



Pujyashri Chitrabhanuji

Parable a Day

PARABLE A DAY

Written by

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The Immortal Song

- (1) *May the sacred stream of amity flow forever in my heart,
May the universe prosper, such is my cherished desire.*
- (2) *May my heart sing with ecstasy at the sight of the virtuous,
And may my life be an offering at their feet.*
- (3) *May my heart bleed at the sight of the wretched, the cruel, and the poor,
And may tears of compassion flow from my eyes.*
- (4) *May I always be there to show the path to the pathless wanderers of life,
Yet if they should not hearken to me, may I bide patiently.*
- (5) *May the spirit of goodwill enter all our hearts,
May we all sing together the immortal song of humanhood.*

—Chitrabhanuji



THE INNER LIGHT

WISHING to test the wisdom of his two sons, Ajata and Abhaya, their father gave each of them a silver coin saying, "Buy something with this that would fill the entire house."

The thoughtless one bought a cart-load of hay and scattered it all over the room. The thoughtful one bought a fragrant candle and lit it, and its light and aroma filled every nook and corner of the room!

Both of them filled the house, but one with trash, the other with light and fragrance.

THE MIND OF MAN

A SNAKE and a mouse happened to live in the same barn, full of haystacks. The farmer put in his hand to take out some hay and instantly the snake bit him. The mouse thrust its little head out at the same time. The farmer sighted him and muttered indifferently, "Ah, it's just a wee mouse!" The next day, the mouse bit the farmer's hand, while the snake peered out. Catching sight of the snake, the farmer screamed, "My God, the snake bit me!" and fainted with sheer terror.

It is our fear that creates terror. It is fear that emasculates and saps our courage. So he who conquers the mind conquers the world.

BEYOND MEASURE

SHE was a strapping young shepherdess who carried her foaming cans of fresh milk for sale in the town. On the way she passed her sweetheart's field. She would always stop there, and the two of them would sit under a spreading banyan tree talking fondly for a while. While leaving, she would fill his mug to the brim with the fresh, creamy milk. After selling the rest of the milk in town, she would return home.

Once a friend met her on the way home. "How much did you make out of your milk today?" she asked casually.

"Seven rupees," she replied.

"And how much for what you gave to your sweetheart?" asked the friend.

"You don't expect me to count its value, do you? What's given out of love cannot be measured in terms of money!" the young maiden replied with a tinkling laugh.

A sage who heard of this, remarked, "Then how can anyone ever measure the worth of God's love? It's beyond all weights and measures."

NOT BY PRAYER ALONE

SINCE time immemorial it has been debated, "Which is superior—Endeavour or Prayer?" Learned debators argue vehemently in favour of one or the other, each according to his own convictions. To my mind, it is a humble boatman who has found a perfectly satisfying answer to this highly-debated abstract question.

The boatman has named his two oars 'Endeavour' and 'Prayer'. If anyone questions him about these strange names, he gives no reply, but immediately plies only one oar, 'Prayer'. The boat begins to spin. He stops. Next he plies the other oar, 'Endeavour'. The result is the same; only this time the boat spins in the opposite direction.

Presently, with a smile, he plies both his oars. 'Endeavour' and 'Prayer' now work simultaneously and in unison and forthwith the little boat goes skimming over the water's surface, sailing swiftly and serenely, in the intended direction.

If Endeavour and Prayer work in unison, is there a port in the Seven Seas which the Boat of Life cannot reach?

FIRE AND WATER

KSHATIMOHANBABU and his wife were poles apart in temperament. He was serene as the full moon; she was hot as a seething volcano. One evening, Babuji returned home long after time for supper. His wife who was out of temper because the supper was already cold, greeted him in a strident voice the moment he had crossed the threshold.

“You are so obsessed with these silly notions of service that you forget all about your meals,” she screamed, her rage mounting with her words. “You lose all count of time; you never give a thought to the inconvenience you cause me by your irregular habits. Well, here’s your plate of rice—cold as ice—eat it if you are hungry!”

Her husband smiled good-naturedly, picked up the plate of rice and held it on her head. “Never mind if the rice has got cold,” he said sweetly. “There’s such a fire roaring in your head, your eyes have turned red and the whole atmosphere is hot as if the house were on fire! I am sure the rice will be warmed up in no time if I hold it on your head and then I can have a nice, warm supper without bothering you!”

His wife, whose sense of humour was better than her temper, burst into laughter. She apologised for her outburst and promised to curb her temper and her tongue, in future.

उवसमेण ह्णे कोहं ।

If rage is like fire, is not forgiveness like a jet of cool water putting out the flame ?

“COME IN—COME IN”

THE earth looked fresh and green after the rains. The sky was still covered with banks of dark clouds, but the setting sun touched their fringes with its mellow beams, painting the sky with many splashes of gold and red and purple. To enhance the beauty of this picture, a rainbow appeared spanning the sky with its seven-coloured bridge. It was truly a picture of unsurpassing beauty.

One of the devotees of Mahatma Anandghanji was so deeply moved by the grandeur of this sight that he ran in to awaken his master from his deep meditation.

“*Gurudeva*,” he exclaimed excitedly, “Come out, come out! Behold this sight of ecstatic beauty in the sky. It is something you may never again see on earth; it is something celestial in its grandeur!”

Mahatma Anandghanji’s lips quivered in a faint smile, which seemed to fill the air with its delicate fragrance. As white buds spring on a delicate creeper, so gentle words sprang to his lips. “Come in, my son, Come in! Come unto the source of all light and colour from which alone springs this magnificent sight that has so enthralled you. Here you will have the vision of the soul shimmering in a translucent blaze of light and colour. Come in, my son, Come in! You may not get another chance to behold a sight so exceedingly beautiful. Come IN!”

THE WORLD : A MIRROR!

EACH of us views the world according to his own vision. If a man wears dark glasses, the whole world appears dark to him; even the silvery moon seems dim to him. To view the world as it is you need a clear vision.

When it was decided to find out who was vicious in the court at Hastinapura, Dharmaraja could not find a single vicious man, for he could find some virtue in every single man, and to him they were all virtuous.

When Duryodhana was told to undertake the same investigation, he could trace some vice even in the most virtuous, and to him the whole court seemed to be overflowing with the vicious.

NOT A GRAVEYARD

WHEN Bernard Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize, there was a gathering to celebrate the event. The fact that Shaw was a vegetarian was not known to the organizers.

The hall was filled with many celebrities. The guests started helping themselves to the refreshments. It was soon observed that only Shaw refrained from touching them. Somebody told Shaw, "You are the guest of honour and you don't seem at all interested in the food!" Shaw made a reply that would be for ever carved in the memory of those who heard it:

"Because I am a human being and not a graveyard for the burial of the dead!"

"Animals are my friends and I do not eat my friends."

THE BRUTE IN MAN

A LION'S cub, stealing out of its den, caught sight of a large army marching by. The sight of so many men carrying rifles and bayonets scared him so that he slunk back into the cave, trembling with fear. His mother was resting. The frightened cub sought the warm shelter of his mother's side. Feeling him quake all over, she was quite concerned. "What's wrong, my pet? You are a lion's cub; you'll be the lord of the jungle. Nothing on earth should scare you so!" "But mother dear, look out," quavered the cub.

Glancing out of the cave, the lioness saw the army marching past. "Oh, that!" she said disdainfully. "That's an army marching to slaughter its own kind! Man is the only savage being on earth who kills his own kind in the name of religion, country, state or even language!"

THE WEIGHT OF A FLOWER

THE Prince's friends and admirers decided to weigh him against ornaments of gold as a token of their loyalty and devotion. He was ceremoniously seated in one pan of the scales while heavy ornaments of gold were piled in the other. But the scales would not balance.

Then there came his beloved, fragrant in body and mind with the freshness of chastity. She was quick to notice the helpless bewilderment of the group surrounding the Prince. Impulsively, she tossed into the pan a blooming rose she was holding in her hand and instantly the scales turned!

All marvelled at this inexplicable phenomenon. How could a delicate flower weigh down the pan that their heavy gold ornaments had failed to bring down? The love and purity that fill a woman's heart lend weight to things light as a flower making them heavier than gold.

VISION

ONE day it so happened that four men who were blind from birth met at an eye clinic where they had come for treatment. While waiting for their turn they got into a heated argument about the colour of the window panes. One of them touched it accidentally and remarked categorically "I can tell that the colour of the panes is green." The second contradicted him immediately, "Certainly not; it is red. My guide said so." The third now exclaimed, "But my father told me it was yellow, and yellow it must be." "You are all wrong," burst in the fourth. "The panes are blue; my son who is studying science said so and he must know better than the others!"

As this storm in the tea cup was raging, the doctor arrived. He intervened and restored peace. "None of you can see and yet you are squabbling over what somebody else told you. My cabin has eight glass panes, each of a different colour."

Isn't it foolish to argue dogmatically over any subject, ignoring the likelihood of its having several aspects?

TRUST BEGETS TRUST

CHARLES James Fox was a representative of the middle class in the House of Commons in England. He was a great orator. He had made it a point to pay his creditors as soon as he received his salary on the first of every month. Once a tradesman asked him for payment against a promissory note on the first of the month, as he had to deposit the money in the bank. Fox replied, "I am sorry I can't pay you this month, as I have to repay a loan to Sheridan. He has loaned me money without taking a promissory note from me, because he trusts me implicitly. Supposing I die suddenly, the poor man would get nothing."

The tradesman was highly impressed by Fox's high sense of integrity. Tearing the promissory note in bits he said, "I don't need this either; you may return the loan at your convenience."

Fox was deeply moved. Holding out the money he said to his creditor, "In that case I must pay you before I pay to Sheridan. In the first place, your loan is older; secondly, you need to put it in the bank urgently; thirdly, you've torn up the promissory note, trusting me. I'll pay Sheridan next month; he'll understand."

Trust begets trust.

INSATIABLE

IT was the Raja's custom to fill with gold coins the bowl of the *Bhikshu* who was the first in the morning to knock at his door for alms. Thus many a bowl had been filled. Once a new *Bhikshu* came knocking at his door. The Raja dropped handfuls of gold coins in it, but failed to fill it. His whole treasury was emptied into the bowl, but still it was not filled. The Raja marvelled at this strange phenomenon and asked, "What is this bowl made of? What metal has gone into its making?"

"This bowl is made of a human heart," replied the *Bhikshu*. "The human heart is so hungry, so greedy, so discontented that it will not be satisfied even with the gold of Croesus."

The Raja said, "You are the first to explain to me the meaning of contentment. Man's heart will never be satisfied till there is contentment in life."

PURSUIT OF MIRAGE

HE was very wealthy and yet very devout. Every morning he devoted two whole hours to worshipping God.

A young man came to him. "Sir, I am in urgent need of money. This watch is all I own. I wish to sell it; will you please buy it?"

The gentleman was annoyed. "Don't you see how busy I am?" he cried out impatiently. "Come next month."

"But Sir," persisted the man in a beseeching voice, "It's urgent; I need the money right now; my mother is ill."

"Didn't you hear what I said? Get out at once or I'll have you thrown out," yelled the gentleman.

"You needn't do that, I am leaving. But just one question: Have you no love for God?"

"That's a foolish question! I love God with all my heart. What has that got to do with it?"

"No, you don't," expostulated the desperate man. "You don't even believe in God. If you did, you wouldn't have threatened to throw me out. Man is the visible image of God. If you don't believe in what is visible, how can you believe in something invisible!" With that, he left the room.

DIALOGUE

THE Body and the Soul of man were engaged in a heated dialogue on sin. The Body, hot and flushed with righteous indignation, argued, "I am no more than a clump of clay—just a compound of the five elements. I cannot even imagine things that create cravings. How can I be held responsible for committing sin?"

The Soul countered with the same subtlety. "I don't even possess the physical organs to commit sin! Do I have senses? Cravings are from the senses; they gratify the senses—hence the word sensual! I have neither form nor matter—how can I commit sin?"

In the uneasy silence that followed this heated argument, was heard the awe-inspiring Voice of the Supreme Being:

"Sin is born of the dualism of the two, the Body and the Soul. You are equal partners in the creation of sin. Only when the Soul enters the Body, the Body becomes animate. The Body without the Soul is mere matter. The Soul without the Body is the Supreme Being. The world is nothing but the dualism of the Body and the Soul."

THE TOUCHSTONE OF FRIENDSHIP

THERE were two boys studying together in a school. They were very closely attached to each other; their friendship was very intimate. But, as years rolled by, their careers led them in different directions. One became a philosopher, the other, a minister. Each progressed in his own sphere with the passing of time.

Once the minister's wife called on the philosopher. During the course of conversation, she asked, "Why don't you ever come to see your old friend?"

The philosopher replied, "There are throngs of people who come to see my old friend. So, if I don't, it won't make much difference. But I assure you, I'll come to see him when he loses his seat in the elections. Those who bow low to him now will not take the trouble even to look him up then. When my friend's heart is pierced with disappointment and heavy with distress, I will be there to dress his wound with the balsam of encouragement and comfort."

Friendship lies, not in swelling the crowd of merry-makers, but in giving comfort to the lonely heart.

ELEGANCE OF SPEECH

THIS is the story of the youth of Siddharaj Jaisinh. His father Karnadev had died when Siddharaj was a child of three. The Queen Mother Minaldevi held the reins of administration in her capable hands.

Siddharaj's fame of personality spread as far as the metropolis and the *Badshah* sent an imperial command: "Your son is old enough to attend our *Darbar*." Minaldevi was worried; she gave her son minute instructions on how to behave at Delhi. Finally, Siddharaj remarked casually, "Mother, should a contingency arise about which you have not already instructed me, tell me how I should contact you." His mother was gratified to hear this significant remark.

As he approached the *Badshah* to offer his greetings, the latter seized both his hands firmly in his own and asked, "Come, young man, how are you going to free yourself now?"

Without making the least effort to release his hands, the lad replied with a smile: "In this ancient land of ours, when a groom takes his bride by one hand, he pledges himself to bear the responsibility of her welfare to the end of her life; but Your Majesty has grasped me by both my hands, so now I am secure for ever!"

The *Badshah* was so impressed with this elegance of speech that he rewarded Siddharaj handsomely and gave him permission to depart at will.

CONSTRUCTION—NOT DESTRUCTION

FIRE has two aspects—Flame and Light. Thought has two aspects—destructive and constructive. The former has its roots in Envy, the latter in Hope. The flame of Envy will consume the inner strength. The light of Hope will illumine darkness.

Once, Emperor Akbar drew a line and said to the courtiers around him, "Who can make this line shorter without rubbing or even touching it?"

The Court was mystified. How could the line be made shorter without being partially rubbed out? Men who are trained and accustomed to think in terms of destruction cannot think of rising to greater heights without lowering others.

Birbal stood up. Akbar reminded him of the condition—the line must be made shorter without being touched.

"Yes, Your Majesty," replied Birbal, bowing with reverence. Then he stepped out, coolly drew a line parallel to the original, but much longer. The Emperor's line was obviously much shorter in comparison with Birbal's! The spectators gasped with admiration.

Success lies in a constructive effort to rise above others; not in destroying those who are higher than you.

NOT IN THE EYE—IN THE HEART

IT was early morning; I was walking through a garden breathing deeply the fresh, fragrant air, when I noticed a couple just ahead of me. There was something discordant about them.

Then I heard the man's gruff voice, "I just can't understand what beauty people see in you. You have a fair complexion but surely that isn't beauty! They flatter you when they say you are beautiful."

"And I fail to understand why they tell you, you are a great singer!" she flashed, "Yelling at the top of your voice is not singing. Your voice lacks sweetness. Why do you lap up their fulsome flattery?"

So that was it; the discord between them made them see only the flaw in each other. As I turned in another direction, I heard a bulbul trilling in ecstasy to a flower, "O, the exquisite beauty of your fragrance!"

The flower replied fondly, "Beauty pours out in golden notes from your throat!"

The eye of love looks for only what is good.

And then I stumbled upon the truth about Beauty. Beauty lies, not in the object itself, but in the love with which it is viewed. Beauty lies not in the eye, but in the heart.

PRIDE

A CANDLE and a joss-stick were burning side by side in the two niches of a wall. Each was conveying a message to the world in the process of burning. The candle with its mild light and the joss-stick with its sweet perfume beautified and cheered the night.

One day they fell out over a trivial matter. The elegant white candle cried out saucily to the thin, black joss-stick, "You are so dark and thin and ugly, nobody would ever think of looking at you twice!"

The joss-stick held its peace. Its silence provoked the candle to words of greater insolence. "You don't seem to possess even the wit to answer me. I see that ugliness isn't your only drawback."

The joss-stick was still unperturbed, "Look at me," screamed the candle. "I am so fair and luminous and I utilise my gifts to brighten the room; what do you"

There came a gust of wind and puffed out the candle even as its boastful words were uttered, leaving behind only an unpleasant smell.

The joss-stick glowed on, content to spread its fragrance. Its Supreme Virtue was Contentment.

VOICE AND VISION

THE two brothers were returning home after twelve years of intensive and extensive study of the scriptures under a renowned scholar. The stamp of scholarship and contemplation was evident on their enlightened faces. Their home town was all agog to welcome them. The very air was permeated with gaiety and excitement. Only their father was silent and thoughtful.

In the evening he sent for his elder son and asked, "My son, you have drunk deep at the spring of knowledge but did you catch a glimpse of the Supreme inner self? Did your soul catch a spark of the Divine Fire?" His son poured out verses from the scriptures fast and free. "That's enough my son; but this is mere repetition of what others have said. What spiritual experience did you have by your personal effort? You may go and send your brother."

When the younger son was asked the same question, he replied, "Father, I know not how to answer. How can I circumscribe within the boundary of words something that is infinite by its very nature? Something that is essentially formless, cannot be articulated in words; it's something one can only experience, not something one can voice."

A smile of serenity, born of silent understanding lit up the father's face.

THE MAGNETISM OF LOVE

DISGUISED as a common traveller, Raja Prajapal was riding a horse to a neighbouring town. On the way, a lame man signalled to him to stop and pleaded, "I am lame, I have come a long way and am very tired. I'll be very grateful if you allow me to ride behind you as far as the next town."

Feeling sorry for him, the Raja helped him to mount. On their arrival at the town, he was helping him to dismount when the man raised a hue and cry. "I am lame; this man is trying to make away with my horse!" Soon a sympathising crowd gathered around them and led them to the judge.

The judge ordered the traveller to lead his horse some distance and tether him to a nail in a wall. Next he ordered the impostor to untether him and lead him back. Within seconds, he cried out to the traveller, "this horse belongs to you, you can take it."

The Raja was amazed at this novel procedure of giving judgment. Revealing his identity, he asked the judge, "but how could you decide so quickly that I was the rightful owner of the horse?"

"Sire, as you led the horse to be tethered, he followed you unhesitatingly, affectionately; but as that impostor tried to lead him back, the horse shied and started dragging his feet. Wasn't that a conclusive proof?"

Love attracts, fear repels.

THE SMILE OF GOODWILL

A THOUSAND rose petals were being boiled in a seething, bubbling cauldron in the process of being distilled into rose water or rose oil. A million more rose petals lay plucked and scattered to be turned into rose condiment. A witness to this painful sight could not help exclaiming, "You are the beauty of the earth at its best. In the delicate fragrance of your colourful petals one can see the very smile of the earth. It grieves my heart to see your plight."

Even in their agony, the flowers burst out laughing: "True, we are in a sorry plight, but we are not alone in this. It is the common lot of all men of goodwill. People cannot bear to see those who flourish, those who rise to the top and in their own happiness have a ready smile of goodwill for all. People have sympathy for those who weep in sorrow or in pain and will promptly hold out a helping hand to them. But they strive to sink with their envy those who are afloat on the tide of prosperity and out of the overflow of their own happiness, beam on all around them.

"Man does not realise that whether he boils or plucks us, we do not die. We live on through our fragrance, our tender delicacy. The smile of goodwill that we give to the world as flowers will persist through our fragrance in a new form."

BEHAVIOUR

IT was early morning. People had begun going up and down the main street of the town in increasing numbers. An old man was walking slowly, supporting himself on a stick. From the opposite direction came a young man, walking with swift, easy strides. Evidently he was in a hurry and did not see where he was going. He ran into the old man and lost his temper.

As if nothing had happened, the old man spoke in a calm voice, "I beg your pardon, Sir; I am afraid, you didn't realise that I am blind. I hope you are not hurt."

These words had an unexpected effect on the youth. He was ashamed of his rude behaviour, and humbly begged the old man's pardon for his unseemly behaviour. "It is for me to apologize, Sir; forgive me. I have heard much about being gentle in one's behaviour. I have seen many who assume gentleness, but I have never known gentleness such as yours."

Could there be a better lesson in good behaviour than this? Those with sight need sometimes the insight of the blind.

THE PRICE OF ACQUISITION

IT was early morning as *Mahamuni* wended his way through the still, deserted lanes of the town, meditating on such abstract matters as acquisition and renunciation. The savage barking of dogs disturbed him in his thoughts. Looking up, he saw a dog with a bone in his mouth pursued by nearly a dozen dogs. Soon they caught up with him and mauled him cruelly. Bleeding from the wounds, the dog dropped the bone and the onslaught ceased immediately.

But now a second race was on; the dog who had picked up the abandoned bone was the new quarry, till he, too, bleeding from the wounds, dropped the bone of contention and was left alone.

This went on for some time; one dog after another pouncing on the bone, abandoning it only when he could not hold on to it out of sheer agony, and being left in peace the moment he had given it up.

Contemplating on this ugly incident, the *Mahamuni* realised in a flash that his reflections on the abstract subject of acquisition and renunciation were concretely demonstrated before his very eyes. So long as the dog clung to the bone, he had to bleed for it; the moment he gave it up, he was left in peace.

THE BETTER-HALF!

THE sun was moving sadly towards the west, grieved at the many sorrowful sights he had witnessed when suddenly his face brightened at a pleasing scene of love and patience. Tukaram, the composer and singer of devotional music was on his way home, loaded with ten long stalks of sugar-cane. His eyes shone with child-like innocence, his face beamed with love and peace.

Children loved him and flocked in his way. They held out their hands and he doled out to them the juicy canes till only one was left.

His wife, watched with dismay Tukaram's generous distribution. When he offered her the solitary cane, she cried out scornfully, "why did you keep this one? Why didn't you hand it out with the rest to show the children how large-hearted you are?" She snatched the stalk from his hand, and beside herself with rage, she brought it crashing down on his back. The cane snapped in two. Tukaram smiled and said :

"I knew you wouldn't eat it alone. You are truly my better-half, always ready to share whatever you have." So saying he started munching the juicy cane, as cheerful as a child. His wife could not resist this utter simplicity of Tukaram and melted into tears of regret and affection.

Clothes stained with blood cannot be cleansed by blood but by water; similarly, rage cannot be removed by rage but by love.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

ONCE a man dreamt a very strange dream. He was plunged in wonder.

A *Sadhu* and a prostitute living in the same town had died within a week of each other. The prostitute went to heaven, the *Sadhu* to hell. The prostitute had risen high, the *Sadhu* had tumbled down!

The man related this dream to a seer. The seer said, "well, there is nothing strange about your dream. The prostitute was ashamed of her immoral life and was striving to give it up. She thought highly of the *Sadhu* and praised him sincerely. On the other hand, the *Sadhu* was conceited and boasted of his noble living, scorning the woman and condemning her way of life day in and day out.

"The prostitute, despite her immoral occupation, had the virtue of condemning herself and appreciating someone she thought holy; the *Sadhu*, despite his holy vocation, was guilty of praising himself and condemning others. That is why the prostitute found light, but the *Sadhu* was lost in darkness."

THE WAY TO KNOWLEDGE

BAHUBALI became an ascetic on the battlefield, but there was still a tinge of pride in him. He thought that he could be omniscient and then go to see his father, Adinatha, so that he would not have to kneel before his brothers who, though younger in years, had donned the ascetic's garb before him.

To attain omniscience, he undertook arduous penance. He sat unperturbed in the scorching heat and the biting cold and the pouring rain. He felt nothing, knew nothing; so lost was he in his meditation.

But he failed to acquire what he had so ardently longed for—the spark of divine knowledge—for his penance was marred by his overweening pride.

Bhagwan Adinatha, however, took pity on this erring but steadfast devotee and he sent Bahubali's two saintly sisters to point out to him, the futility of his penance and meditation. They set out on their mission and called out to him, "Brother. Brother! Climb down from the elephant if you wish to acquire omniscience of divine knowledge, When the light of Knowledge is concealed by the screen of vanity, man turns blind.

Bahubali realised in a flash why he had striven in vain so far. He subdued his pride and was ready to pay respect to his younger brothers. His soul was kindled with light. Truly, the way to knowledge is paved with humility.

THE INVISIBLE WRAPPING

A *GURU* had a tiny box of iron which he seemed to value very highly. This was a matter of great wonder to the disciple. But he was obedient, and did not touch it. The guru was pleased with his disciple's honesty and faithful devotion, and said one day, "My son, bring that tiny box of iron containing the philosopher's stone."

Now the young man's astonishment equalled his curiosity. How could a philosopher's stone be kept in a box of iron! Would not the iron turn into gold as soon as it came in contact with the stone? He picked up the box and brought it to his *guru*.

The *guru* carefully lifted the lid. He unwrapped the stone; it seemed to radiate beams of light. He removed the wrapping and allowed the stone to touch the box and forthwith the iron box turned into gold!

"Look, my son! All these years the philosopher's stone and the iron box were in close proximity, and yet the one did not affect the other because they were separated by the wrapping. The wrapping was a barrier between the two.

"The same principle applies to our attainment of oneness with higher self. Between you and your higher self, there is only the thin wrapping of worldly attachments separating the one from the other; cast off that wrapping and you will be one with Light.

A LABOUR OF LOVE

ONCE the Maharaja of Bhavnagar was on a visit to a saint. As he sat talking to him, the Maharaja noticed the shirt that the saint wore. It was stitched very skilfully; its pleats and tucks were arranged very neatly and precisely.

The tailor who had stitched it, happened to be present there. As they left the saint's presence, the Maharaja could not refrain from asking the tailor if he had made that shirt. The tailor replied with justifiable pride that he had.

"Then I would like exactly a shirt like that to be made for me. You may charge whatever you like."

The tailor assured him that his handiwork would be flawless. After some weeks, he presented to the Maharaja the shirt which he had stitched with the utmost care.

The Maharaja was delighted and amazed at his skill, but examined the shirt more critically. He praised the tailor, and remarked, "Somehow it lacks the perfection of the saint's shirt."

The tailor replied, "Sire, I have put all my abilities in its making. My fingers and my eyes did their work as best they could, but in the saint's shirt, my love and devotion for him were also at work. That is why that shirt seems more perfect. I cannot produce the same result, however hard I try.

"Those were the pleats and tucks of love and devotion."

Glimpses about the Author

Once Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji was asked : "What would you want if you could be granted one and only one thing?" "Right vision," was his response.

To perceive and experience reality as it is, this is the vision which Gurudev has been deepening and expanding since he took the vows of a Jain monk at the age of 20. His first five years of monastic life were spent mostly in silence, training himself through study of comparative world religion, philosophy and meditation to look within for the answers to his quest for enlightened awareness.

Moving in that awareness, he is able to help people of all faiths and cultures free themselves from mental, psychological, and social boundary lines and plunge into the reality of their innermost being. As one of the spiritual leaders of the Jains in India, he founded the Divine Knowledge Society and other social welfare and emergency relief organizations. "Salvation," according to Gurudev, "comes when you forget about your own salvation and put yourself in the place of all living beings."

Incapable of being limited by name or fame, by precedent or label, he was willing to be the first monk to break the ancient rules prohibiting travel by vehicle in order to accept the invitation of the Temple of Understanding to address the Second and Third Spiritual Summit Conferences, at Geneva in 1970, and at Harvard Divinity

School in 1971. Subsequently, he accepted lecturing tours in Europe and Africa, and eventually he accepted many invitations to teach in America. Gurudev gave up his cloistered life along with his position of authority in order to be free to live and carry his universal message to the larger family of humankind.

He lectured at many institutions of learning and human development such as Princeton, Sarah Lawrence, Cornell, Harvard, State University of New York at Purchase and others. He is the founder and spiritual advisor to the Jain Meditation International Center in New York City as well as to other meditation centers in America, UK, Africa, Canada and India. He thus carries his message of world peace and non-violence which stresses the need to appreciate the sanctity of all life and to build solidarity in the larger family of humanity.

This collection of anecdotes is drawn from a number of speeches made by him to diverse groups. There is variety in this collection and various readers can read and muse over them. These anecdotes are like signposts that suggest a direction or a path that the seeker may traverse. The reading of this collection, marked by its subtlety and grace of expression, is a rewarding experience.

—*Elizabeth Cattell*
New York

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