before it is too late.

the folly of overloading the boat

A boat that is lightly loaded can easily cross the stream but if it is heavily loaded, its chances of sinking, upon being struck by a big wave or hitting against a rock, increase substantially. It is difficult for someone who carries a burden, to go a long distance or climb very high but one who is empty handed can easily cover a long distance and reach great heights. Everyone longs for a chance to live a light-hearted life because only that brings cheerfulness and gives a chance to think about uplifting oneself.

chapter 4

A large family is a persistent obligation that calls for a continuous major expense. Upbringing a child and making him self-sufficient entails an expense of about several lakhs of rupees on an average, which includes expenses on education, health, recreation, marriage etc. One does not realize it because this expense gets included in the systematic, day-to-day expenses. But, if a record is maintained of the expenses and the time spent on bringing up the child is also appropriately accounted for, then this estimate will not seem to be an exaggeration. Giving birth to a child is therefore equivalent to piling up a loan of nearly a million rupees that one has to forcibly keep paying back till the body permits.

The more the number of children one has produced the greater the amount of loan that gets piled on. It is the kind of loan that can never be written off and where no moderation is possible. It has to be paid back under any circumstances even if that compels one to adopt means that are unethical and disgraceful.

And, the story doesn't end there. Driven by excessive attachment towards their children, people also wish to leave behind a huge fortune as patrimony. What is earned through fair means is often found insufficient for this. The only alternative available is to resort to cheating and using unfair means. It is the only way to fulfil this wish to a certain extent.

One gets loaded with as much burden as the number of children one has produced. Bearing this cumbersome liability squeezes one's body and mind completely. One gets so swamped with the load of earning and bringing up the family that, even if one desires, there is no possibility left of thinking of one's own welfare and personality development. There are many actions that need to be taken for improving health, enhancing knowledge, conducting charity and stepping towards eminence. But unfortunately, one fails to take any. The invaluable life is lost in the cycle of breeding and satiating hunger. The saying that "one enters this world with the hands full (tight fists) but leaves with begging hands" literally proves true in the case of such people. This happens because the tensions and responsibilities of a large family are so overwhelming that even if one wishes, it is impossible to take steps towards improving the present and building a better future. One is forced to live in a (self-created) state of helplessness.

The parents, who give the gift of life and take all the pains in making their children self-sufficient, deserve to be paid back their due. It is a duty to serve one's parents. But, it does not justify that only for their sake one should give birth to children and put the complete life at stake. Every child demands the best for living and recreation.

Every child also needs higher education, suitable marriage, appropriate sum of money for livelihood etc. If affording all this

for the child is beyond means, then what sort of courtesy is it to invite such a guest and not accord him the right welcome? For the parents who cannot raise money for appropriate upbringing of their children, it is only pertinent that they should neither become the culprit of bringing up deficient and unkempt children nor become subject of dissatisfaction and ridicule. From the very beginning such children feel that they were brought into this world but no justice was done to them. They are never satisfied with the little bit that the parents are able to arrange for them and always long for more. Parents are unable to arrange for more and consequently both the parties grow dissatisfied. Sometimes it manifests into revolts. Children run away from their homes, land in bad company and learn bad habits. Not only is the children's future ruined, the parents also cannot escape defamation. Unkempt children neither respect their parents nor follow any discipline. This leads to major chaos in the family and directly or indirectly augments negativity in the society as well.

Along with raising children, father has an additional load of the responsibility to earn money. Mother has to dissolve her own body for the child as the embryo grows by cutting into her own body. During childbirth, the mother suffers an agony greater than a major surgery. Breast-feeding squeezes out her body juices. In such a case, the mother is neither able to keep good health nor maintain her beauty. There is no time of the day or night, left for her own comfort. The result is that giving birth to one child after another takes its toll on her. Morbidity and many symptoms of

illness inundate her. Father pays the price of this unnecessary breeding of children in the form of economic difficulties and the mother pays for it by losing her health.

Here breeding of children is dubbed as unnecessary because the prevalent conditions in the world (esp. in the developing countries like India) are such that load of even a single additional child cannot be borne. The production capacity of the Earth is limited. It can raise crop only in limited quantities and that can feed only a limited population. Uncontrollably increased population will have to die of hunger, become victims of malnutrition or suffer from distress due to weakness. In spite of all efforts, solutions to problems in the areas of education, health, traffic, transport, livelihood, housing etc. are not forthcoming. They continue to grow more complex. When new arrangements are made, the consumers increase manifold and all the plans of progress come a cropper. If poverty and illiteracy are not brought under control, the country will remain unsteady. The dream of making it a developed nation cannot be realized until the rapid growth of population is curbed. In absence of proper resources for development, increasing number of people in the society would have disdainful and inferior personalities. In such a situation, how can one hope for the country or the society to progress?

Unbridled sex desires and not paying heed to its consequences results in unwarranted breeding. Lust makes one forget the need for maintaining a right balance and forces one to behave like a

fanatic. Atonement for this mistake leaves the parents with no opportunity to even think of their own development. Such parents not only drain out their vital energies, but also increase the load on this earth and produce unkempt children who are born out of such wretched circumstance.

It has to be termed the folly of the wise that man can only see so far as satisfaction of his sexual desires but fails to see that he is constructing a sinful future for himself and a bleak future for his descendants. Bizarre ideas like producing children for carrying on one's lineage, for performing one's last rites or preparing support for old age etc, only occur to those who live far from reality.

The purpose of marriage is for husband and wife to become partners in each other's progress. Progress has many dimensions. One person alone does not get opportunities to make progress in each and every dimension. There is very little that is taught in schools today that can help in such multi-dimensional progress. One has to continue to work on it all life. There are many tasks like promotion of true knowledge, skill development in arts, social service etc. that need to be carried out through out one's life.

Running a family is like running a small kingdom. Family is a foundry to mould talent. It is a mine that yields human gems. But, this becomes possible only when multiple individuals together focus on all activities of the family, give complete

attention, continuously monitor any lapses made by any member of the family and work out its remedies.

Enjoy Loving the Children — An Altruist Way:

The talented individuals in the family must get the opportunity of providing necessary inspiration and guidance and make right arrangements that are necessary for progress of others in the family and the society. But they must be fully devoted to this cause. And, that is possible only if they do not have children of their own because otherwise they get busy caring and making arrangements for their own children. With their own children to look after, they start expecting others to extend them a helping hand. Under such circumstances, how can a parent ignore his own duty and start committing his time, effort and attention to others? And, if that is not possible then it is hopeless to expect that the society could be made independent, developed and cultured. If man favours producing his own children over the responsibility of making arrangements for society's or at least his family members' ascent then it surely is a folly of the wise. It reflects indifference towards those who could have proven capable of contributing towards development.

Having one's own kids is not necessarily the only way to contribute to the glory of the 'family institution'. This can be better accomplished by loving and nursing children of other parents who lack resources to raise them. One's own children

become demanding and consider it their right to get all possible comforts but if children of other needy parents are nursed and educated then all those parents will remain grateful all their lives. This beneficence will not only boost self-confidence but also encourage cooperation from acquaintances. The benevolent are always respected and they earn favours that provide them greater recognition, respect and opportunities.

Sometimes, one's own children land in the wrong company and step in the wrong direction owing to excessive pampering. Upon growing up such children can be a real liability on their parents. Thus, selfishness and attachment towards only one's own children can prove to be counter-productive. On the other hand, if money, time and affection were to be showered upon the children of other parents, then the results of that charity would always be beneficial. Difficulty can arise only if children of other parents are adopted with the purpose of succession. If without adopting, one owns up the responsibility of educating them, uplifting them, as part of social welfare, then it would be considered the highest service for the nation. The wise need to ensure that they do not burden their spouses with children and make them disabled, helpless and a burden. Instead, they should support their spouses to become and remain capable of serving and helping others.

greatness weighs more than success & prosperity

Every capable individual wishes to establish and publicise his capability and achievements. Other creatures aspire only to satiate their hunger for food and sex but man also aspires to prove himself better than others. This is called, being ambitious. Every man nurtures ambitions. There are very few who would be satisfied by fulfilling their basic needs and who would make no attempts to show off in some respect.

All that one needs to cover oneself up is a few meters of cloth but it is seen that people

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fill their wardrobes with variety of fashionable clothes and also keep changing them often. Women decorate their body with jewellery. There are strange and unique hairstyles to be seen. The whole purpose behind all this is to attract people's attention and on the basis of this, the one who manages to grab star attraction, is supposed to be superior. In order to enhance beauty, there are a host of cosmetics that are applied to the face and all the other parts of the body. Women, in general, are far ahead of men in this trend. How much money and time is wasted in all this get-up and fashion! When the fashion trends change, the old is discarded and the new is adopted so that by replacing the unpopular design with a new one, people's attention may be drawn towards oneself again. The artistry, fitting, gorgeousness and glaze is meant to dazzle people's eyes. It is a reflection of people's mental ardour that they want to exhibit themselves better than others.

The affluent build houses that are much bigger than necessary. Palaces and forts are decorated with expensive furnishings. Vehicles and servants are kept in numbers that are much larger than necessary. Parties are held every other day and people succumb to various types of addictions. The reason for all this is that a lot of undue importance is given to materialistic riches and because people evaluate themselves against others using this yardstick. This show-off only creates a delusion of superiority. If it was avoided then one could have lived with limited resources, time and money. The savings could have been used elsewhere, which would have benefited self and others.

One can see competitions being organized every other day. People participate in motor races, horse races, rock climbing and other such risky activities because the winner becomes famous for his chivalry. To establish various records, people take so much pains and show amazing courage. One reads about these in magazines and hears about them in various discussions. Why do people indulge in such display of their courage? Why do they spend so much time and money on it? In most cases, there is only one answer to these questions – the ambition of achieving fame and status of 'greatness'. Those who are unable to perform, resort to paying for yes-men in order to earn false praise. These yes-men earn their bread by making a mountain out of molehill and then creating a hype around it in order to please those who have a greed for accolades. Many wars have been fought for similar ambitions. One can also see people engaging a fleet of servants and maids so that it becomes a topic for discussion. The pompousness on display during marriages is meant to serve the same purpose. The interest in keeping and exhibiting pets also originates from this desire to be talked about.

Upon contemplation, it seems that such indulgers only satisfy their egos. Others don't seem to give them the same importance. Everyone is busy. Who has the time to notice and rectify such delusions? And then, there are so many who indulge in this sham. Who considers such people to be great or the blessed ones? On the contrary, people tend to envy or to get

an impression that it is an illegally earned wealth that is being squandered away and a sham is being erected to earn false accolades. How long can the reality be hidden?

It appears so childish that the poor attempt to put up a face of richness. It feels so pathetic to see people rent clothes from the laundry in order to dress up for the marriage processions. Many bury themselves under the burden of loans for such sham and end up frittering away all their ancestral wealth. When this pretension becomes a habit for the meagre earners, it forces them to resort to immorality. Such squandering does not allow man to remain honest. They have to turn to sinful acts to fill their bags. The reality of such people does come out eventually. As others start discovering the reality, the so-called respect or recognition of 'high-status' begins to give way to hatred. Once exposed, such people lose all their friends and allies because if they remained associated with such people, the world would see them in the same light.

By indulging in such mockery, only the childish try to achieve the status of greatness and of course, they fail. It is impossible for the reality to remain hidden forever. If an uneducated poses as a scholar, he easily gets exposed in a small conversation. Besides, the times are gone when one could awe others with one's opulence. There may have been times when feud lords ran the world and their terror gave shivers down the spine of the masses. But, now in most societies, people have come out of their shells. Communism

has generated resentment against the rich. They are bitterly criticised and accused of dishonesty. Only the merciless can become rich otherwise if they earn more they should have been spending it on the needy. Their money should have been used for serving others. Those who turn their eyes away from social service and take pride in spending it on extravagance would not only carry the blame of inappropriate conduct but also be categorized selfish and cruel.

Prudence rejects this pretence of greatness as childish behaviour. Foresight and wisdom manifests itself in man in the form of refinement of personality through adoption of high morals, efforts to achieve eminence in qualities, actions and nature, striving to lead a pure life, maintaining high thinking, being kind, adopting the principle of simple living and high thinking, living a life of an ordinary citizen so that the savings from the increased earnings may be spent on helping others.

Those who try to achieve greatness through affluence and by squandering away their wealth, will only end up in disappointment. The terror of torture can also not instil the feeling of respect in anyone's heart. At times the threat of one's powerful status might get applaud of some flatterers or fearsome subordinates. It is possible that the heart may be filled with hatred but upon getting driven by fear or greed, one may be forced to speak a few words of praise but this deception doesn't last long. At the first opportunity, the reality presents itself. What

is disdainful, will remain so. The facts cannot be denied for long. People with vicious character and wicked behaviour can neither live a glorious life nor earn respect. In spite of this, people can be seen treading this path. Many still believe that through hypocrisy they can earn and maintain a false clout of greatness. If people could come out of this illusion then they could work to achieve true greatness. They could adopt a straight and simple path and really achieve what they aspire for. Greatness achieved on worthless grounds crumbles like a pack of cards.

Attain True Greatness:

Greatness can be eternal. It is possible to attain true greatness by inculcating virtues and adopting ideals in thoughts and conduct. Achieving greatness is in accordance with human dignity. To achieve it one has to refine one's character, actions, nature, thoughts, conduct and behaviour to an extent that it can stand any tests of excellence. This refinement results in lasting self-satisfaction, social recognition and unlimited support. It must be clearly understood that honesty needs to be maintained in all the actions, complete dedication needs to be demonstrated in performing all duties and courage needs to be exhibited in not succumbing to pressures and temptations.

Some individuals may become rich, scholars, strong, talented, skilled, smart etc. and some may be able to prove themselves

richer in strength and abilities compared to others. But, it is also certain that they will face the lurking danger of misusing resources and the possibility of attacks and damage from the jealous. Thieves and attackers will continue to skulk as well. The danger of being dragged into a quagmire of downfall by sycophants and yes-men, who will lay a bait of false praises, cannot be ruled out as well. Doubts and sinister possibilities will always be present. And, all this will keep one's mind in a state of distress.

One must understand the risks associated with greatness and remember the miserable state of mind that one may land in. However, if greatness is achieved through continuous chiselling and refinement of personality then there is no such danger. The dignity attached to such greatness keeps one happy and the favours done to others yield beneficial returns as well. The adoption of two foundations - character integrity and focus on social service - can lead every man, on the basis of his excellence, to present an example in front of the public that will encourage them to become better individuals too.

It is not necessary to become rich or a scholar to achieve greatness. It does not even need special abilities or cleverness. One can embrace the quality of humility, which is possible for everyone under all circumstances. Once the mind is immersed in goodwill and generosity, then the opportunities for benevolence and charity keep arising. Once the mind tastes the unique joy of immersing in the pool of love and compassion, in

spite of being busy, it becomes possible to engage it in such activities that assist in uplifting oneself. Only by adopting sincerity and humility, one can prove to people that living a dignified life and sticking to a social discipline is not difficult. Even if others do not reciprocate, it is possible to maintain dignity and fill the environment with a scent of purity. While continuing to practice self-improvement, one can also lead others on the same path.

Ambition can only be beneficial if it is embellished with the spirit of purity and charity. Everyone can tread the path towards greatness, truly become powerful and be considered fortunate. It is only the folly of the wise that people run after the mirage of greatness but ignore the importance of divinity.

women need not be dependent

Nature has created all categories of creatures in the forms of male and female. Both live together and assist each other. From the time of pregnancy to child rearing, both shoulder the responsibility together. Birds, for example, work together to create a nest. For this purpose, they do not hesitate to get or give help.

Being a more evolved creature, this collaboration should be to an even larger degree in man. When the natural attraction brings them together, the purpose behind it is obviously that they compliment each other. Woman is the goddess of art and emotions. Man has a concentration of courage and endurance. A complete

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personality emerges only upon combining the two. Evolution from imperfection to perfection is the purpose of bringing both the genders together. Only with their mutual cooperation, the cart of life can run smoothly on its track. Both should not only distribute tasks amongst themselves but also practice to assist each other if needed. This is indeed the social and natural purpose behind creation of the combination of male and female.

As long as this tradition was appropriately followed, this communion was successful and it benefited both men and women and the wheel of social system rolled on smoothly.

Misfortune struck when man gave undue importance to carnality, made it an addiction and like addicts made a mountain out of this molehill. When this belief reached mischievous heights in the medieval times of cultural downfall, then it brought forth unforeseen consequences. When defiance rode high then man thought of exploiting the temporary weakness of the woman during pregnancy. The physical weakness and inability to produce during the days of pregnancy were blown out of proportions and woman was taught to remain a slave to man, follow him blindly and be satisfied with the food and shelter provided to her in return. By and large, her ambitions to ascend were suppressed and the thoughts of equality with man be buried. She was supposed to expect nothing from man except what is needed for basic survival. The logic given was that when the primary responsibility of reproduction has been laid on her then she must accept it as her destiny and remain content.

The logic sounded convincing and it was adopted as a tradition. The leash continued to be tightened until woman remained only a medium for sexual satisfaction of man.

This leash was tightened both from outside and from within. Externally, she was confined within the house walls and made to hide inside a veil. She was restricted from moving around alone. Terming this bondage as the curse of being a woman, she was forced by the male dominated society to live a disdainful life. Inhuman customs such as committing *sati*, shaving off / tonsuring the head, begging at the shrines etc, were initiated as these traditions helped the family members to get rid of the responsibility of supporting the widow and also, helped keep the widow away from laying claims to her husband's property.

From the inside, woman was weakened to such an extent that she started believing herself to simply be an object of desire and busied herself in putting on make-up and in looking more attractive and seductive. She started shunning hard labour in order to avoid its adverse impact on her tenderness and beauty. She started believing that her welfare was in dressing up like dolls and attracting her husband.

After this noose was tightened around her from both outside and inside, woman became crippled and helpless. She was brought to a situation where she was completely dependent on man. When this became a custom and the environment got tuned according to this belief then who could show resistance against it? How could anyone

dare go against the tide? Men saw their benefits in this tradition. After all, they were getting maids in return for basic food, water and clothes. Why would they let the situation change? Women too had no other resort. By the time women reached the threshold of youth, they became mothers to many children. The upbringing of these children was so difficult that a mother was incapable of handling them alone. This gave rise to a tradition that is still being followed. Women in many parts of the world have remained dependent on their providers like a pet animal depends on its owner.

Even in the modern era of intellectual ascent and civilization, in several societies, especially in the developing and under developed world, she has no right to think of her development. She is not allowed to even express desire for independence. She is left to survive like a piece of rotting garbage and has to bury her desire for respect to some remote corner of her heart. What respect does a slave need? When there is enough food to fill the stomach and clothes to cover the body then why long for love and respect?

While there is some difference in the state of a woman in developed and developing nations, it is fundamentally identical. In developing or underdeveloped nations, she is under tremendous pressure and has to spend her days in a state of helplessness. In developed nations, she is encouraged to become more attractive and seductive so that she starts giving greater importance to comforts and glamour, and, on her own, feels tempted to earn the man's favour. The result of the temptation is that she can be seen exposing her body a lot more and attracting

the onlookers. This rising enthusiasm has created an ambience, especially in the developed world where coyness, which was once an asset of the woman, is hardly seen anywhere. Sometimes under the tag of 'bold and beautiful', sometimes of the glamour of 'models of commercial advertisements', she is being exploited or letting herself so in several ways in ultra modern societies.

This is not development. It is a pitiable expression of lack of self-respect. In both the developed and the developing nations, the women have their own unique plights and compulsions.

What Have Men Achieved by Oppressing Women?

Who gained what by pushing woman to this pitiable state? Woman suffered a big loss but man did not gain from this either. By depriving woman of her basic human rights, she was forced into a state of constraints and helplessness but what did man get in return? He lost an important collaborator who could have assisted him in his development, comforts and happiness and landed in a situation where he has to carry her like a heavy load on his own shoulders.

Even today, supporting the family is the sole responsibility of man in larger part of the world. It consumes him completely and makes him pensive and worried. How precarious is the situation, becomes clear when a woman with four-five children becomes a widow at a young age. The savings from her husband's earnings gets consumed on illness etc. After his death, the widow and

children do not find a shelter anywhere – neither at parent's place nor with the in-laws. Children are scorned at every step and when they somehow grow up amidst such deprivation and contempt they most often become uncivilized and uncouth.

Mother's pain and agony knows no bounds. She lives like a corpse and somehow survives only under the compulsion of her affection towards her innocent children. There are numerous examples of such existence. Such plight presents its ugly face at almost every nook and corner and is a result of the insane and cruel custom where no opportunities are provided to woman for her education and independence. If she had also received these facilities, she would not have been a burden on anyone and would instead have been a helping hand in healthy development and advancement of the family-members.

If half the population lives as a cripple and the other half bears its burden then this situation is similar to that of a half paralysed sufferer. There is no comfort in this situation for either the healthy part or the paralysed part. It can be termed a big folly of the wise. Except meeting the shallow purpose of feeding man's ego, it yields nothing to be pleased about and nothing that could assist in progress of the society and the nation. In fact it has impeded or retarded our ascent on most fronts.

It should be understood that by trampling his capable collaborator, man has only increased his own burden and introduced darkness in his own future. The purpose of sexual

satisfaction, which was taken to its extremes and which was forced upon women, is not completely served either. In the entrapped state that woman is in, what can be conducted is only a rape. Pleasure is attained through dedicated cooperation and that happens only if proper attention is given to the development and comforts of the partner. Harmony can only be nurtured in the environment of service and gratitude and collaboration surely bears good fruit.

Immense Potential of Women:

Factually, woman's proficiency, dexterity and capability is no less than that of man. She is forced to bear children and citing this as a proof of her weakness, is then oppressed. This burden can be easily lightened. By pledging celibacy, or maintaining small family of at most two children, many couples have saved themselves from carrying this burden and have used the conserved energy in assisting each other to achieve greater competency and happiness. In such a situation they become like two balanced wheels of a cart that carry the loaded cart over a long distance and they both thus make their existence more meaningful.

Wherever she has found opportunities, woman has awakened her dormant capabilities and proved that she is ahead of man in every field. In the field of education, women score better than men. Her skills in the areas of education, medicine, art and science are better than men. She is not behind in business and industry either. Her

backwardness is not inborn. It has been forced upon her. If the noose around her is loosened and an opportunity is provided for her independent talent to emerge then the balance would surely tilt to her side. In all living creatures there is only a slight difference between males and females and it does not imply that one could be considered more capable than the other. Both have their own specialities and capabilities. Confluence of these is an example of the strength that lies in unity. It is difficult to fathom what man gained by crippling half the population but it is clear that he suffered a huge loss.

Woman symbolizes goddess *Lakshmi* but only if she has been nurtured with intensive cooperation and support. Her emotional strength, her patience, her motherly affection alone can nurture lasting happiness and peace along with materialistic progress.

The mistake of suppressing her potentials has been committed over a long period of time and it has caused extensive damage. Time has arrived to correct this mistake and to instil new traditions. Blame lies with man and hence he must atone first. In his zone of influence, he must inspire everyone to leave no stone unturned in uplifting and making women capable of becoming independent, cultured and full of self-respect, so that the proof of their development becomes visible on all fronts of familial, social and global rise.

the agonizing walls of division and discrimination

In this world there are many species of organisms. Their form differs to some extent across regions but they are still known by the same name. Animals like Elephants, Horses, Donkeys, Oxen etc, and birds like Peacocks, Pigeons, Ducks, Swans etc, are known by the same name all over the world. Snakes, Scorpions, Ants, Termites etc, also are different species and wherever they belong, they are still known by the same name. Man is also one such organism. Wherever he may stay in this world, whatever language he may speak,

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there may be drastic variations in his body-built, complexion and facial features too but he will still be known as man. They all belong to the single species known as *Homo sapiens* in zoological terms and commonly as human beings. Organs of all human beings are similar. Wherever he stays, whatever may be the skin of his colour be but he will always belong to the single class – 'human beings'.

Another identity of every species is that it can reproduce only within its class. Organisms belonging to different class cannot mate and will not be able to reproduce. Had there been different classes of human beings they would not have been able to mate or reproduce. But, such differences are not seen anywhere. Hence, their class has to be the same.

According to the region, weather and family traditions, one may attain black, white or brown skin. There may also be some differences in the structure of the faces but that doesn't mean they belong to any class other than human beings.

In spite of this fact, people have created their own special classes in the name of country, region, faith (ethnic group), language and so on for example, Bengali, Tamil, Punjabi, Chinese, Japanese etc. On the basis of language also such divisions have been formed. But, these are not real. The natural oneness cannot be split into such sections.

Racism in India is bizarre. When in the ancient times the social engineering system of four *varnas* (social classes) was put in place, it was based on the nature of one's natural attitude and business or work that he naturally liked and performed. They were classified broadly as teachers, warriors, businessmen and artisans. This classification was temporary and not static. There had always been the freedom to change profession. On this basis anyone could change his class, whenever one desired. Even today this classification based on profession exists. Organizations are also formed on this basis. Members of *Kisan Sabha* (Assembly of Farmers), *Shramik Sangh* (Labour Union), *Vyapaari Mandal* (Business Circles), *Adhyapak Sabha* (Institution of Teachers), *Rikshaw Union* etc, are those who are engaged in the corresponding profession. Class changes when the profession changes. One who is a teacher may later join the armed forces. Upon retirement one may start his own business. This way one's class may keep changing with time. But, he will still continue to belong to the specie of human beings. Even the family would also remain the same. Social class or caste of a person may be changed multiple times but from the perspective of human affection and cooperation, there will continue to be a unity amongst all. For example, "voter" belongs to a single class irrespective of where he stays and whatever business he conducts.

This simple equation has been immensely complicated in the dark age of medieval times. In these times of cultural decline, religious-anarchy and political-disturbances, society was divided into classes as 'castes' based on birth and clans. It might have been

fine if things remained there. But, when discrimination started based on caste or creed, then that brought the onslaught of nepotism. Classes got divided into sub-classes and countrymen got divided into communities. Some class of people started considering themselves to be superior to others based on their caste. Classification based on qualities, work and character is plausible but classification based on caste and discrimination on that basis can only be termed shameful and shocking.

This mindless classification is beginning to mature into a tradition now. Every community has many sub-classes and each sub-class believes itself to be “the” supreme class and discriminate against others. The classes of *Brahmins* (class of religious teachers), *Kshatriyas* (warrior class), *Vaishyas* (business class) etc, have now become castes defined by birth (family lineage). Within each there are many sub-classes. People belonging to these sub-classes do not mingle with each other, moreover they restrict their social interactions, marriages etc to within their sub-class. Only people from the same sub-class are invited to any social festivities that are organized. People joining the marriage processions also often need to belong to the same sub-class. This parochialism is settling in to business and politics as well. Even while casting vote, people give undue consideration to the 'caste', creed and community of the candidate. More importance is attached to these 'labels' of a candidate than to his qualifications and honesty.

The practice of such division and discrimination has caused heavy damage to the whole society. Society was already afflicted with discrimination due to language, regionalism and communalism. Addition of discrimination based on caste has made the system scornfully ugly. We are Indians only for the namesake but going by our blind convictions and communal divisions it seems we are continuously disintegrating the strength that lies in our unity. Externally, an Orange is one fruit but when we peel its skin, it seems that there are numerous particles inside that are different from one another. This is a sad and unfortunate situation of our society today. As if this was not enough, the menace of racism is catching on as well. The rise of parochialism and bigotry is fragmenting and weakening us further. Under these circumstances, survival of the strength that lies in our seemingly infallible unity looks difficult.

Root-Cause of Our Social Evils and Backwardness:

With the onslaught of casteism, the custom of alienating others and humiliating them begins to take roots. This parochialism has far-reaching ill effects. People start putting efforts to stack up greater benefits for their narrow community in business, jobs and elections. This evokes similar reaction from others. They adopt the policy of giving tit for tat and this deepens the divide even further. Later this venom results in quarrels, testimonies, and litigations. One loses the eye for justice and ethics. Casteism, communalism and regionalism dominate the behaviour of most people today. Matters come to a head when people start plotting

to capture power and rule by creating a majority of their own class. Disregarding the well-established propriety in arresting the population explosion, people start believing in having more and more children belonging to their own class in order to augment their vote bank and enable a win for their candidate. And then they profit under this candidate's patronage. Clearly when one class starts getting more benefits and the inappropriate side prevails then it is sure to evoke a reciprocal reaction. The vicious cycle continues and spreads more hatred, corruption, nepotism and so on....

Everyone knows that there is great strength in unity and there are great benefits of it. If threads of a cloth get scattered then that cloth becomes useless. Nations that are built upon the strength of unity, prosper rapidly and easily cross all difficulties even if they are tiny nations like Japan and Israel. But, in the nation where there are large differences, all the energy gets spent on petty disputes. They are plagued by jealousy, malice, vengeance, which in the end harm everyone.

In our country, marriages are also associated with casteism. People want to marry their sons and daughters within their community. Division within smaller and smaller sub-classes has greatly reduced the spread of these classes. In that limited spread, it is difficult to find a right match for the boys and girls. In desperation one has to compromise and select out of the limited options. There is high demand for the qualified ones. This has been the major cause of the curse of dowry and hence of

corruption in our society. Moreover, because of limited choice within a small 'community' one is forced to choose amongst the inept ones. It is therefore seen that people compromise and go for an inept match. If the extent of the search was larger and beyond the community, then there would not have been the need to struggle this much, indulge in adulation or pay dowry.

Good match could have been found in the neighbourhood itself. There would have been sufficient information about their nature and traditions and marriages would have been more successful. But, when one is entangled within the community, one needs to look afar and then real information about the state of that family or the nature of the boy or girl is not available. One has to shoot in the dark and that mostly yields unsuitable results. The problem of finding the right match for marriage gets complex in the wake of restrictions to search within the community. Its solution was simple. If caste distinctions were not allowed to get in the way, relations could have been easily and cheaply formed without having to bid for them. Parochialism could have been contained and circle of affinity widened.

In our country, backwardness also has got associated with clans and classes. Not just people but the whole communities remain entangled in backwardness because of their bondage to restrict themselves to within the clan and to adopt the same rituals. The basic reason behind the backwardness of many so-called scheduled castes or backward classes, is that they are being deprived of progressive thinking, liberation from blind customs

and are thus being forced to live in the rotten circumstances by their own leaders and protectors of traditions. If they were allowed to mingle with people who have made more progress then it would have promoted unity and equality. No division would have existed between the progressed and the backwards. Everyone would have attained the same status, progressed together and benefited equally in the development. This division has relegated a large section of the society to an inferior existence and snatched away the opportunity from them to progress on the path of development. This can only be called social injustice.

Indian constitution has renounced any caste or creed-based, community-based, or social status-based discrimination. In order to create equality it has also ascertained all possible economic and political provisions too. But, that is not sufficient. In order to bring emotional transformation, the belief systems will have to be transformed and deep rooted traditions that have become habits and that instigate discrimination in our society, will need to be radically changed.

It is a folly of the wise that has erected the walls of division and discrimination. It has forced multitudes not to rise over the illusory false pride over the community that they belong to or to rise from their downtrodden state. This indeed is the right time to end this foolishness. This mistake has encouraged a large section of the Hindu society to convert to other egalitarian religions. If the situation remains unchanged then the caste-based system will also be considered unjust and more and more people will drift away from Hinduism.

fatalism and astrology

Karma and its result are interdependent. Upon labouring through the day, one will earn one's wages at the end of the day. Upon depositing the savings in the bank, one is sure to earn interest on it. Businessmen run their shops and earn their living. Farmer sows the seeds and happily reaps the crop. The studious become scholars. Those who go to the gym regularly, become strong. Artists practise and become proficient in their skills. That *karma* (action, deed) committed in a state of mental yields fruit is obvious. Intake of bad food will give rise to stomach-ache. Those who commit suicide would die. Those who adopt spartan and orderly life-styles become healthy, strong

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and attain longevity. Those with soft-spoken, humble and gentlemanly behaviour make many friends whereas angry, rigid and ill-mannered make others cynical and antagonistic towards them. It is all a result of one's *karma*. There may be delay in getting the results of one's *karma* but there will never be injustice.

Karma of today becomes fate tomorrow. What is milk today will be curd tomorrow. Its name and form may change but it is not possible to get curd without milk. It is only our good or bad *karma* today that brings good or bad result sometimes in future. We must accept the fact that as we sow, so shall we reap.

Sometimes the results do not show up immediately but after a delay. Because of this some restless people lose their patience and start doubting whether they will see the results of what they have done. This kind of distrust is philosophical atheism. The purpose of believing in God and worshipping Him is to establish the faith that God is omnipresent, omniscient and righteous. No *karma* escapes His notice. Over time, He gives the fruits according to one's *karma* sometime or the other. Those fruits may be in the form of bodily or worldly benefits or losses, or, spiritual development and happiness, etc. Sooner or later bad *karma* will always conclude in misery in some way.

Farmer sows the seeds. It takes months before he can reap the crop. Gardener plants tree in the garden. It takes years for those trees to grow. Trees like Banyan and Peepal take really long to grow. But, no farmer and no gardener grows impatient or loses

faith. Because of the delay, none of them leave their job or get disappointed.

Ignoring the established principle, some mindless people adopt the strange principle of fatalism. They believe that God writes one's fate at His own whims and fancies. Because of this belief the faith in the natural "Law of *Karma*" begins to wane. If God writes one's fate at His own free will then why does one need to analyse his own actions?

If fatalism is indeed the right principle then all the credit and blemish must be attributed to God. Who needs to do anything? Who will earn the fruits? If God schedules everything then He alone is responsible for giving happiness or credit to some and pain or disrepute to others. Man then remains a puppet in His hands. For a puppet show, the basic skill is that of the puppeteer and all the credit and rewards are given to him. Puppet itself is just the means. It is only meant for the show. All the benefits go to the puppeteer. Guns and swords are only the means to kill but the punishment for the murder is awarded to the man who operates them. Gun is lifeless, when is it ever hanged for the misdeed? If God lays out everything then on that basis the responsibility all the acts lies with Him, who defined everything. In such a situation, no man can be held a sinner or saint. He commits the act only because he was helpless against his destiny. This way no one can be impeached nor can anyone earn credit for his act. Then there is no justification for praise or condemnation of anyone and

so why should anyone be punished or rewarded either? More so, why would one need to do anything, even the daily chores, at all?

Thus, there is no logic behind the belief that God defines destiny, as per His will. At most what can be regarded is that there is some invisible power that maintains the law of karma or that defines the results for one's past *karma* on the basis of certain rules. If this is true then man is the master of his own destiny. It is a different thing that some plants fruit faster than others based on the laws of nature. Similarly some karma may result in consequent effects earlier while some may take even a lifetime. In any case the doer is principally responsible. It is his own (physical or mental) deeds that prosper with time. Therefore, there should be no attempts to bring God in the picture and belittle or neglect what is our creation.

Misconceptions About Astrology:

Astrology in ancient India was developed as a science to understand celestial movements and to analyse and predict major events like solar spots, eclipses, meteorites, magnetic storms, etc. It even helped the experts in calculation of time, formation of calendar, and prediction of weather, etc. However, in the later ages due to loss of many original texts and misinterpretations by some scholars some irrational implications and practices became popular in the Indian society.

The principle of putting the responsibility of sorrows and pleasures on the position of stars and constellations is even more bizarre. All the planets and satellites of the solar system are far away from earth. Besides, they are not any living beings. Like inert objects they simply maintain their existence. Like our earth, they simply move around in their orbits and on their axis as per the laws of nature. This is their method and system on the basis of which they conduct their activities. Only their light and some magnetic and subtle effect is all that reaches the earth. In such a situation, how is it possible that they would pick individuals out of the five billion odd humans on the earth and present good or bad effects on them separately? Keeping track to this extent is not possible for even an extremely intelligent man. Then how is it possible for the planets in the sky to trace out each man and afflict fear or shower some boons upon him?

Many children are born in this world every moment. Their horoscopes must be identical. In that case, the destiny and future of every child who is born at the same instant should also be identical! But, where does one see it happening? Children born in different parts of the globe, in prosperous families, or in tribal areas live their own different lives. So, there seems to be no logic behind the belief that celestial congregation of certain stars at the time of one's birth forms one's destiny.

It is even more bizarre to expect that after performing some rituals, the same stars and constellations will stop being unlucky and instead start being favourable to the person who performed

the rituals. This sounds similar to the practice of bribery and flattery that is prevalent amongst the corrupt set of people. Leaving the right methods aside, this bag of tricks is adopted by this corrupt set of people for getting the wrong things done.

If God also starts adopting such tricks then who would believe in His divinity? Then, isn't He too adopting the manners and policies of those disdainful people. Those who can afford the expense of the rituals will be able to extract the benefit. Those who are poor and incapable will not be able to perform the rituals and will continue to suffer the wrath of the stars! In this situation, instead of considering God as proponent of justice, He would be seated in the party of corrupts. It is even more a shame on those who use these rituals as an excuse to grab money and taint the image of the very God, the praises of whose power and ability they sing. After all God must remain just and persistent in his decisions. If He starts changing his systems and methods at the temptation of mere rituals then who would believe in His absolute greatness?

In reality there is nothing of that kind. God, stars and constellations are all busy doing their own work. They do not have time to choose out of crores of men to torture some and shower gifts on others. Earlier there may have been people who might be believing them to be alive and imposing allegations of topsy turvy mismanagement on them but this is the age of science. The positions of all planets and satellites in the solar system have been nailed down. Now there should be no question

of believing that the stars and constellations pick individuals and affect them arbitrarily or that they determine the destiny and future of individuals.

If stars were to affect the earth then their influence would have been on a large part of the earth. Those living in that part of the earth would have all been affected alike. There seems to be no basis for such fantasies or beliefs that the stars would have attachment with or nurture malice against specific individuals.

Off and on some boys and girls are categorized as *mangali* in the Hindu families. These children have *mangal* (the planet Mars) in one of the brackets of their horoscope. It is believed that spouses of these children will die early. If girl is *mangali*, then she will have to become a widow and if the boy is *mangali* then he would have to suffer the loss of his wife. So, the remedy found is to marry such *mangali* boys and girls only to each other.

The literal meaning of the word "*Mangal*" is welfare. So it should mean that where it resides, this 'starr' it will only bring welfare but what kind of *mangal* is it that eliminates people wherever it resides? If it resides on husband's half of the girl's horoscope it seems to be eliminating her husband and if it resides on the wife's half of the boy's horoscope then it seems to eliminate his wife. What can be the reason behind this? Even after deep inspection, there doesn't seem to be any rational basis or reason for this. Even a snake would not bite unless it is provoked. Then it is beyond

comprehension why *mangal* would bring misfortune without any provocation.

Many competent boys and girls are deprived of a good partner because of this conviction of their parents or grand parents. *Mangali* girls fail to find a *mangali* boy and vice versa. Years go by in the search for such a match and having crossed the marriageable age, many have to remain bachelors all their life. Absurd delusions regarding the effects of stars and constellations are reason behind this misery. *Mangal* (Mars) is so far away from Earth. How can it rush over to the earth to become a hindrance in someone's marriage? What can this be called except misplaced notions and fantasies?

Reasons like dowry, casteism etc already make it difficult to find the right partners. When finding a proper match of horoscopes is added on top of this, it makes matters even more difficult. There are many religious creeds in the world but nowhere are the horoscopes prepared and nowhere does anyone feel the need for matching horoscopes at the time of marriage. There is only a small section in the Indian Hindus that believes in matching horoscopes before getting the boys and girls married. Even within the Hindu society, more than half of the population today does not see any need for this matching of horoscopes and freely goes about finding the right match for boys and girls. They are not trapped in any hesitations nor do they suffer upon ignoring the horoscopes. It is the folly of some wise that allows such futile thoughts to be nurtured and cause inconveniences.

discrimination and divisions will not last long

There are as many as two thousand religious creeds in this world. They all have their own philosophies or doctrines. There are occasional similarities in these creeds but mostly they all have their own independent beliefs. What is the origin of these beliefs? There is only one answer one gets to this question - either God stated it that way Himself or apostles and prophets rendered it that way. How can such sources be dismissed? After all faith is faith. How can the prophecies of God and apostles be

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fallacious? There can be no arguments against faith. How can the statements of God and apostles be challenged then?

God of every religion is one. Most of the religions believe that the creator and master of this world is one. No religion believes in presence of two or more Gods. There may be multiple incarnations of God but those are not the creators. The abilities and working styles of these incarnations, in the form of a being, are limited. They do not proclaim themselves to be the supreme power. Similarly in some religions Satan or devil is understood to be the rival of God. His only job is to mislead people and deceive them into wrongdoing.

In all the topics like God's appearance, His methods of working, the birth of this universe, diversity of forms of worship, life after death, fruits of one's actions, heaven-hell etc, these creeds have their own beliefs that have been devoutly accepted by their followers as conventions. The followers treat these beliefs as cast in stone and consider it to be their religious duty to adopt them. Overpowered by their faiths, there is no scope left for them to doubt the utility and reality of those beliefs. How can they then be subjected to questioning? What are the facts behind their beliefs – how does one raise this question to them? Upon raising doubts one is accused of being an atheist and threatened with consequences like angering God and getting condemned to hell.

Surprisingly, every community believes their beliefs are cent percent correct. In which case, beliefs of all the others naturally seem incorrect. Everyone calls his own beliefs to be the truth and others as inaccurate. Own beliefs are pushed to an extent that every one besides them is made to suffer. This war started from the very time when more than one lines of faiths started being followed. In order to prove others wrong, debates were organized and when logic proved incapable of winning the argument then the opponents were held atheist and a *jihad* was initiated against them. In the medieval times, there were many such wars and their reduced, smaller versions keep appearing in the form of riots even now.

When every one of the two thousand religious creeds adopts its own beliefs, then for any rational person it is a complex riddle to identify which out of those is right and which is wrong. It is not even possible that every believer submit his interpretation for review to an independent authority, which would then put a stamp of approval on those beliefs that are realistic. If rebuttal of other beliefs causes discomfort to the followers of that belief then everyone must adopt silence on those topics. Another possibility is that together by assigning greater importance to useful subjects, a collection of thoughts be put together as a world religion. If both of these options are not acceptable then the only option left is to let everyone follow his own beliefs but no one must force his beliefs on others. While this will not help nail down the truth, it will surely assist in maintaining peace. This requires building a

psyche similar to one that exists in a family where people are free to wear different types of clothes and eat different types of food. This is the approach of tolerance and wisdom. Raising differences, which cannot be resolved in presence of individual biases, is meaningless. It is best to avoid a meaningless debate that wastes time, consumes thoughts and reduces camaraderie.

Researching for facts is possible only if everyone is in a frame of mind where they are ready to accept flaws in their customs. But, it does not seem to be possible in current circumstances because if everyone's customs are formed by his own 'God' then how can they be invalidated? Significance of other's customs are determined by some one else's Gods and not our own. Only one's own God can be believed. If every God was to be believed then how could one harmonize conflicting definitions? Ages have gone by in this indecision and this will continue until a bouquet of the best practices is put together or every difference of opinion is resolved and only one interpretation remains.

With freedom of expression having received universal recognition, both these options seem impossible. In this situation, the path to peace is to allow everyone to stay with their own beliefs but throw no allegations at others, spread no communal violence. At most, freedom can be given to share information about the special features of one's belief to others who may be willing to listen. Policy of denial and denunciation must be shunned. This is the only way to attain provisional peace.

If independent investigation of truth continues on every side then time will come when people will shun their differences and harbour discretion and propriety. And, that is when the time for a new refined philosophy to get established will not be far.

Feasible & Promising Way to Peace:

It will be better if religion is confined to the subjects of righteous conduct, virtues, dutifulness and ideals of humanity. Only then it can be a sovereign religion. Nobility, austerity, generosity and genuineness can be the main elements of such a sovereign religion. Harmony and cooperating and respectful, modest behaviour can be the actionable practices of such a religion. This aspect of religion is eternal and on the grounds of human dignity, is also globally acceptable. All policies and rules, which can be formed by balancing high ideals with humanity, must be included in this religious deliberation. The list can be long, if detailed, but if appropriately formulated it can be made crisp. From the perspective of what is common knowledge, it can be categorized under wisdom, honesty, responsibility and courage. These four categories cover the complete gamut of religious elements. On need basis, these can also be commented upon and interpreted in detail.

The aspect of customs, traditions, worship, and philosophical beliefs typically gets attached with religion. These are formed according to the conditions at the time of their origin and then

continue to be transformed as time progresses. When there was scarcity of clothes, people used to put on robes. Those were sufficient as a cover and a protection from weather. When conditions changed and availability of clothes was no longer a concern, people adopted varied fashions and got various new types of clothes stitched. At nights, oil lamps were used at homes. When production of electricity began, every house started to have electric lamps. Hand held fans were used during summers. Now, electric fans and air-conditioners are in circulation. Similar to the changes in practical life, changes are seen in the philosophical domains as well.

The World has shrunk into what is termed as a 'global village' now. Ideas that originate at one place reach far and wide through the print and electronic media and the Internet. Ability of critical analysis is more developed and people are more inclined towards comparative studies. Hence, old beliefs are easily undergoing transformation without the need for large scale movements or wars. For example, in India, practice of *Sati* is almost extinct, child marriages have come down drastically. Customs of class-based discrimination have undergone major changes with the progressive thinking and broad mindedness of parents at many places, with the matured girls and boys finding their own compatible matches, and with initiatives of several social organizations. Because of increasing awareness, pomp and show during marriages and practice of dowry is also on the reversing trend in many sections of the Indian society. Similarly tradition of

community lunches after a death in the family (*mrituk bhoj*), system of veils, practice of begging have also seen a decline. People are spontaneously turning away from whatever seems irrelevant. Earlier slaves and maids were sold and bought in the open market in many parts of the world but this doesn't happen any longer. Monarchies are being demolished and democracies are gaining ground. These are all the changes that have stood out as worthwhile and hence have been adopted after comparative analysis of traditions and philosophies.

These changes will continue. Based on what is the need of the hour and based on their ease and conveniences, people will keep making changes in their thoughts and actions. As the human foresight and comparative analysis abilities develop, the pace of these changes will pick up. Whatever proves worthless, will fall into oblivion and whatever proves worthwhile will find acceptance even if it is new. Such improvements and changes have happened over time in the past and these initiatives will continue in future. We must keep ourselves ready for such changes. Progress is the order of destiny. Human civilization has progressed so far through multifaceted methods of improvement adoption and instilling of new practices. In future too, by embracing these methods with prudence and foresight we will keep reaching close to the goal of global ascent with peace and happiness.

Man has advanced gradually. His personality too has evolved over time. No obstacles will hamper this natural trend of growth.

Nothing is static in Nature. The universe is expanding. Our solar system revolves around other stars and even those stars revolve around other stars. The order of continuous progress, takes every object, every creature forward. Natural instincts and thoughts also keep evolving gradually. Advancement and evolution is the nature of consciousness-force.

There is no need to lose heart over the unusual differences that are visible in the various philosophies. There is no need to worry about them either. It is sufficient if we adopt the policy of keeping patience and averting wars. Narrow viewpoints and obstacles of discrimination will easily get removed with time. There was a time when going from one end of the earth to another was next to impossible. But now, ships and aeroplanes have made it possible. Philosophical differences and divisions and bigotry are not as prevalent as they were earlier and it will be even lesser in the days to come. The human conscience is moving towards unity. As the human foolishness declines, the thoughts of unity and equality will prevail and the way will be found.

this much, the wise must understand

If universe is studied from scientific perspective, then the whole universe can be seen as pervaded with heat, light and sound waves, or more precisely with electromagnetic and subtler energy waves. There are atomic storms everywhere. There is repulsion and attraction between various substances. The universe looks as if a magician is running a show in a magical city. This indeed is the real picture of the universe where there is gigantic storm stirring inside whatever seems stationary from outside. Every

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constituent of inert substance seems to have its own separate existence but they don't remain static for long. There is a rapid change occurring in them. Even within a living being, it is amazing how every cell remains active – producing, transporting, receiving some bio-chemical or physiological signal, every moment. The whole fabric of this universe is amazing. Its mercurialness is beyond comprehension for a normal brain. Universe seems stationary to an untrained mind but that is a pure delusion.

If life is visualized under this mercurialness then we reach close to the reality. The penetration of ovum by the sperm yields a fertilized cell that slowly transforms into an embryo, which then develops into a foetus in the uterus and eventually gets born as a child. The child goes from infancy to childhood to adolescence and then on to youth. Youth culminates into old age. Body becomes weak and fragile and eventually death takes over the body. The visible becomes invisible and starts searching for an avenue for new birth. Then follows the same sequence, the same state and the same destiny. We cruise along in this circle of change. The time that is gone never returns. The journey from life to death is incessant. But it is surprising that man believes himself to be 'permanently the same'. He fails to notice the changes and the disintegration and remains entangled in his present. He doesn't even think of his eventuality. The fallout of this delusion comes out when it is already too late and there is no option left except repentance.

The wise, like the fools, believe in the delusion of the present being everything and everlasting. Circumstances change with time. Infancy doesn't remain in a grown up child, childishness disappears at the onset of youth and no sign of youth remains in old age. Even in these days of better knowledge, man does not pay attention to the rapid pace of change and does not think and act according to what the situation demands.

The profile of the present must be constructed keeping an eye on the future and creating a right balance with it. When children grow up, their guardians start focussing on their education, marriage and job. They start putting efforts to make the right arrangements for it. Before the rains, arrangements are made for the embankments in the farm and for the roof of the house to be appropriately repaired. Woollens are arranged before the winter starts and before the summer strikes the clothes are appropriately changed. The farmer does not make such a mistake. After sowing the seeds, he pays attention to the soil fertility, watering and surveillance of the crops. If he doesn't pay attention to these, he wouldn't get to reap the crop. The sown seeds would be wasted too. Each one of us knows the importance of preparing well for future keeping our immediate interest in mind, or following others but, ironically, no preparations are made to keep the future perfect by keeping an eye on the continuous changes in life. This ideological vacuum must not be allowed if we really want to elevate our life.

Road Map to Fulfilling Life:

To be born as a human being is a rare gift. Man is the greatest creation of God. No other creature has been gifted with such privileges. Man has received evolved faculties and rights only so that he correctly utilizes them, with responsibility and discretion, to take imperfection to perfection and exhibit his skills in making this world – the garden of God — more picturesque, happier place for all living beings. This is the foresight and discretion that results in a heavenly blissful life and a liberated thinking.

But, all this is possible only if the importance of the present and possibilities of the future are kept in mind while drawing out any programmes and schedules. It is possible only when together with world order, the changing circumstances of life are kept in mind and also no mistakes are made in defining a bright future. Hindu philosophers have defined the four stages of life with the intention that each of these four turns, doors or crossroads provides a specific direction and inspiration to advance the journey (of the soul) from imperfection to perfection.

In the childhood, keeping in mind the needs of the youth, the need is to remain obsessed with keeping the body healthy and training and developing the mind through education and nurturing of skills and talents. Those who keep this focus during this first stage (called *Brahamcharya Ashram*), clearly their youth

will be competent and orderly. Those who in their youth bear their responsibilities and organize their finances to last them till their final days have truly exercised prudence in their lives. This stage (*Grahashta Ashram*) of life is the phase to practice self-discipline and expand and make creative use the physical and mental potentials. Like taking interest in physical exercises and studies during the first phase, it is important, while making worldly progress and enjoying family life in the second phase, to observe abstinence and enhance physical and mental strength in the youth otherwise the old age would be painful due to the hollowness.

The old age (*vaanprastha*) is best utilized in returning the favour of millions of those who have provided immeasurable support during one's lifetime, by sincerely engaging oneself into tasks of social service and promotion of goodwill. In this period, the task of making the children or younger family members self-dependent and cultured citizens is almost over. Hence, all the available time and potential must be dedicated to welfare of the needy. The fourth stage is dedicated to renunciation (*sanyaas*). Moving with the times, this fourth stage must be combined with *vaanprastha*. Life's first half must be kept for worldly duties and progress and the latter half must be entrusted to charitable purposes. This system of four stages of life is thoroughly beneficial for serving the purpose of self-development as well as uplifting of the society and thus helps one accomplish a truly fulfilling life.

But, this system does not get implemented successfully. People remain rooted in their family life (*grahastha*) and worldly pleasures from the start of their youth till the dead-end of life. Instead of adopting ideals that have far-reaching benefits, the whole life is often spent on fulfilling selfish aims. Greed, attachment and egoism occupy the mind. Everyone tries to bridge the gulf of ambitions and cravings but this gulf is so deep that in spite of spending everything on it, it is impossible to bridge it. This is the result of ignoring the fundamental reality of life.

In the fast pace of time, the present exists only like a flash of few moments between the past and the future. It is only the present that is in our hand. It is like a quick opportunity of lightening of good luck (to brighten the future). This must be made the best use of, without fail. Lethargy and passion for pleasures are two devils that come in the way of utilizing these moments effectively. There is a need to be vigilant and protect against the attacks of these devils hidden within each one of us. So, watch your thoughts every moment, contemplate on what could be done for further refinement and improvement and do whatever necessary to build a better future.

The situation before birth and after death must be kept in mind. The birth as a human is achieved after going through almost uncountable number of (referred as eighty-four lakhs in the allegorical style of ancient Indian scriptures) petty life forms and the life-span as a human is very short too. Not even half the

population lives the full life. They die an untimely death even while they are pretty young. No one knows what is in store for him? Time flies past and the journey to death goes on at a rapid pace. The useful time is the one at present. Tomorrow may not come or may not be productive due to some long and serious illness or disability. In that situation, doing something for others may be really difficult. On the contrary, it may happen that one may be forced to live a dependent, humiliating or neglected life. These possibilities must not be ignored. One must be vigilant against letting laxity creep in the efforts to make prudent use of the time in hand. One must not let one's guard down to the extent that it lands one in a state where it is difficult to decide the way forward or take the next course of action.

Know Your Real Self-Interests:

The real interest of the self does not lie in narrow selfishness. Basic necessities are few. The body can be well maintained with a life of an ordinary citizen. Ambitions can be controlled by self-analysis and self-study in the light of the thoughts and works of elevated personalities; desires of pleasure may be channelized in constructive activities and life can be lived in simplicity by exercising restraint. Upon adopting this policy, substantial time can be found for charity that can provide reasons for satisfaction, respect, cooperation, glory and praise. These are the worldly benefits. Bright future in this life and beyond is also associated

with benevolent activities. For an altruistic life, there is no need of vast resources. A lot can be achieved even in their absence. One's own time, industrious efforts and capital of goodwill are no less important. Enormous cooperation, love and content come as natural returns of these. We can lift our character through integrity, generosity, humility, gentility and service. Just this is sufficient for charity. One need not renounce the worldly life to follow high ideals. Ideals can be associated with the normal activities as well. Once our mind is convinced, once it tastes the fruit of content achieved by self-less service, it begins to enjoy adopting moral ideals and disciplines too.

It is not necessary to erect a monument to cement one's reputation. It is possible to live a life from which others can draw an inspiration for excellence. If one leaves the road to evil and treads a virtuous path then this indirect help can make, not just that person but the whole society, grateful towards the one who provided the inspiration for it. Hearts can be won with courteous and chivalrous behaviour, and in response, it evokes similar behaviour from others. To initiate and promote such traditions is a creditable act which makes not just ours but also other's future bright.

Gentility percolates deep down to the conscience and it gets carried well beyond this life. The future of the saintly cannot be abysmal. They will never fall into misery. The dignity of human

existence is in following such learning. It is not necessary to perform major sacramental rituals to attain excellence. Living a life of gentility is a practice that is easy and accessible for everyone.

Amongst all follies, the biggest one is that one forgets the existence of the soul; that one forgets what is in one's true interest and what is not; that one expends oneself over petty ambitions and cravings; that one fails to understand the importance and purpose of life; and that, forgetting the eventual death and believing the comfortable existence of today to be perennial, one wastes time on childish, short-sighted acts that are at best for entertainment and killing time. It will be better if, before it is too late, one understands the situation and takes initiatives that lead to a splendid future.

Everything here is in flux, only virtuous mentality consonant with the conscience, is invariable. If one understands this and latches on to it, a situation can be created where one cannot just carry oneself through towards beatifying goals, but also provide an opportunity for others to sail through as well.



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