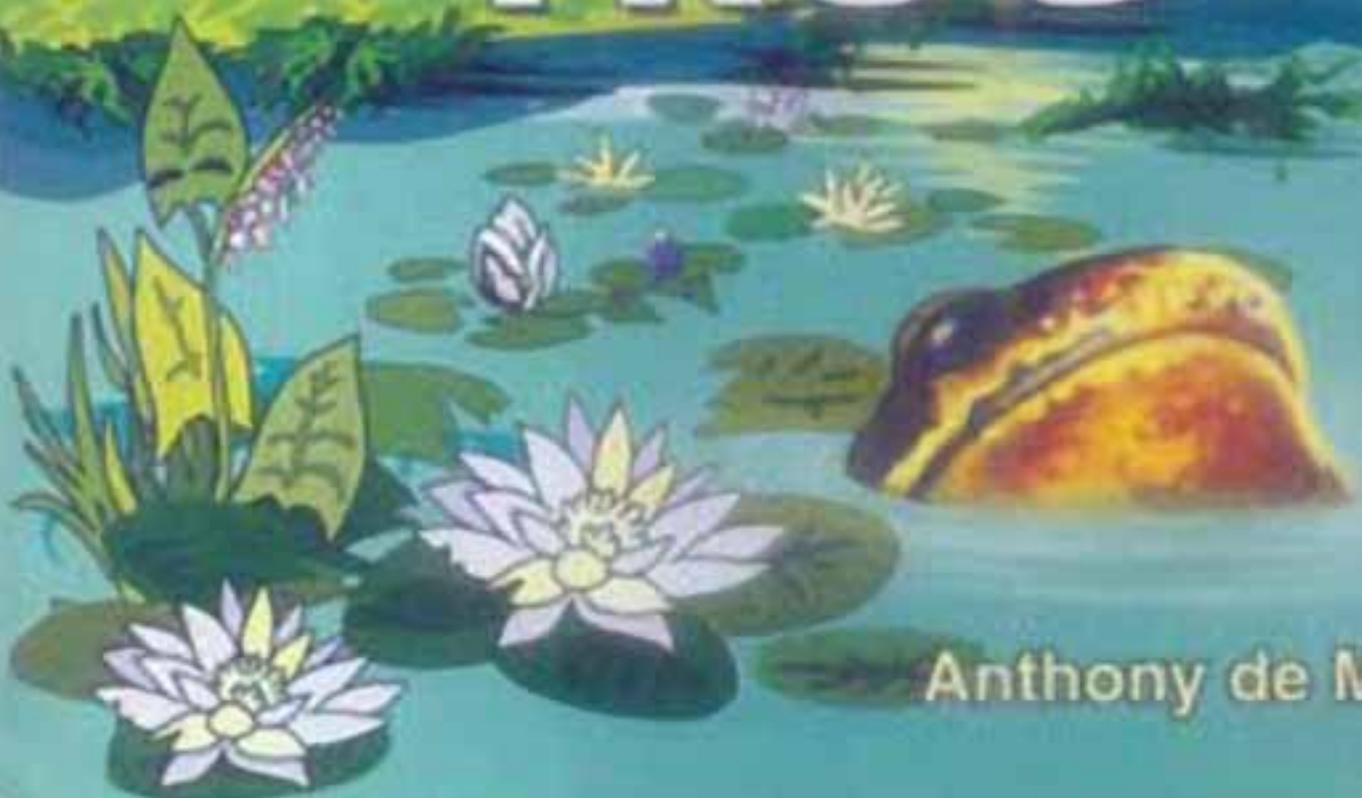


Volume - I

# THE PRAYER OF THE FROG



Anthony de Mello

THE PRAYER OF THE FROG  
PART ONE

AUTHOR  
Anthony de Mello

"Tony's been a refreshing cool drink this summer," commented a Sister referring to the special issue we brought out which included a supplement on the course of inner self-liberation by Tony de Mello. To judge from the success of the course, we have to admit she's right. We've had to bring out four editions of the reprint after his death the message of this special incarnation of a 'guru' is evoking a real inner discovery in many people.

What's behind this phenomenal success? Very simply, it is a manifestation of the hunger for the spiritual spreading around the world. It's a hunger with very special characteristics. People aren't buying set formulas anymore, or pious platitudes redolent of an cry gone by; beaten tracks that did not succeed in bringing people to a spiritual awakening. There is an anguished search, sometimes confused in its direction, for a more liberal outlook. Modern man mired in profound cultural change first wants to know who he is, what imprisons his soul, what stands in the way of spiritual progress. He wants to rediscover the God beyond all that has been identified through the years with the name of God: laws, norms, doctrines not made flesh, words stranded from life.

That is why Tony de Mello said that "our violent spirituality has created problems for us", that "Jesus Christ has got a bad name because of what is said of him from pulpits" and that "it is very difficult to recognize a saint because he looks like the rest of us". In short, what Tony de Mello is telling us is that if we want to make Christianity credible we need to plumb the depths of (lie human spirit, to reach beyond our present frontiers,  
(From "VidaNueva' Madrid, Sept. 12th, 1987)

FOREWORD

The first image of Tony de Mello that I cherish goes back thirty years-and precisely to Lonavla, to the very house that much later became the home of the Sadhana Institute.

Tony was then a Jesuit student, but engaged in teaching the young men who had just finished their noviciate. The whole group had come up to St Stanislaus' Villa for a brief holiday. I remember Tony with a batch of juniors, as we called them, sitting under the trees outside the kitchen and cleaning vegetables for the day's meals, whilst he regaled a very receptive audience with his inexhaustible fund of stories.

Much has happened to all of us since then; and Tony himself went through innumerable stages of growth and change, of fresh competence and new interests, and of effective service. But he was always an incomparable story-teller. Hardly any of his anecdotes were original, and some were not even exceptionally smart; but on his lips they came alive with meaning and relevance, or just plain fun. For that matter, any theme he touched came alive and captured attention.

And now his parting gift to us, which will surely join the ranks of his other best-sellers, is The Prayer of the Frog. Though he spoke rather casually of his literary output, he was meticulous in editing his compositions. The last thing he did in India before taking the plane for the United States was to spend more than three hours with the publisher, going over the details of his manuscript. I have not seen the text, but I know of his final concern.

That was in the evening of May 30th, 1987. On June 2nd he was found dead on the floor of his room in New York, having succumbed to a massive heart attack. In

between he had made time to write a long letter to a close friend, in which he said, speaking of earlier experiences: "All of that seems to belong to another era and to another world. I find the whole of my interest is now focused on something else, on the 'world of the spirit', and I see everything else as so trifling and so irrelevant. The things that mattered so much in the past do not seem to matter any more. Things like those of Achaan Chah the Buddhist teacher, seem to absorb my whole interest and I am losing my taste for other things. Is this an illusion? I do not know. But never before in my life have I felt so happy, so free. "

That just about sums up Tony as he was-and indeed as others perceived him -in his last phase, before he left us so suddenly, three months before his fifty-sixth birthday. And now there is already a body of literature that is growing around him. a veritable golden legend, with testimonies from a variety of people, scattered the world over. Quite a few have said they never met him but were profoundly affected by his books. Others had enjoyed the privilege of a deep relationship. Yet others only briefly experienced the magic of his spoken word. Not many would go along with everything that he said or did, especially after he crossed the established boundaries of spiritual venture-nor did Tony expect a docile following, but rather the contrary. What attracted so many to his person and ideas was precisely that he challenged everyone to question, to explore, to get out of prefabricated patterns of thought and behaviour, away from stereotypes, and to dare be one's true self-in fine, to seek an ever greater authenticity.

A relentless quest for authenticity-that is how Tony's vision came across from any angle, at any range. And this gave to his multifaceted personality an integrity, a wholeness, that had a charm and a power all its own: it reconciled opposites, not in tension but as a harmonious blend. He was most ready to make friends, to share; yet one felt there was a dimension in him that was out of reach. He could be boisterous in company, trotting out outrageous jokes, but no one could doubt his steadfast seriousness of purpose. He changed so much and in so many ways along the years, and nevertheless there were constants in his character that stayed firmly in place.

A striking example of this was his commitment as a Jesuit. He had moved far beyond the enthusiastic promotion of the Spiritual Exercises according to the original design of Saint Ignatius-which was the thrust for which he first came to be internationally appreciated; in fact, at the end he was way out of what might be recognized as Ignatian spirituality. But he never surrendered his Jesuit identity.

There was obviously no compulsion in this; probably not much reasoning either. It was just that he felt so much in tune with the mind and heart of Ignatius, as he knew and understood the Saint.

In a homily that he addressed to the Jesuit Provincials of India in 1983, before they and he himself participated in the last General Congregation, or Chapter of the Order, he shared , with them an insight into Ignatius which was even more a self-revelation of Tony;

"There is a tradition among our early Fathers that God gave to Ignatius the graces and charismas that He intended for the Society as a whole and for each individual Jesuit. If I were asked to choose for myself and for our Society today from among the many charismas that Ignatius had. I would quite unhesitatingly choose three; his contemplation, his creativity and his courage,"

Parmananda R. Divarkar S.J. 4th September. 1987

## WARNING

It is s a great mystery that though the human heart longs for Truth in which alone it finds liberation and delight, the first reaction o/ human beings to Truth is one of hostility and fear. So the Spiritual Teachers of humanity, like Buddha and Jesus, created a device to circumvent the opposition of their listeners: the story They knew that the most entrancing words a language holds are, "Once upon a time...", that it is common to oppose a truth but impossible to resist a story.

Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata. says that if you listen carefully to a story you will never be the same again That is because the story will worm its way into your heart and break down barriers to the divine Even if you read the stories in this book only for the entertainment there is no guarantee that an occasional story will not slip through your defences and explode when you least expect it to. So you have been warned!

If you are foolhardy enough to court enlightenment, this is what I suggest you do:

(A) Carry a story around in your mind so you can dwell on it in leisure moments. That will give it a chance to work on your subconscious and reveal its hidden meaning. You will then be surprised to see how it comes to you quite unexpectedly just when you need it to light up an event or situation and faring you insight and inner healing. That is when you will realize that, in exposing yourself to these stories, you were auditing a Course in Enlightenment for which no guru is needed other than yourself!

(B) Since each of these stories is a revelation of Truth arid since Truth, when spelt with o capital T. means the truth about you make sure that each time you read a story you single-mindedly search for a deeper understanding of yourself. The way one would read a Medico! Book - wondering if one has any of the symptoms; and not a Psychology Book -thinking what typical specimens one's friends are. If you succumb to the temptation of seeking insight into others, the stories will do you damage.

So passionate was Mulla Nasruddin's love for truth that he travelled to distant places in search of Koranic scholars and he felt no inhibitions about drawing infidels at the bazaar into discussions about the truths of his faith.

One day his wife told him how unfairly he was treating her-and discovered that her husband had no interest whatsoever in that kind of Truth!

It's the only kind that matters, of course. Ours would be a different world, indeed, if those of us, who are scholars and ideologues, whether religious or secular, had the same passion for self-knowledge that we display for our theories and dogmas.

"Excellent sermon," said the parishioner, as she pumped the hand of the preacher.

"Everything you said applies to someone or other I know."

See?

## INSTRUCTION

The stories are best read in the order in which they are set out here Read no more than one or two at a time-that is, if you wish to get anything more than entertainment from them

## NOTE

The stories in this book come from a variety of countries, cultures and religions. They belong to the spiritual heritage-and popular humour-of the human race All that the author has done is string them together with a specific aim in mind. His task has been that of the weaver and the dyer He takes no credit at ail for the cotton and the thread.

\*\*\*\*\*

When Brother Bruno was at prayer one night he was disturbed by the croaking of a bullfrog. All his attempts to disregard the sound were unsuccessful so he shouted from his window, "Quiet! I'm at my prayers."

Now Brother Bruno was a saint so his command was instantly obeyed. Every living creature held its voice so as to create a silence that would be favourable to prayer.

But now another sound intruded on Bruno's worship- an inner voice that said, "Maybe God is as pleased with the croaking of that frog as with the chanting of your psalms." "What can please the ears of God in the croak of a frog?" was Bruno's scornful rejoinder. But the voice refused to give up: "Why would you think God invented the sound?"

Bruno decided to find out why. He leaned out of his window and gave the order, "Sing!" The bullfrog's measured croaking filled the air to the ludicrous accompaniment of all the frogs in the vicinity. And as Bruno attended to the sound, their voices ceased to jar for he discovered that, if he stopped resisting them, they actually enriched the silence of the night.

With that discovery Bruno's heart became harmonious with the universe and, for the first time in his life he understood what it means to pray.

\*\*\*\*\*

A Hasidic tale:

The Jews of a small town in Russia were eagerly awaiting the arrival of a Rabbi. This was going to be a rare event so they spent a lot of time preparing the questions they were going to put to the holy man.

When he finally arrived and they met with him in the town hall, he could sense the tension in the atmosphere as all prepared to listen to the answers he had for them.

He said nothing at first; he just gazed into their eyes, and hummed a haunting melody. Soon everyone began to hum. He started to sing and they sang along with him. He swayed and danced in solemn, measured steps. The congregation followed suit. Soon they became so involved in the dance, so absorbed in its movements that they were lost to everything else on earth; so every person in that crowd was made whole, was healed from the inner fragmentation that keeps us from the Truth.

It was nearly an hour before the dance slowed down to a halt. With the tension drained out of their inner being everyone sat in the silent peace that pervaded the room. Then the Rabbi spoke the only words he pronounced that evening: "I trust that I have answered your questions."

A dervish was asked why he worshipped God through dance. "Because." he replied, "to worship God means to die to self; dancing kills the self. When the self dies all problems die with it. Where the self is not. Love is. God is. "

\*\*\*\*\*

The Master sat with his disciples in the audience. He said, "You have heard many a prayer and said many a prayer. Tonight I should like you to see one."

At that moment the curtain rose and the ballet began.

\*\*\*\*\*

A Sufi saint set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca. At the outskirts of the city he lay down by the road, exhausted from his journey. He had barely fallen asleep when he brusquely awakened by an irate pilgrim. "This is the time when all believers bow their heads towards Mecca and you have your feet pointing towards the holy shrine. What sort of Muslim are you?"

The Sufi did not move; he merely opened his eyes and said, "Brother, would you do me the favour of placing my feet where they won't be pointing to the Lord?"

The prayer of a devotee to the Lord Vishnu:

"Lord, I ask you to pardon me for three major sins: first, I went on pilgrimage to your many shrines, oblivious of your presence everywhere; second, I so often cried to you for help, forgetting that you are more concerned than I am about my welfare; and finally, here I am asking for forgiveness when I know that our sins are forgiven before we commit them."

\*\*\*\*\*

After many years of labour an inventor discovered the art of making fire. He took his tools to the snow-clad northern regions and initiated a tribe into the art-and

the advantages of making fire. The people became so absorbed in this novelty that it did not occur to them to thank the inventor who one day quietly slipped away. Being one of those rare human beings endowed with greatness, he had no desire to be remembered or revered; all he sought was the satisfaction of knowing that someone had benefited from his discovery.

The next tribe he went to was just as eager to learn as the first. But the local priests, jealous of the stranger's hold on the people, had him assassinated. To allay any suspicion of the crime, they had a portrait of the Great Inventor enthroned upon the main altar of the temple; and a liturgy designed so that his name would be revered and his memory kept alive. The greatest care was taken that not a single rubric of the liturgy was altered or omitted. The tools for making (ire were enshrined within a casket and were said to bring healing to all who laid their hands on them with faith.

The High Priest himself undertook the task of compiling a Life of the Inventor. This became the Holy book in which his loving kindness was offered as an example for all to emulate, his glorious deeds were eulogized, his superhuman nature made an article of faith. The priests saw to it that the Book was handed down to future generations, while they authoritatively interpreted the meaning of his words and the significance of his holy life and death. And they ruthlessly punished with death or excommunication anyone who deviated from their doctrine. Caught up as they were in these religious tasks, the people completely forgot the art of making fire.

From the Lives of the Desert Fathers:

Abbot Lot came to Abbot Joseph and said, "Father, according to my capacity I keep my little rule and my little fast, my prayer, my meditation, my contemplative silence; and according as I am able I cleanse my heart of evil thoughts. Now what more should I do?"

The elder stood up in reply. He stretched out his hand to heaven and his fingers became fire ten lamps of fire. He said: "This: become totally changed into fire."  
\*\*\*\*\*

A cobbler came to Rabbi Isaac of Ger and said. "Tell me what to do about my morning prayer. My customers are poor men who have only one pair of shoes. I pick up their shoes late in the evening and work on them most of the night; at dawn there is still work to be done if the men are to have their shoes ready before they go to work. Now my question is: What should I do about my morning prayer?" "What have you been doing till now?" the Rabbi asked.

"Sometimes I rush through the prayer quickly and get back to my work-but then I feel bad about it. At other times I let the hour of prayer go by. Then too I feel a sense of loss and every now and then, as I raise my hammer from the shoes, I can almost hear my heart sigh. "What an unlucky man I am that I am not able to make my morning prayer."

Said the Rabbi. "If I were God I would value that more than the prayer."  
\*\*\*\*\*

A Hasidic tale:

Late one evening a poor farmer on his way back from the market found himself without his prayer book. The wheel of his cart had come off right in the middle of the woods and it distressed him that this day should pass without his having said his prayers.

So this is the prayer he made: "I have done something very foolish, Lord. I came away from home this morning without my prayer book and my memory is such that I cannot recite a single prayer without it. So this is what I am going to do: I shall recite the alphabet five times very slowly and you, to whom all prayers are known, can put the letters together to form the prayers I can't remember,"

And the Lord said to his angels, "Of all the prayers I have heard today, this one was undoubtedly the best because it came from a heart that was simple and sincere."

\*\*\*\*\*

It is the custom among Catholics to confess their sins to a priest and receive absolution from him as a sign of God's forgiveness. Now all too often there is the danger that penitents will use this as a sort of guarantee, a certificate that will protect them from divine retribution, thereby placing more trust in the absolution of the priest than in the mercy of God.

This is what Perugini, an Italian painter of the Middle Ages, was tempted to do when he was dying. He decided that he would not go to confession if, in his fear, he was seeking to save his skin. That would be a sacrilege and an insult to God. His wife, who knew nothing of the man's inner disposition, once asked him if he did not fear to die unconfessed. Perugini replied: "Look at it this way, my dear: My profession is to paint and I have excelled as a painter. God's profession is to forgive and if he is good at his profession as I have been at mine, I see no reason to be afraid."

\*\*\*\*\*

The Indian sage, Narada, was a devotee of the Lord Hari. So great was his devotion that he was one day tempted to think that in all the world there was no one who loved God more than he.

The Lord read his heart and said, "Narada, go to this town on the banks of the Ganges for a devotee of mine dwells there- Living in his company will do you good"

Narada went and found a farmer who rose early in the morning, pronounced the name of Hari only once, (hen lifted his plough and went out to his fields where he worked all day. Just before he fell asleep at night he pronounced the name of Hari once again. Narada thought, "How can this rustic be a devotee of God? I see him immersed all day in his worldly occupations."

Then the Lord said to Narada, "Fill a bowl to the brim with milk and walk all round the city. Then come back "without spilling a single drop." Narada did as he was told.

"How many times did you remember me in the course of your walk around the city?" asked the Lord.

"Not once. Lord." said Narada. "How could I when you commanded me to watch that bowl of milk."

The Lord said, "That bowl so absorbed your attention that you forgot me altogether. But look at that peasant who though burdened with the cares of supporting a family, remembers me twice every day?"

\*\*\*\*\*

The village priest was a holy man so each time the people were in trouble they had recourse to him. He would then withdraw to a special place in the forest and say a special prayer. God would always hear his prayer and the village would be helped. When he died and the people were in trouble they had recourse to his successor who was not a holy man but knew the secret of the special place in the forest and the special prayer. So he said. "Lord, you know I am not a holy man. But surely you are not going to hold that against my people? So listen to my prayer and come to our assistance." And God would hear his prayer and the village would be helped. When he too died and the people were in trouble they had recourse to his successor who knew the special prayer but not the place in the forest. So he said. "What do you care for places, Lord? Is not every place made holy by your presence? So listen to my prayer and come to our assistance." And once again God would hear his prayer and the village would be helped.

Now he too died and when the people were in trouble they had recourse to his successor who did not know the special prayer or the special place in the forest. So he said. "It isn't the formula that you value. Lord, but the cry of the heart in distress. So listen to my prayer and come to our assistance." And once again God would hear his prayer and the village would be helped.

After this man died when the people were in trouble they had recourse to his successor. Now this priest had more use for money than for prayer. So he would say to God, "What sort of a God are you that while you are perfectly capable of solving problems that you yourself have caused, you still refuse to lift a finger until you have us cringe and beg and plead? Well, you can do as you please with the people." Then he would go right back to whatever business he had in hand. And, once again, God would hear his prayer and the village would be helped.

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An elderly woman who was an enthusiastic gardener declared that she had no faith whatsoever in predictions that some day scientists would learn to control the weather. According to her all that was needed to control the weather was prayer. Then one summer, while she was away on a foreign trip, a drought hit the land and wiped out her entire garden. She was so upset when she got back that she changed her religion.

She should have changed her silly beliefs.

\*\*\*\*\*

It's no good having our prayers answered  
If they are not answered at the right time:

In ancient India much store was set by the Vedic rites which were said to be so scientific in their application that when the sages prayed for rain there was never any drought. It is thus that a man set himself to pray, according to these rites, to the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, begging her to make him rich.

He prayed to no effect for ten long years, after which period of time, he suddenly saw the illusory nature of wealth and adopted the life of a renunciate in the Himalayas.

He was sitting in meditation one day when he opened his eyes and saw before him an extraordinarily beautiful woman, all bright and shining as if she were made of gold.

"Who are you and what are you doing here?" he asked.

"I am the goddess Lakshmi to whom you recited hymns for twelve years," said the woman. "I have appeared to grant you your desire."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Ah, my dear goddess," exclaimed the man, "I have since attained the bliss of meditation and lost my desire for wealth. You come too late. Tell me, why did you delay so long in coming?"

"To tell you the truth," said the goddess, "Given the nature of those rites you so faithfully performed you had fully earned the wealth. But, in my love for you and my desire for your welfare, I held it back."

If you had the choice, which would you choose: the granting of your petition or the grace to be peaceful whether it is granted or not?

\*\*\*\*\*

One day Mulla Nasruddin saw the village schoolmaster leading a group of children towards the mosque.

"What are you taking them there for?" he asked.

"There is a drought in the land," said the teacher, "and we trust that the cries of the innocent will move the heart of the Almighty."

"It isn't the cries, whether innocent or criminal, that count," said the Mulla, "but wisdom and awareness."

"How dare you make such a blasphemous statement in the presence of these children!" cried the teacher.

"Prove what you have said, or you shall be denounced as a heretic."

"Easy enough," said Nasruddin. "If the prayers of children counted for anything there wouldn't be a school teacher in all the land, for there is nothing they so detest as going to school. The reason you have survived those prayers is that we,

who know better than the children, have kept you where you are?"

\*\*\*\*\*

A pious old man prayed five times a day while his business partner never set foot in church. And now, on his eightieth birthday he prayed thus:

"Oh Lord our God! Since I was a youth not a day have I allowed to pass without coming to church in the morning and saying my prayers at the five specified times. No! a single move, not one decision, important or trifling did I make without first invoking your Name. And now, in my old age, I have doubled my exercises of piety and pray to you ceaselessly, night and day. Yet here I am, poor as a church mouse. But look at my business partner. He drinks and gambles and, even at his advanced age, consorts with women of questionable character yet he's rolling in wealth. I wonder if a single prayer has ever crossed his lips. Now, Lord, I do not ask that he be punished, for that would be unchristian. But please tell me: Why, why, why... have you let him prosper and why do you treat me thus?"

"Because," said God in reply, "you are such a monumental bore!"

The Rule in a monastery was not, "Do not speak," but, "Do not speak unless you can improve on the silence."

Might not the same be said of prayer?

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Of prayers and prayers:

Grandmother: "Do you say your prayers every night?"

Grandson: "Oh, yes!"

"And every morning?"

"No. I'm not scared in the daytime."

\*\*\*\*\*

Pious old lady, after the war: "God was very good to us. We prayed and prayed, so ail the bombs fell on the other side of the town!"

\*\*\*\*\*

So intolerable had Hitler's persecution of the Jews become that two Jews decided to assassinate him. They mounted guard, their guns at the ready, at a spot by which they knew the Fuehrer was to pass. He was long in coming and a horrible thought occurred to Samuel. "Joshua," he said, "say a prayer that nothing's happened to the man!"

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They had made it their custom to invite their pious aunt to go with them on their picnic each year. This year they forgot. When the invitation did come at the last minute, she said, "It's too late now. I've already prayed for rain."

\*\*\*\*\*

A priest observed a woman sitting in the empty church with her head in her hands. An hour passed. Then two. Still she was there.

Judging her to be a soul in distress, and eager to be of assistance, he went up to the woman and said. "Is there any way I can be of help?"

"No, thank you. Father." she said. "I've been getting all the help I need."

Until you interrupted!

\*\*\*\*\*

An old man would sit motionless for hours on end in church. One day a priest asked him what God talked to him about.

"God doesn't talk. He just listens," was his reply.

"Well, then what do you talk to him about?"

"I don't talk either. I just listen."

The four stages of Prayer;

I talk, you listen.  
You talk, I listen.  
Neither talks, both listen.  
Neither talks, neither listens: Silence  
\*\*\*\*\*

The Sufi Bayazid Bistami describes his progress in the art of prayer: "The first time I visited the Kaaba at Mecca, I saw the Kaaba. The second time I saw the Lord of the Kaaba. The third time I saw neither the Kaaba nor the Lord of the Kaaba."  
\*\*\*\*\*

The Moghul Emperor, Akbar, was one day out hunting in the forest. When it was time for evening prayer he dismounted, spread his mat on the earth and knelt to pray in the manner of devout Muslims everywhere.  
Now it was precisely at this time that a peasant woman, perturbed by the disappearance of her husband who had left home that morning and hadn't returned, went rushing by, anxiously searching for her husband. In her preoccupation she did not notice the kneeling figure of the Emperor and tripped over him, then got up and without a word of apology rushed further into the forest.  
Akbar was annoyed at this interruption but, being a good Muslim, he observed the rule of speaking to no one during the namaaz.  
Now just about the time that his prayer was over the woman returned, joyful in the company of her husband whom she had found. She was surprised and frightened to see the Emperor and his entourage there. Akbar gave vent to his anger against her and shouted, "Explain your disrespectful behaviour or you will be punished."  
The woman suddenly turned fearless, looked into the Emperor's eyes and said, "Your Majesty, I was so absorbed in the thought of my husband that I did not even see you here, not even when, as you say, I stumbled over you. Now while you were at namaaz, you were absorbed in one who is infinitely more precious than my husband. And how is it you noticed.  
The Emperor was shamed into silence and later confided to his friends that a peasant woman, who was neither a scholar nor a Mullah, had taught him the meaning of prayer.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Once the Master was at prayer. The disciples came up to him and said, "Sir, teach us how to pray." This is how he taught them....  
Two men were once walking through a field when they saw an angry bull. Instantly they made for the nearest fence with the bull in hot pursuit. It soon became evident to them that they were not going to make it, so one man shouted to the other, "We've had it! Nothing can save us. Say a prayer. Quick!"  
The other shouted back, "I've never prayed in my life and I don't have a prayer for this occasion."  
"Never mind. The bull is catching up with us. Any prayer will do."  
"Well, I'll say the one I remember my father used to say before meals; for what we are about to receive. Lord, make us truly grateful."  
Nothing surpasses the holiness of those  
who have learnt perfect acceptance  
of everything that is.

In the game of cards called life  
one plays the hand one is dealt  
to the best of one's ability.

Those who insist on playing,  
not the hand they were given  
but the one they insist they should have been dealt  
these are life's failures.

We are not asked if we will play.  
That is not an option. Play we must  
The option is how.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A rabbi once asked a pupil what was bothering him.  
"My poverty," was the reply. "So wretched is my condition that I can hardly study and pray."  
"In this day and age," said the rabbi, "the finest prayer and the finest study lie in accepting life exactly as you find it."  
\*\*\*\*\*

On a bitterly cold day a rabbi and his disciples were huddled around a fire. One of the disciples echoing his master's teachings, said, "On a freezing day like this I know exactly what to do!" "What?" asked the others.  
"Keep warm! And if that isn't possible, I still know what to do."  
"What?"  
"Freeze."  
Present Reality cannot really  
be rejected or accepted.  
To run away from it  
is like running away from your feet.  
To accept it  
is like kissing your lips.  
All you need to do is see, understand,  
and be at rest.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A man went to see a psychiatrist and said that every night he was visited by a twelve-foot dragon with three heads. He was a nervous wreck, could not sleep at all and was on the verge of total collapse. He had even thought of suicide.  
"I think I can help you," said the psychiatrist, "but I must warn you that it will take a year or two and will cost three thousand dollars."  
"Three thousand dollars!" the man exclaimed. "Forget it! I'll just go home and make friends with it."  
\*\*\*\*\*

The Muslim mystic, Farid, was prevailed upon by his neighbours to go to the court in Delhi and obtain a favour from Akbar for the village. Farid walked into the court and found Akbar at his prayers:  
When the Emperor finally emerged, Farid asked. "What sort of prayer did you make?"  
"I prayed that the All-Merciful would bestow success and wealth and long life on me," was the reply.  
Farid promptly turned his back on the Emperor and walked away, remarking, "I came to see an Emperor. What I find here is a beggar no different from the rest!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a woman who was religious and devout and filled with love for God. Each morning she would go to Church. And on her way children would call out to her, beggars would accost her, but so immersed was she in her devotions that she did not even see them.  
Now one day she walked down the street in her customary manner and arrived at the church just in time for service. She pushed the door, but it would not open. She pushed it again harder, and found the door was locked.  
Distressed at the thought that she would miss service for the first time in years, and not knowing what to do, she looked up. And there, right before her face, she found a note pinned on to the door.

It said, "I'm out there!"

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Of a saint it used to be said that each time he left home to go and perform his religious duties he would say, "And now, Lord, goodbye! I am off to Church."

\*\*\*\*\*

A monk was walking in the monastery grounds one day when he heard a bird sing. He listened, spellbound. It seemed to him that never before had he heard, but really heard, the song of a bird.

When the singing stopped he returned to the monastery and discovered, to his dismay, that he was a stranger to his fellow monks, and they to him.

It was only gradually that they and he discovered that he was returning after centuries. Because his listening was total, time had stopped and he had slipped into eternity.

Prayer is made perfect  
when the timeless is discovered.

The timeless is discovered  
through clarity of perception.

Perception is made clear  
when it is disengaged

from preconceptions  
and from all consideration  
of personal loss or gain.

'Then the miraculous  
is seen and the heart is filled with wonder.

\*\*\*\*\*

When the Master invited the Governor to practise meditation and the Governor said he was too busy, this is the reply he got:

"You put me in mind of a man walking blind-folded into the jungle-and too busy to take the blindfold off."

When the Governor pleaded lack of time, the Master said, "It is a mistake to think that meditation cannot be practised for lack of time. The real cause is agitation of the mind."

\*\*\*\*\*

An efficiency expert was making his report to Henry Ford. "As you well see, sir, the report is highly favourable, except for that man down the hall. Every time I pass by he's sitting with his feet on his desk. He's wasting your money.

Said Ford. "That man once had an idea that earned us a fortune. At the time I believe his feet were exactly where they are now."

There was an exhausted woodcutter who kept wasting time and energy chopping wood with a blunt axe because he did not have the time, he said, to stop and sharpen the blade.

\*\*\*\*\*

Once upon a time there was a forest where the birds sang by day and the insects by night. Trees flourished, flowers bloomed and all manner of creatures roamed about in freedom.

And all who entered there were led to Solitude which is the home of God who dwells in Nature's silence and Nature's beauty.

But then the Age of Unconsciousness arrived when it became possible for people to construct buildings a thousand feet high and to destroy rivers and forests and mountains in a month. So houses of worship were built from the wood of the forest trees and from the stone under the forest soil. Pinnacle, spire and minaret pointed towards the sky; the air was filled with the sound of bells, with prayer and chant and exhortation.

And God was suddenly without a home.  
God hides things by putting them before our eyes!

Hark! Listen to the song of the bird,  
the wind in the trees,  
the ocean roar;  
look at a tree, a falling leaf, a flower  
as if for the first time.

You might suddenly make contact  
with Reality  
with that Paradise  
from which we,  
having fallen from childhood,  
are excluded by our knowledge.

Says the Indian mystic Saraha:  
"Know the taste of this flavour  
Which is the absence of Knowledge."  
\*\*\*\*\*

## AWARENESS

A great religious persecution broke out in the land and the three Pillars of religion. Scripture. Worship and Charity appeared before God to express their fear that, if religion was stamped out, they would cease to exist.  
"Not to worry." said the Lord. "I plan to send One to earth who is greater than all of you."  
"By what name is this Great One called?"  
"Self-knowledge." said God. "He will do greater things than any of you have done."  
\*\*\*\*\*

Three wise men set out on a journey for, even though they were considered wise in their own country, they were humble enough to hope that travel would broaden their minds.  
They had barely crossed into a neighbouring country when they saw a skyscraper in the distance. What could this enormous object be, they asked themselves? The obvious answer would have been: go up and find out. But no, that might be too dangerous. Suppose it was something that exploded as one approached? It was altogether wiser to decide what it was before finding out. Various theories were put forward, examined and, on the basis of their past experience, rejected. Finally, it was determined, also on the basis of past experience of which they had an abundant supply, that the object in question, whatever it was could only have been placed there by giants.  
This led them to the conclusion that it would be safer to avoid this country altogether. So they went back home having added something to their fund of experience.  
Assumptions affect Observation.  
Observation breeds Conviction.  
Conviction produces Experience.  
Experience generates Behaviour,  
which, in turn, confirms Assumptions.  
\*\*\*\*\*

## Assumptions:

A couple of hunters chartered a plane to fly them into forest territory. Two weeks later the pilot came to take them back. He took a look at the animals they had shot and said, "This plane won't take more than one wild buffalo. You'll have to

leave the other behind.”

“But last year the pilot let us take two in a plane this size,” the hunters protested.

The pilot was doubtful, but finally he said, “Well, if you did it last year I guess we can do it again.”

So the plane took off with the three men and two buffaloes. But it couldn't gain height and crashed into a neighbouring hill. The men climbed out and looked around. One hunter said to the other, “Where do you think we are?” The other inspected the surroundings and said. “I think we're about two miles to the left of where we crashed last year.”

\*\*\*\*\*

And more assumptions:

A married couple was returning from the funeral of Uncle George who had lived with them for twenty years and had been such a nuisance that he almost succeeded in wrecking their marriage.

“There is something I have to say to you, dear.” said the man. “If it hadn't been for my love for you I wouldn't have put up with your Uncle George for a single day.”

“My Uncle George!” she exclaimed in horror. “I thought he was your Uncle George!”

\*\*\*\*\*

In the summer of 1946 the rumour of a famine swept through a province in a South American country. Actually the crops were growing well, and the weather was perfect for a bumper harvest. But on the strength of that rumour 20,000 small farmers abandoned their farms and fled to the cities. Because of their action the crops failed, thousands starved and the rumour about the famine proved true.

\*\*\*\*\*

Many, many years ago, back in the Middle Ages, the Pope was urged by his advisors to banish the Jews from Rome. It was unseemly, they said that these people should be living unmolested in the very centre of Catholicism. An edict of eviction was drawn up and promulgated much to the dismay of the Jews who knew that wherever else they went they could only expect worse treatment than was meted out to them in Rome. So they pleaded with the Pope to reconsider the edict. The Pope, a fair-minded man, offered them a sporting proposition: Let the Jews appoint someone to debate with him in pantomime. If their spokesman won the Jews might stay. The Jews met to consider this proposal. To turn it down was to be evicted from Rome. To accept it was to court certain defeat, for who could win a debate in which the Pope was both participant and judge? Still, there was nothing for it but to accept. Only, it was impossible to find someone to volunteer for the task of debating with the Pope. The burden of having the fate of the Jews on his shoulders was more than anyone man could bear.

Now when the synagogue janitor heard what was going on he came before the Chief Rabbi and volunteered to represent his people in the debate. “The janitor?” said the other rabbis when they heard of this. “Impossible!”

“Well,” said the chief Rabbi, “None of us is willing. It is either the janitor or no debate.” Thus for lack of anyone else the janitor was appointed to debate with the Pope.

When the great day arrived, the Pope sat on a throne in St Peter's square surrounded by his cardinals, facing a large crowd of bishops, priests and faithful. Presently the little Jewish delegation arrived in their black robes and flowing beards, with the janitor in their midst.

The Pope turned to face the janitor and the debate began. The Pope solemnly raised one finger and traced it across the heavens. The janitor promptly pointed with emphasis towards the ground. The Pope seemed somewhat taken aback. Even more solemnly he raised one finger again and kept it firmly before the Janitor's face. The janitor thereupon lifted three fingers and held them just as firmly before the

Pope who seemed astonished by the gesture. Then the Pope thrust his hand into his robes and pulled out an apple. Whereupon the janitor thrust his hand into his paper bag and pulled out a flat piece of matzo. At this the Pope explained in a loud voice, "The Jewish representative has won the debate. The edict of eviction is hereby revoked."

The Jewish leaders promptly surrounded the janitor and led him away. The cardinals clustered around the Pope in astonishment. "What happened, your Holiness?" then asked. "It was impossible for us to follow the rapid thrust and parry of the debate." The Pope wiped the sweat from his forehead and said, "That man is a brilliant theologian, a master in debate. I began by sweeping my hand across the sky to indicate that the whole universe belongs to God. He thrust his finger downward to remind me that there is a place called Hell where the devil reigns supreme. I then raised one finger to signify that God is one. Imagine my shock when he raised three fingers to indicate that this one God manifests Himself equally in three persons, thereby subscribing to our own doctrine of the Trinity! Knowing that it was impossible to get the better of this theological genius I finally shifted the debate to another area. I pulled out an apple to indicate that according to some new-fangled ideas the earth is round. He instantly produced a flat piece of unleavened bread to remind me that, according to the Bible, the earth is flat. So there was nothing to do but concede the victory to him."

By now the Jews had arrived at their synagogue. "What happened they asked the janitor in bewilderment. The janitor was indignant. "It was all a lot of rubbish," he said. "Look. First the Pope moves his hand like he is telling all the Jews to get out of Rome. So I pointed downwards to make it clear to him that we were not going to budge. So he points a finger to me threateningly as if to say. Don't get fresh with me. So I point three fingers to tell him he was thrice as fresh with us when he arbitrarily ordered us out of Rome. The next thing, I see him taking out his lunch. So I took out mine."

\*\*\*\*\*

Reality, mostly, is not what it is but what we have decided it is:

A little old Jewish lady sits down in a plane next to a big Swede and keeps staring at him. Finally she turns to him and says, "Pardon me, are you Jewish?"

He says, "No."

A few minutes later she turns to him again and says, "You can tell me, you know- you are Jewish, aren't you?"

He says, "Most certainly not."

She keeps studying him for some minutes, then says again, "I can tell you are Jewish."

In order to get rid of the annoyance the man says, "O.K., so I'm Jewish!"

She-looks at him again, shakes her head and says. "You certainly don't look it."

We first make our conclusions

- then find some way to arrive at them.

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman in the grocery department of a super-market bent down to pick up some tomatoes. At that moment she felt a sharp pain shooting down her/back; she became immobilized and let out a shriek.

A shopper standing next to her leaned over knowingly and said, "If you think tomatoes are bad, you should see the price of the fish!"

is it Reality you are responding to or your assumptions about it?

\*\*\*\*\*

A man got into a bus and found himself sitting next to a youngster who was obviously a hippy. He was wearing only one shoe.

"You've evidently lost a shoe, son."

"No man," came the reply. "I found one."

It is evident to me;

that does not mean it is true.

\*\*\*\*\*

A cowboy was riding across the desert when he came upon an Indian lying on the road with his head and ear to the ground.

"How yah doing, chief?" said the cowboy.

"Big paleface with red hair driving dark green Mercedes-Benz with German shepherd dog inside and license plate number SDT965 going headed West."

"Gee chief, yah mean you hear all that just listening to the ground?"

"I'm not listening to the ground. The SOB ran over me."

\*\*\*\*\*

An oyster saw a loose pearl that had fallen into the crevice of a rock on the ocean bed. After great effort she managed to retrieve the pearl and place it just beside her on a leaf.

She knew that humans searched for pearls and thought, "This pearl will tempt them, so they will take it and let me be."

When a pearl diver showed up, however, his eyes were conditioned to look for oysters and not for pearls resting on leaves.

So he grabbed the oyster which did not happen to have a pearl and allowed the real pearl to roll back into the crevice in the rock.

You know exactly where to look. That is the reason why you fail to find God.

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman at a bank asked the cashier to cash a cheque for her.

Citing company policy the cashier asked her for identification.

The woman gasped. Finally, she managed to say, "But Jonathan, I'm your mother!"

If you think this is funny, how come you fail yourself to recognize the messiah?

\*\*\*\*\*

A man took his new hunting dog out on a trial hunt. Presently he shot a duck that fell into the lake. The dog walked over the water, picked the duck up and brought it to his master.

The man was flabbergasted! He shot another duck. Once again, while he rubbed his eyes in disbelief, the dog walked over the water and retrieved the duck.

Hardly daring to believe what he had seen, he called his neighbour for a shoot the following day. Once again, each time he or his neighbour hit a bird the dog would walk over the water and bring the bird in. The man said nothing. Neither did his neighbour. Finally, unable to contain himself any longer, he blurted out, "Did you notice anything strange about that dog?"

The neighbour rubbed his chin pensively. "Yes," he finally said. "Come to think of it, I did! The son of a gun can't swim!"

It isn't as if life is not full of miracles. It's more than that: it is miraculous, and anyone who stops taking it for granted will see it at once.

\*\*\*\*\*

"That's a clever dog you have there," said a man when he saw his friend playing cards with his dog.

"Not as clever as he looks," was the reply. "Every time he gets a good hand he wags his tail."

\*\*\*\*\*

Grandpa and grandma had quarrelled and grandma was so angry she would not speak to her husband.

The following day grandpa had forgotten all about the quarrel, but grandma continued to ignore him and still wouldn't speak. Nothing grandpa did seemed to succeed in pulling her out of her sullen silence.

Finally he started rummaging in cupboards and drawers. After this had gone on for

a few minutes, grandma could stand it no longer. "What on earth are you looking for?" she demanded angrily.

"Praised be God, I've found it," said grandpa with a sly smile. "Your voice!" If it is God you are looking for, look somewhere else.

\*\*\*\*\*

When the devil saw a seeker enter the house of a Master he determined to do everything in his power to turn him back from his quest for Truth. So he subjected the poor man to every possible temptation: wealth, lust, fame, power, prestige. But the seeker was far too experienced in spiritual matters and was able to fight off the temptations quite easily, so great was his longing for spirituality.

When he got into the Master's presence, he was somewhat taken aback to see the Master sitting on an upholstered chair and the disciples at his feet. "This man certainly lacks the principal virtue of the saints, humility," he thought to himself.

He then observed other things about the Master that he did not like; for one thing, the Master took little notice of him. ("I suppose that is because I do not fawn on him as the others do," he said to himself). Also the kind of clothes the Master wore and the somewhat conceited way he spoke. All of this led him to the conclusion that he had come to the wrong place and must continue his quest elsewhere.

\*\*\*\*\*

As he walked out of the room, the Master, who had seen the devil seated in a corner of the room. said. "You need not have worried Tempter. He was yours from the very first, you know."

Such is the fate of those who,  
in their search for God,  
are willing to shed everything  
except their notions of what God really is.

\*\*\*\*\*

People would never sin  
if they were aware  
that each time they sin  
it is themselves they are damaging.  
Most people are in too much of torpor, alas,  
to have the slightest awareness  
of what they are doing to themselves.

A drunkard was walking down a street with blisters in both of his ears. A friend asked him what had happened to cause the blisters.

"My wife left her hot iron on, so when the phone rang I picked the iron up by mistake."

"Yes, but what about the other ear?"

"The damned fool called back!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A famous Viennese surgeon told his students that a surgeon needed two gifts: freedom from nausea and the power of observation. He then dipped a finger into some nauseating fluid and licked it, requesting each of the students to do the same. They steeled themselves to it and managed it without flinching.

With a smile, the surgeon then said, "Gentlemen, I congratulate you on having passed the first test. But not, unfortunately, the second, for not one of you noticed that the finger I licked was not the one I dipped into the fluid."

\*\*\*\*\*

The priest of a fashionable parish had his ushers greet the people after Sunday service. His wife persuaded him to take on this task himself. "Wouldn't it be awful if, after some years, you were not to know the members of your own parish?" she said.

So the following Sunday the priest took up his post at the church door after service. The first one out of church was a woman in plain clothes, evidently a newcomer to the parish.

"How do you do? I am very glad to have you here with us," he said, offering her his hand.

"Thank you," said the woman, somewhat taken aback.

"I hope we will see you often at our services. We are always glad to see new faces, you know."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you live in this parish?"

The woman seemed at a loss what to say.

"If you give me your address, my wife and I will call on you some evening."

"You wouldn't have to go far, sir. I'm your cook"

\*\*\*\*\*

A tramp stood in the office of a wealthy man asking for alms.

The man rang for his secretary and said, "Do you see this poor, unfortunate man here? Observe how his toes stick out of his shoes, how frayed his trousers are, how tattered his coat. I am sure the man hasn't had a shave, a shower or a decent meal in days. It breaks my heart to see people in this wretched condition-so, GET HIM OUT OF MY SIGHT AT ONCE!"

A man with only stumps for arms and legs was begging by the roadside.

I was so conscience stricken the first time I saw him that I gave him an alms.

The second time I gave him less.

The third time I cold bloodedly handed him over to the police for begging in a public place and making a nuisance of himself.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Guru meditating in his Himalayan cave opened his eyes to discover an unexpected visitor sitting there before him-the abbot of a well-known monastery. "What is it you seek?" asked the Guru.

The abbot recounted a tale of woe. At one time his monastery had been famous throughout the western world. Its cells were filled with young aspirants and its church resounded to the chant of its monks. But hard times had come on the monastery. People no longer flocked there to nourish their spirit, the stream of young aspirants had dried up, the church was silent. There was only a handful of monks left and these went about their duties with heavy hearts.

Now this is what the abbot wanted to know: "Is it because of some sin of ours that the monastery has been reduced to this state?"

"Yes," said the Guru, "a sin of ignorance." "And what sin might that be?"

"One of your numbers is the Messiah in disguise and you are ignorant of this."

Having said that the Guru closed his eyes and returned to his meditation.

Throughout the arduous journey back to his monastery the abbot's heart beat fast at the thought that the Messiah-but the Messiah himself-had returned to earth and was right there in the monastery. How is it he had failed to recognize him? And who could it be? Brother Cook? Brother Sacristan? Brother Treasurer? Brother Prior? No, not he; he had too many defects alas. But then the Guru had said he was in disguise. Could those defects be one of his disguises? Come to think of it, everyone in the monastery had defects. And one of them had to be the Messiah! Back in the monastery he assembled the monks and told them what he had discovered. They looked at one another in disbelief. The Messiah? Here? Incredible! But he was

supposed to be here in disguise. So, maybe. What if it were so-and-so? Or the other one over there? or....

One thing was certain: If the Messiah was there in disguise it was not likely that they would recognize him. So they took to treating everyone with respect and consideration. "You never know," they said to themselves when they dealt with one another, "maybe this is the one."

The result of this was that the atmosphere in the monastery became vibrant with joy. Soon dozens of aspirants were seeking admission to the Order-and once again the Church re-echoed with the holy and joyful chant of monks who were aglow with the spirit of Love.

Of what use is it to have eyes if the heart is blind?

\*\*\*\*\*

A prisoner lived in solitary confinement for years. He saw and spoke to no one and his meals were served through an opening in the wall.

One day an ant came into his cell. The man contemplated it in fascination as it crawled around the room. He held it in the palm of his hand the better to observe it, gave it a grain or two, and kept it under his tin cup at night.

One day it suddenly struck him that it had taken him ten long years of solitary confinement to open his eyes to the loveliness of an ant.

When a friend visited the Spanish painter El Greco at his home on a lovely spring afternoon he found him sitting in his room, the curtains tightly drawn.

"Come out into the sunshine," said the friend.

"Not now," El Greco replied. "It would disturb the light that is shining within me."

\*\*\*\*\*

The old rabbi had become blind and could neither read nor look at the faces of those who came to visit him.

A faith healer said to him, "Entrust yourself to my care and I will heal your blindness."

"There will be no need for that," replied the rabbi. "I can see everything that I need to."

Not everyone whose eyes are closed is asleep. And not everyone with open eyes can see.

\*\*\*\*\*

## RELIGION

Weary traveller: "Why in the name of heaven did they build the railway station three kilometres away from the village?"

Helpful porter: "They must have thought it would be a good idea to have it near the trains, sir."

An ultra-modern station  
three kilometres away from the track  
is as much of an absurdity  
as a much frequented temple  
three centimetres away from life.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Kamakura Buddha was lodged in a temple until one day a mighty storm brought the temple down. Then for many years the massive statue stood exposed to sun and rain and wind and the changes of the weather.

When a priest began to raise funds to rebuild the temple, the statue appeared to him in a dream and said, "That temple was a prison, not a home. Leave me exposed to the ravages of life. That's where I belong."

\*\*\*\*\*

Dov Ber was an uncommon man. When people came into his presence they trembled. He was a Talmudic scholar of repute, inflexible, uncompromising in his doctrine. And he never laughed. He believed firmly in self-inflicted pain and was known to fast for days on end. Dov Ber's austerities finally got the better of him. He fell seriously ill and there was nothing the doctors could do to cure him. As a final resort someone made a suggestion: "Why not seek the help of the Baal Shem Tov?" Dov Ber agreed even though at first he resisted the idea because he strongly disapproved of Baal Shem whom he considered to be something of a heretic. Also while Dov Ber believed that life was only made meaningful by suffering and tribulation, Baal Shem sought to alleviate pain and openly preached that it was the spirit of rejoicing that gave meaning to life.

It was past midnight when Baal Shem answered the summons and drove up dressed in a coat of wool and a cap of the finest fur. He walked into the sick man's room and handed him the Book of Splendour which Dov Ber opened and began to read aloud.

He had hardly read for a minute when, so the story goes, Baal Shem interrupted. "Something is missing," he said. "Something is lacking to your faith."

"And what is that?" the sick man asked.

"Soul," said the Baal Shern Tov.

\*\*\*\*\*

On a cold winter night a wandering ascetic asked for shelter in a temple. The poor man stood shivering there in the falling snow so the temple priest, reluctant though he was to let the man in, said. "Very well, you can stay but only for the night. This is a temple, not a hospice. In the morning you will have to go."

At dead of night the priest heard a strange crackling sound. He rushed to the temple and saw an incredible sight. There was the stranger warming himself at a fire he had lit in the temple. A wooden Buddha was missing. The priest asked, "Where is the statue?"

The wanderer pointed to the fire, then said. "I thought this cold would kill me."

The priest shouted, "Are you out of your mind? Do you know what you have done?"

That was a Buddha statue. You have burnt the Buddha!"

The fire was slowly dying out. The ascetic gazed into it and began to poke it with his stick.

"What are you doing now?" the priest yelled.

"I am searching for the bones of the Buddha whom you say I burnt."

The priest later reported the incident to a Zen Master who said, "You must be a bad priest because you valued a dead Buddha over a live man. "

\*\*\*\*\*

Tetsugen, a student of Zen, resolved on a mighty undertaking: the printing of seven thousand copies of the sutras which till then were available only in Chinese.

He travelled the length and breadth of Japan to collect funds for this project. Some wealthy people offered him as much as a hundred pieces of gold but mostly he received small coins from peasants. Tetsugen expressed equal gratitude to each donor regardless of the sum of money given.

After ten long years of travel he finally collected the funds necessary for the task. Just then the river Uji overflowed and thousands were left without food and shelter. Tetsugen spent all the money he had collected for his cherished project on these poor people.

Then he began the work of raising funds again. Again it was several years before he got the money he needed. Then an epidemic spread all over the country, so Tetsugen gave away all he had collected to help the suffering.

Once again he set out on his travel and, twenty years later, his dream of having the scriptures in the Japanese language finally came true.

The printing block that produced this first edition of the sutras is on display at the Obaku Monastery in Kyoto. The Japanese tell their children that Tetsugen got out three editions of the sutras in all; and that the first two are invisible and

far superior to the third.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two brothers, one a bachelor, the other married, owned a farm whose fertile soil yielded an abundance of grain. Half the grain went to one brother and half to the other.

All went well at first. Then, every now and then, the married man began to wake with a start from his sleep at night and think: "This isn't fair. My brother isn't married and he gets half the produce of the farm. Here I am with a wife and five kids, so I have all the security I need for my old age. But who will care for my poor brother when he gets old? He needs to save much more for the future than he does at present, so his need is obviously greater than mine."

With that he would get out of bed, steal over to his brother's place and pour a sack full of grain into his brother's granary.

The bachelor too began to get these nightly attacks. Every once in a while he would wake from his sleep and say to himself: "This simply isn't fair. My brother has a wife and five kids and he gets half the produce of the land. Now I have no one except myself to support. So is it just that my poor brother, whose need is obviously greater than mine, should receive exactly as much as I do?" Then he would get out of bed and pour a sack full of grain into his brother's granary.

\*\*\*\*\*

One day they got out of bed at the same time and ran into each other, each with a sack of grain on his back!

Many years later, after their death, the story leaked out. So when the townsfolk wanted to build a temple they chose the spot at which the two brothers met for they could not think of any place in the town that was holier than that one.

The important religious distinction is not between those who worship and those who do not worship but between those who love and those who don't.

\*\*\*\*\*

A wealthy farmer burst into his home one day and cried out in an anguished voice, "Rebecca, there is a terrible story in town-the Messiah is here!"

"What's so terrible in that?" asked his wife. "I think it's great. What are you so upset about?"

"What am I so upset about?" the man exclaimed. "After all these years of sweat and toil we have finally found prosperity. We have a thousand head of cattle; our barns are full of grain and our trees laden with fruit. Now we will have to give it all away and follow him."

"Calm down," said his wife consolingly. "The Lord our God is good. He knows how much we Jews have always had to suffer. We had a Pharaoh, a Haman, a Hitler-always somebody. But our dear God found a way to deal with them all, didn't He? Just have faith, my dear husband. He will find a way to deal with the Messiah too."

\*\*\*\*\*

Goldstein, aged ninety-two, had lived through pogroms in Poland, concentration camps in Germany and dozens of other persecutions against the Jews.

"Oh, Lord!" he said, "Isn't it true that we are your chosen people?"

A heavenly voice replied. "Yes, Goldstein, the Jews are my chosen people."

"Well, then, isn't it time you chose somebody else?"

\*\*\*\*\*

An atheist fell off a cliff. As he tumbled downward he caught hold of the branch of a small tree. There he hung between heaven above and the rocks a thousand feet below, knowing he wasn't going to be able to hold on much longer.

Then an idea came to him. "God!" he shouted with all his might.

Silence! No one responded.

"God!" he shouted again. "If you exist, save me and I promise I shall believe in

you and teach others to believe.”

Silence again! Then he almost let go of the branch in shock as he heard a mighty Voice booming across the canyon. “That’s what they all say when they are in trouble.”

\*\*\*\*\*

“No, God, no!” he shouted out, more hopeful now. “I am not like the others. Why, I have already begun to believe, don’t you see, having heard your Voice for myself. Now all you have to do is save me and I shall proclaim your name to the ends of the earth.”

“Very well,” said the Voice. “I shall save you. Let go of that branch.”

“Let go of the branch?” yelled the distraught man. “Do you think I’m crazy?”

It is said that when Moses threw his wand into the Red Sea the expected miracle did not take place, it was only when the first man threw himself into the sea that the waves receded and the water divided itself to offer a dry passage to the Jews.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mulla Nasruddin’s house was on fire, so he ran up to his roof for safety. There he was, precariously perched on the roof, when his friends gathered in the street below holding a stretched out blanket to him and shouting, “Jump, Mullah, jump!”

“Oh no, I won’t,” said the Mullah. “I know you fellows. If I jump, you’ll pull the blanket away just to make a fool of me!”

“Don’t be silly. Mullah. This isn’t a joke. This is serious. Jump!”

“No,” said Nasruddin. “I don’t trust any of you. Lay that blanket on the ground and I’ll jump.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The old miser was overheard at his prayers: “If the Almighty, may His holy name be blessed forever, would give me a hundred thousand dollars, I would give ten thousand to the poor. I promise I would. And if the Almighty, may He be glorified forever, were not to trust me, let Him deduct the ten thousand in advance and just send me the balance.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Pilot to passengers in mid-flight: “I regret to inform you we are in terrible trouble. Only God can save us now.”

A passenger turned to a priest to ask what the pilot had said and got this reply:

“He says there’s no hope!”

\*\*\*\*\*

A Sufi saint, on pilgrimage to Mecca, was delighted to see that there were barely any pilgrims at the holy shrine when he got there, so he was able to perform his devotions at leisure.

Having completed the prescribed religious practices, he knelt down and touched his fore-head to the ground and said, “Allah! I have only one desire in life. Give me the grace of never offending you again.”

When the All-Merciful heard this he laughed aloud and said, “That’s what they all ask for. But if I granted everyone this grace, tell me, whom would I forgive?”

When the sinner was asked about the fearless way he walked into the temple, he replied: “There is no single person that sky does not cover; there is no single person that earth does not sustain - and God, is He not earth and sky to everyone?”

\*\*\*\*\*

A priest ordered his deacon to assemble ten men to chant prayers for the recovery of a sick man.

When they had all come in, someone whispered into the ear of the priest, “There are some notorious thieves among those men.”

"All the better," said the priest. "When the Gates of Mercy are shut, these are the experts who will open them."

\*\*\*\*\*

A traveller was walking along the road one day when a man on horseback rushed by. There was an evil look in his eyes and blood on his hands.

Minutes later a crowd of riders drew up and wanted to know if the traveller had seen someone with blood on his hands go by. They were in hot pursuit of him.

"Who is he?" the traveller asked.

"An evil-doer," said the leader of the crowd.

"And you pursue him in order to bring him to justice?"

"No," said the leader, "we pursue him in order to show him the way."

Reconciliation alone will save the world,  
not justice which is generally another word for revenge.

\*\*\*\*\*

The poet Awhadi of Herman was sitting on his porch one night, bent over a vessel. The Sufi Shams-e-Tabrizi happened to pass by. "What are you doing?" he asked the poet.

"Contemplating the moon in a bowl of water," was the reply.

"Unless you have broken your neck, why don't you look directly at the moon in the sky?"

Words are inadequate reflections of reality. A man thought he knew what the Taj Mahal was because he was shown a piece of marble and told that the Taj was just a collection of pieces like that. Another one was convinced that, because he had seen Niagara water in a bucket, he knew what the Falls were like.

\*\*\*\*\*

"What a pretty baby you have there!"

"This is nothing! You should see his photographs!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Words (and concepts) are indicators,  
not reflections, of reality.

But, as the mystics of the East declare.

When the Sage points to the moon  
all that the idiot sees is the finger!"

A drunk was staggering across a bridge one night when he ran into a friend. The two of them leaned over the bridge and began chatting for a while.

"What's that down there?" asked the drunk suddenly.

"That's the moon," said his friend.

The drunk looked again, shook his head in disbelief and said, "Okay, okay. But how the hell did I get way up here."

We almost never see reality.

What we see is a reflection of it  
in the form of words and concepts  
which we then proceed to take for reality.

The world we live in  
is mostly a mental construct.

\*\*\*\*\*

People feed on words,  
Hue by words,  
would fall apart without them.

A beggar tugged at the sleeves of a passer-by and begged for money to buy a cup of coffee. This was his tale: "There was a time, sir, when I was a wealthy businessman just like you. I worked hard all day long. On my desk was the motto: THINK CREATIVELY, ACT DECISIVELY, LIVE DANGEROUSLY. That's the motto I lived by-

and money just kept pouring in. And then... and then... (the beggar's frame shook with sobs)"... the cleaning woman threw my motto out with the trash."  
When you sweep out the temple courtyard don't stop to read the old newspapers.  
When you are cleaning out your heart doesn't stop to flirt with words.  
\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a man who was very stupid. Each morning when he woke he had such a hard time finding his clothes that he almost feared to go to bed when he thought of the trouble he would have on walking.  
One night he got himself a pencil and pad and jotted down the exact name and location of each item of clothing as he undressed. Next morning he pulled out his pad and read, "pants"-there they were. He stepped into them. "Shirt"-there it was. He pulled it over his head. "Hat"-there it was. He slapped it on his head.  
He was very pleased about all this till a horrible thought struck him. "And I-where am I?" He had forgotten to jot that down. So he searched and searched but in vain. He could not find himself.  
What about those who say, "I am reading this book to find out who I am?"  
\*\*\*\*\*

One of the most renowned sages in ancient India was Svetaketu. This is how he came by his wisdom: When he was no more than seven years of age he was sent by his father to study the Vedas. By dint of application and intelligence the lad outshone all his fellow students till in time he was considered the greatest living expert on the Scriptures-and this when he was barely past his youth.  
On his return home his father wished to test the ability of his son. This is the question he put him: "Have you learned that by learning which there is no need to learn anything else? Have you discovered that by discovering which all suffering ceases? Have you mastered that which cannot be taught?"  
"No," said Svetaketu.  
"Then." said his father, "what you have learnt in all these years is worthless, my son."  
So impressed was Svetaketu by the truth of his father's words that he set off to discover through silence the wisdom which cannot be expressed in words.  
When the pond dries up and the fish are lying on the parched earth, to moisten them with one's breath or damp them with spittle is no substitute for flinging them back into the Jake. Don't enliven people with doctrines; throw them back into Reality. For the secret of life is to be found in life itself-not in doctrines about it.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A seeker asked the Sufi Jalaluddin Rumi if the Koran was a good book to read. He replied, "You should rather ask yourself if you are in a state to profit from it."  
A Christian mystic used to say of the Bible, "However useful a menu, it is not good for eating. "  
\*\*\*\*\*

Child in geography class: "The benefit of longitude and latitude is that when you are drowning you can call out what longitude and latitude you are in and they will find you."  
Because there is a word for wisdom  
people imagine they know what it is.  
But no one becomes an astronomer  
from understanding the meaning  
of the word "astronomy."

Just because, by blowing on the thermometer.  
You got it to register higher.

You did not warm the room.

\*\*\*\*\*

Every day in the corner of a library in Japan an old monk was to be found sitting in peaceful meditation.

"I never see you read the sutras." said the librarian.

"I never learnt to read." replied the monk.

"That's a disgrace. A monk like you ought to be able to read. Shall I teach you?"

"Yes. Tell me," said the monk pointing to himself, "what is the meaning of this character?"

Why light a torch

when the sun shines in the heavens?

Why water the ground

when the rain pours down in torrents?

\*\*\*\*\*

A Guru promised a scholar a revelation of greater consequence than anything contained in the scriptures.

When the scholar eagerly asked for it, the Guru said, "Go out into the rain and raise your head and arms heavenward. That will bring you the first revelation."

The next day the scholar came to report: "I followed your advice and water flowed down my neck-And I felt like a perfect fool."

"Well." said the Guru, "for the first day that's quite a revelation, isn't it?"

\*\*\*\*\*

The poet Kabir says:

What good is it if the scholar pores over words and points of this and that but his chest is not soaked dark with love?

What good is it if the ascetic clothes himself in saffron robes but is colourless within?

What good is it if you scrub your ethical behaviour till it shines, but there is no music inside?

Disciple: What's the difference between knowledge and enlightenment?

Master: When you have knowledge you use a torch to show the way. When you are enlightened you become a torch.

\*\*\*\*\*

A parachutist jumped out of a plane on a windy day and was blown a hundred miles off course by a powerful gale. Then his parachute caught on a tree, so he hung there for hours in the middle of nowhere, shouting for help.

Finally someone passed by. "How did you get up there on that tree?" he asked.

The parachutist told him. Then asked, "Where am I?"

"On a tree," was the reply.

"Hey! You must be a cleric!"

The stranger was stunned. "Yes I am. How did you know?"

"Because what you said is certainly true and just as certainly useless."

\*\*\*\*\*

A group was enjoying the music at a Chinese restaurant. Suddenly a soloist struck up a vaguely familiar tune; everyone recognized the melody but no one could remember its name. So they beckoned to the splendidly-clad waiter and asked him to find out what the musician was playing. The waiter waddled across the floor, then returned with a look of triumph on his face and declared in a loud whisper, "Violin!"

The scholar's contribution to spirituality!

\*\*\*\*\*

The play was in progress at the village theatre when the curtain was suddenly

lowered and the manager stepped before the audience.  
"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "it distresses me deeply to have to announce that the leading actor, our great and beloved mayor himself, has just had a fatal heart attack in his dressing room. We are therefore forced to stop the play."  
On hearing this announcement a huge middle-aged woman in the front row stood up and shouted agitatedly: "Quick! Give him chicken broth!"  
"Madam," said the manager, "the heart attack was fatal. The man is dead!"  
"So give it to him at once!"  
The manager was desperate. "Madam," he pleaded, "What good will chicken broth do to a dead man?"  
"What harm will it do?" she shouted.  
Chicken broth does for the dead what religion does for the unconscious whose number, alas, is legion.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A Master was surprised to hear shouting and altercation going on in his courtyard. When he was told that one of his disciples was at the centre of it, he had the man sent for and asked what the cause of the din was.  
"There is a delegation of scholars that has come to visit you. I told them you do not waste your time on men whose heads are stuffed with books and thoughts but devoid of wisdom. These are the people who, in their conceit, create dogmas and divisions among people everywhere."  
The Master smiled. "How true, how true," he murmured. "But tell me, is not your conceit in claiming to be different from the scholars the cause of this present conflict and division?"  
\*\*\*\*\*

A Hindu Sage was having the Life of Jesus read to him. When he learned how Jesus was rejected by his people in Nazareth, he exclaimed, "A rabbi whose congregation does not want to drive him out of town isn't a rabbi." And when he heard how it was the priests who put Jesus to death, he said with a sigh, "It is hard for Satan to mislead the whole world, so he appoints prominent ecclesiastics in different parts of the globe."  
The lament of a bishop: "Wherever Jesus went there was a revolution; wherever I go people serve tea!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

When a million people follow you ask yourself where you have gone wrong. A Jewish author explains that Jews are not proselytizers. Rabbis are required to make three separate efforts to discourage prospective converts! Spirituality is for the elite. It will not compromise to become acceptable so it will not consort with the masses who want syrup, not medicine. Once, when large crowds were following Jesus, this is what he said to them;  
"Which of you would think of building a tower without first sitting down and estimating the cost to see if he can afford to finish it? Or what king will march to battle against another king without first sitting down to consider if with ten thousand soldiers he will be able to do battle with an enemy who comes to meet him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, long before the enemy is near he sends emissaries and asks for terms. So also none of you can be a disciple of mine without the readiness to renounce all possessions."  
People do not want truth. They want reassurance.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Said a preacher to a friend, "We have just had the greatest revival our church has experienced in many years."  
"How many did you add to your church membership?" "None. We lost five hundred."  
Jesus would have applauded!  
Experience shows, alas, that our religious convictions bear as much relation to

our personal holiness as a mart's dinner jacket to his digestion.

\*\*\*\*\*

An ancient philosopher, dead for many centuries, was told that his teachings were being misrepresented by his representatives. Being a compassionate and truth-loving individual, he managed, after much effort, to get the grace to come back to earth for a few days.

It took him several days to convince his successors of his identity. Once that was established, they promptly lost all interest in what he had to say and begged him to disclose to them the secret for coming back to life from the grave.

It was only after considerable exertion that he finally convinced them that there was no way he could impart this secret to them and that it was infinitely more important for the good of humanity that they restore his teaching to its original purity.

A futile task! What they said to him was, "Don't you see that what is important is not what you taught but our interpretation of what you taught? After all, you are only a bird of passage whereas we reside here permanently."

When Buddha dies, the schools are born.

\*\*\*\*\*

All the philosophers, divines and doctors of the law were assembled in court for the trial of Mullah Nasruddin. The accusation was a serious one; he had been going from town to town saying, "Your so-called religious leaders are ignorant and confused." So he was charged with heresy, the penalty for which was death.

"You may speak first," said the Caliph.

The Mullah was perfectly self-possessed. "Have paper and pens brought in," he said, "and give them to the ten wisest men in this august assembly."

To Nasruddin's amusement, a great squabble broke out among the holy men as to who was the wisest among them. When the contention died down and each of the chosen ten was equipped with paper and pen, the Mullah said, "Have each of them write down the answer to the following question: WHAT IS MATTER MADE OF?"

\*\*\*\*\*

The answers were written down and handed to the Caliph who read them out. One said, "It is made of nothing." Another said, "Molecules." Yet another, "Energy." Others, "Light," "I do not know," "Metaphysical Being" and so on.

Said Nasruddin to the Caliph, "When they come to an agreement on what matter is, they will be fit to judge questions of the spirit. Is it not strange that they cannot agree on something that they themselves are made of, yet they are unanimous in their verdict that I am a heretic?"

It is not the diversity of our dogmas

but our dogmatism

that does the damage.

Thus, if each of us did what we are firmly persuaded

is the will of God

the result would be utter chaos.

Certainty is the culprit.

The spiritual person knows uncertainty -

a state of mind unknown to the religious fanatic.

One night a fisherman stole into the grounds of a rich man and cast his net into a lake full of fish. The owner heard him and set his guards upon him.

When he saw the crowd searching for him everywhere with lighted torches, the fisherman hastily smeared his body with ashes and sat under a tree, as is the custom with holy men in India.

The owner and his guards could find no poacher, though they searched for a long time. All they found was a holy man covered with ashes sitting under a tree absorbed in meditation.

The next day word spread everywhere that a great sage had designed to take up

residence in the grounds of the rich man. People gathered with flowers and fruits and food and even a lot of money to pay obeisance to him for it is piously believed that gifts, when made to a holy man, bring God's blessing upon the giver. The fisherman turned sage was astounded at his good fortune. "It is easier to make a living on the faith of these people than by the toil of my hands," he said to himself. So he continued to meditate and never went back to work again.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A king dreamt that he saw a king in paradise and a priest in hell. He wondered how this could be then he heard a Voice say, "The king is in paradise because he respected priests. The priest is in hell because he compromised with kings."  
\*\*\*\*\*

When Sister asked the children in her class what they wanted to be when they grew up little Tommy said he wanted to be a pilot. Elsie said she wanted to be a doctor, Bobby to Sister's great joy, said he wanted to become a priest. Then Mary stood up and declared she wanted to be a prostitute,  
"What was that again, Mary?"  
"When I grow up," said Mary with the air of someone who knew exactly what she wanted, "I shall become a prostitute."  
Sister was startled beyond words. Mary was immediately segregated from the rest of the children and taken to the Parish Priest.  
Father was given the facts in broad outline but he wanted to check them out with the culprit, "Tell me what happened in your own words, Mary."  
"Well," said Mary, somewhat taken aback by all this fuss, "Sister asked me what I wanted to become when I grew up and I said I wanted to become a prostitute."  
"Did you say prostitute?" asked Father, double-checking.  
"Yes."  
"Heavens! What a relief! We all thought you said you were going to become a Protestant!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

Rabbi Abraham had lived an exemplary life. And when his time arrived, he left this world surrounded by the blessings of his congregation who had come to regard him as a saint and as the principal cause of all the blessings they had received from God.  
It was no different at the other end, for the angels came forward to welcome him with shouts of praise. Throughout the festivities the Rabbi seemed withdrawn and distressed. He kept his head in his hands and refused to be comforted. He was finally taken before the Judgement Seat where he felt himself enveloped by a Loving Kindness that was infinite and he heard a Voice of infinite tenderness say to him, "What is it that distresses you, my son?"  
"Most Holy One," replied the Rabbi, "I am unworthy of all the honours that are bestowed on me here. Even though I was considered to be an example to the people, there must have been something wrong with my life, for my only son, in spite of my example and my teaching, abandoned our faith and became a Christian."  
"Let that not disturb you, my son. I understand exactly how you feel, for I have a son who did the same thing!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

In Belfast, Ireland, a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister and a Jewish rabbi were engaged in a heated theological discussion. Suddenly an Angel appeared in their midst and said to them, "God sends you his blessings. Make one wish for Peace and your wish will be fulfilled by the Almighty."  
The minister said, "Let every Catholic disappear from our lovely island. Then peace will reign supreme."  
The priest said, "Let there not be a single Protestant left on our sacred Irish soil. That will bring peace to this island,"

"And what about you, Rabbi?" said the Angel. "Do you have no wish of your own?"  
"No," said the rabbi. "Just attend to the wishes of these two gentlemen and I shall be well pleased."

Little boy: "Are you a Presbyterian?"

Little girl: "No. We belong to a different abomination."

\*\*\*\*\*

A hunter sent his dog after something that moved behind the trees. It chased out a fox and corralled it into a position where the hunter could shoot it.

The dying fox said to the hound, "Were you never told that the fox is brother to the dog?"

"I was, indeed," said the dog. "But that's for idealists and fools. For the practical-minded, brotherhood is created by identity of interests."

Said the Christian to the Buddhist; "We could be brothers, really. But that's for idealists and fools. For the practical-minded, brotherhood lies in identity of beliefs. "

Most people, alas, have enough religion to hate but not enough to love.

\*\*\*\*\*

In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi tells how in his student days in South Africa he became deeply interested in the Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount.

He became convinced that Christianity was the answer to the caste system that had plagued India for centuries, and he seriously considered becoming a Christian.

One day he went to a church to attend Mass and get instructions. He was stopped at the entrance and gently told that if he desired to attend Mass he was welcome to do so in a church reserved for blacks.

He left and never returned.

\*\*\*\*\*

A public sinner was excommunicated and forbidden entry to the church.

He took his woes to God. "They won't let me in. Lord, because I am a sinner."

"What are you complaining about?" said God. "They won't let me in either!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A church or synagogue needs to raise money if it is to survive. Now there was once a Jewish synagogue where they did not pass the collection plate around as they do in Christian Churches. Their way of raising money was to sell tickets for reserved seats on Solemn Holy Days for that was when the congregation was the largest and the people most generous.

On one such Holy Day a kid came to the synagogue in search of his father but the ushers wouldn't let him in because he did not have a ticket.

"Look," said the youngster, "this is a very important matter."

"That's what they all say," the usher replied, unmoved.

The lad became desperate and began to plead. "Please sir, let me in. This is a matter of life and death. I'll only be in a minute."

The usher relented. "Well, OK if it is so important." he said. "But don't let me catch you praying!"

Organized Religion has its limitations, alas!

\*\*\*\*\*

The preacher was more than ordinarily eloquent and everyone, but everyone, was moved to tears. Well, not everyone exactly, because there, in the front pew, sat a gentleman looking straight in front of him, quite unaffected by the sermon.

At the end of the service, someone said to him, "You heard the sermon, didn't you?"

"Of course, I did," said the stony gentleman. "I am not deaf."

"What did you think of it?"

"I thought it so moving I could have cried."

"And why, may I ask, did you not cry?"

"Because," said the gentleman, "I do not belong to this parish."

\*\*\*\*\*

According to one story, when God created the world and glorified in its goodness, Satan shared his rapture, in his own way, of course, for as he contemplated marvel after marvel, he kept exclaiming, "How good it is! Let's organize it!"

"And take all the fun out of it!"

Have you ever attempted to organize something like peace?

The moment you do,

You have power conflicts

and group wars within the organization.

The only way to have peace

is to let it grow wild.

\*\*\*\*\*

A bishop was testing the suitability of a group of candidates for baptism.

"By what sign will others know that you are Catholics?" he asked.

There was no reply. Evidently no one had expected this question. The bishop repeated the question. Then he said it once again, this time making the Sign of the Cross to give the others a clue to the right answer.

Suddenly one of the candidates got it, "Love" he said.

The bishop was taken aback. He was about to say, "Wrong," then checked himself in the nick of time.

\*\*\*\*\*

Someone asked for the bishop's imprimatur for a book for children that contained the parables of Jesus, a few simple illustrations and a few gospel sentences. Not a single word more.

The imprimatur was given with the customary disclaimer: "The imprimatur does not necessarily imply that the bishop agrees with the opinions expressed in this book."

More organizational pitfalls!

\*\*\*\*\*

How spiritual organizations grow:

A Guru was so impressed by the spiritual progress of his disciple that, judging he needed no further guidance, he left him on his own in a little hut on the banks of a river.

Each morning after his ablutions the disciple would hang his loin-cloth out to dry. It was his only possession! One day he was dismayed to find it torn to shreds by rats. So he had to beg for another from the villagers. When the rats nibbled holes in this one too, he got himself a kitten. He had no more trouble with the rats but now, in addition to begging for his own food, he had to beg for milk as well.

"Too much trouble begging," he thought, "and too much of a burden on the villagers. I shall keep a cow." When he got the cow, he had to beg for fodder.

"Easier to till the land around my hut," he thought. But that proved troublesome too for it left him little time for meditation. So he employed labourers to till the land for him. Now overseeing the labourers became a chore, so he married a wife who would share this task with him. Before long, of course, he was one of the wealthiest men in the village.

Years later his Guru happened to drop by and was surprised to see a palatial mansion where once a hut had stood. He said to one of the servants, "Isn't this where a disciple of mine used to live?"

Before he got a reply, the disciple himself emerged. "What's the meaning of all this, my son?" asked the Guru.

"You're not going to believe this, sir," said the man, "but there was no other way

I could keep my loincloth!"

\*\*\*\*\*

On a rocky seacoast where shipwrecks were frequent there was once a ramshackle little life-saving station. It was no more than a hut and there was only one boat, but the few people who manned the station were a devoted lot who kept constant watch over the sea and, with little regard for themselves and their safety, went fearlessly out in a storm if they had any evidence that there had been a shipwreck somewhere. Many lives were thus saved and the station became famous.

As the fame of the station grew, so did the desire of people in the neighbourhood to become associated with its excellent work. They generously offered of their time and money so new members were enrolled, new boats bought and new crews trained. The hut too was replaced by a comfortable building which could adequately handle the needs of those who had been saved from the sea and, of course, since shipwrecks do not occur every day, it became a popular gathering place—a sort of local club. As time passed the members became so engaged in socializing that they had little interest in life-saving, though they duly sported the life-saving motto on the badges they wore. As a matter of fact, when some people were actually rescued from the sea, it was always such a nuisance because they were dirty and sick and soiled the carpeting and the furniture.

Soon the social activities of the club became so numerous and the life-saving activities so few that there was a show-down at a club meeting with some members insisting that they return to their original purpose and activity. A vote was taken and these troublemakers, who proved to be a small minority, were invited to leave the club and start another.

Which is precisely what they did—a little further down the coast, with such selflessness and daring that, after a while, their heroism made them famous. Whereupon their membership was enlarged, their hut was reconstructed and their idealism smothered. If you happen to visit that area today you will find a number of exclusive clubs dotting the shoreline. Each one of them is justifiably proud of its origin and its tradition. Shipwrecks still occur in those parts, but nobody seems to care much.

\*\*\*\*\*

In a desert country trees were scarce and fruit was hard to come by. It was said that God wanted to make sure there was enough for everyone, so He appeared to a prophet and said, "This is my commandment to the whole people for now and for future generations: no one shall eat more than one fruit a day. Record this in the Holy Book. Anyone who transgresses this law will be considered to have sinned against God and against humanity."

The law was faithfully observed for centuries until scientists discovered a means for turning the desert into green land. The country became rich in grain and livestock. And the trees bent down with the weight of unplucked fruit. But the fruit law continued to be enforced by the civil and religious authorities of the land.

Anyone who pointed to the sin against humanity involved in allowing fruit to rot on the ground was dubbed a blasphemer and an enemy of morality. These people, who questioned the wisdom of God's Holy Word, were being guided by the proud spirit of reason, it was said, and lacked the spirit of faith and submission whereby alone the Truth can be received.

In the churches sermons were frequently delivered in which those who broke the law were shown to have come to a bad end. Never once was mention made of the equal number of those who came to a bad end even though they had faithfully kept the law or of the vast number of those who prospered even though they broke it.

Nothing could be done to change the law because the prophet who had claimed to have received it from God was long since dead. He might have had the courage and the sense to change the law as circumstances changed for he had taken God's Word, not as something to be revered, but as something to be used for the welfare of the

people.

As a result, some people openly scoffed at the law and at God and religion. Others broke it secretly and always with a sense of wrongdoing. The vast majority adhered rigorously to it and came to think of themselves as holy merely because they held on to a senseless and outdated custom they were too frightened to jettison.

\*\*\*\*\*

Among the truly religious  
the Law is observed.

But it is neither feared,...

"What do you do for a living?" asked a lady of a young man at a cocktail party.

"I am a paratrooper."

"It must be awful to be a parachute jumper, said the lady.

"Well, it does have its scary moments."

"Tell me about your most terrible experience.

"Well," said the paratrooper, "I think it was the time when I came down on a lawn where there was a sign which read, KEEP OFF THE GRASS.

\*\*\*\*\*

..nor revered...

A sergeant was asking a group of recruits why walnut was used for the butt of a rifle.

"Because it is harder than other wood," said one man.

"Wrong." said the sergeant.

"Because it is more elastic."

"Wrong again."

'Because it has a better shine."

"You boys certainly have a lot to learn. Walnut is used for the simple reason that it is laid down in the Regulations!"

\*\*\*\*\*

...it is neither absolutized...

A railway official reported a murder on a train in the following terms: "The assassin entered the coach from the platform, stabbed the victim savagely five times, each time inflicting a mortal blow, and left the train by the opposite door, alighting upon the railway track--thereby transgressing Railway Regulations."

A nobleman was criticized for burning down a cathedral. He said he was truly sorry but had been informed-falsely, as it turned out -that the Archbishop was inside!

\*\*\*\*\*

In a small town a man dialled 016 for directory information. A woman's voice at the other end said. "I'm sorry; you will have to dial 015 for that."

It seemed to him. when he had dialled 015, that he was hearing the same voice at the other end. So he said. "Aren't you the lady whom I spoke to a while ago?"

"I am." said the voice. "I'm doing both jobs today."

\*\*\*\*\*

.nor magnified out of all proportion...

Mr. Smith had killed his wife and his defence was temporary insanity. He was in the witness stand and his lawyer asked him to describe the crime in his own words.

"Your Honour," he said, "I am a quiet man of regular habits who lives at peace with all the world. Each day I wake at seven, have breakfast at seven-thirty, show up for work at nine, leave work at five, come home at six, find supper on the table, eat it, read the papers, watch television, then retire for the night. Until the day in question,."

Here his breathing accelerated and a look of fury came upon him.

"Go on," said the lawyer quietly. "Tell this court what happened."

"On the day in question. I woke up at seven, as usual, had my breakfast at seven-

thirty, got to work at nine, left at five, got home at six and I discovered to my dismay that supper wasn't on the table. There was no sign of my wife either. So I searched through the house and found her in bed with a strange man. So I shot her."

"Describe your emotions at the time you killed her," said the lawyer, anxious to make his point.

"I was in an uncontrollable rage. I just went out of my mind. Your Honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury," he shouted pounding the arm of his chair with his fist, "When I get home at six I absolutely demand that supper be ready on the table!"

\*\*\*\*\*

...nor exploited.

Mullah Nasruddin found a diamond by the road-side but, according to the Law, finders became keepers only if they first announced their find in the centre of the marketplace on three separate occasions.

Now Nasruddin was too religious-minded to disregard the Law and too greedy to run the risk of parting with his find. So on three consecutive nights when he was sure that everyone was fast asleep he went to the centre of the marketplace and there announced in a soft voice, "I have found a diamond on the road that leads to the town. Anyone knowing who the owner is should contact me at once."

No one was the wiser for the Mullah's words, of course, except for one man who happened to be standing at his window on the third night and heard the Mullah mumble something. When he attempted to find out what it was, Nasruddin replied, "I am in no way obliged to tell you. But this much I shall say: Being a religious man, I went out there at night to pronounce certain words in fulfilment of the Law."

To be properly wicked,  
you do not have to break the Law.  
Just observe it to the letter.

\*\*\*\*\*

Among Jews, the observance of the Sabbath, the day of the Lord, was originally a thing of joy but too many Rabbis kept issuing one injunction after another on how exactly it was to be observed, what sort of activity was allowed, until some people felt they could hardly move during the Sabbath for fear that some regulation or other might be transgressed.

The Baal Shem, son of Eliezer, gave much thought to this matter. One night he had a dream. An angel took him up to heaven and showed him two thrones placed far above all others.

"For whom are these reserved?" he asked.

"For you," was the answer, "if you make use of your intelligence; and for a man whose name and address is now being written down and given to you."

He was then taken to the deepest spot in hell and shown two vacant seats. "For whom are these prepared?" he asked.

"For you," the answer came, "if you do not make use of your intelligence; and for the man whose name and address are being written down for you."

In his dream Baal Shem visited the man who was to be his companion in paradise. He found him living among Gentiles, quite ignorant of Jewish customs and, on the Sabbath, he would give a banquet at which there was a lot of merrymaking and to which all his Gentile neighbours were invited. When Baal Shem asked him why he held this banquet, the man replied, "I recall that in my childhood my parents taught me that the Sabbath was a day for rest and for rejoicing; so on Saturdays my mother made the most succulent meals at which we sang and danced and made merry. I do the same today."

Baal Shem attempted to instruct the man in the ways of his religion for he had been born a Jew but was evidently quite ignorant of all the rabbinical prescriptions. But he was struck dumb when he realised that the man's joy in the Sabbath

would be marred if he was made aware of his short-comings.

Baal Shem, still in his dream, then went to the home of his companion in hell. He found the man to be a strict observer of the Law, always apprehensive lest his conduct should not be correct. The poor man spent each Sabbath day in a scrupulous tension as if he were sitting on hot coals. When Baal Shem attempted to upbraid him for his slavery to the Law, the power of speech was taken from him as he realised that the man would never understand that he could do wrong by fulfilling religious injunctions.

Thanks to this revelation given him in the form of a dream, the Baal Shem Tov evolved a new system of observance whereby God is worshipped in joy that comes from the heart.

When people are joyful they are always good; whereas when they are good they are seldom joyful.

The priest announced that Jesus Christ himself was coming to church the following Sunday. People turned up in large numbers to see him. Everyone expected him to preach, but he only smiled when introduced and said, "Hello," Everyone offered him hospitality for the night, especially the priest, but he refused politely. He said he would spend the night in church. How fitting, everyone thought.

He slipped away early next morning before the Church doors were opened. And, to their horror, The priest and people found their church had been vandalised. Scribbled everywhere on the walls was the single word BEWARE. No part of the church was spared: the doors and windows, the pillars and the pulpit, the altar, even the bible that rested on the lectern. BEWARE. Scratched in large letters and in small, in pencil and pen and paint of every conceivable colour. Wherever the eye rested one could see the words, "BEWARE, beware. Beware, BEWARE, beware, beware..."

Shocking. Irritating. Confusing. Fascinating. Terrifying. What were they supposed to beware of? It did not say. It just said, BEWARE. The first impulse of the people was to wipe out every trace of this defilement, this sacrilege. They were restrained from doing this only by the thought that it was Jesus himself who had done the deed.

Now that mysterious word BEWARE began to sink into the minds of the people each time they came to church. They began to beware of the scriptures, so they were able to profit from the scriptures without falling into bigotry. They began to beware of sacraments, so they were sanctified without becoming superstitious. The priest began to beware of his power over the people, so he was able to help without controlling. And everyone began to beware of religion which leads the unwary to self-righteousness. They began to beware of church law, so they became law-abiding, yet compassionate to the weak. They began to beware of prayer, so it no longer stopped them from becoming self-reliant. They even began to beware of their notions of God so they were able to recognize him outside the narrow confines of their church.

They have now inscribed the shocking word over the entrance of their church and as you drive past at night you can see it blazing above the church in multicoloured neon lights.

\*\*\*\*\*

## GRACE

A priest was sitting at his desk by the window composing a sermon on Providence when he heard something that sounded like an explosion. Soon he saw people running to and fro in a panic and discovered that a dam had burst, the river was in spate and the people were being evacuated.

The priest saw the water begin to rise in the street below. He had some difficulty suppressing his own rising sense of panic but he, said to himself, "Here I am preparing a sermon about Providence and I am being given an occasion to practise what I preach. I shall not flee with the rest. I shall stay right here and trust in the providence of God to save me.

By the time the water reached his window a boat full of people came by. "Jump in, Father," they shouted, "Ah no, my children," said Father confidently. "I trust in the providence of God to save me."

Father did climb to the roof, however, and when the water got up there another boatload of people went by, urging Father to join them. Again he refused. This time he climbed to the top of the belfry. When the water came up to his knees an officer in a motorboat was sent to rescue him. "No thank you, officer," said Father, with a calm smile. "I trust in God, you see. He will never let me down." When Father drowned and went to heaven the first thing he did was to complain to God "I trusted you! Why did you do nothing to save me?" "Well," said God. "I did send three boats, you know."

\*\*\*\*\*

Two monks were on their travels. One of them practised the spirituality of acquisition, the other believed in renunciation. All day long they discussed their respective spiritualities till, towards evening they came to the bank of a river. Now the believer in renunciation had no money with him. He said, "We cannot pay the boatman to take us across, but why bother about the body? We shall spend the night here, chanting God's praises and tomorrow we are sure to find some kind soul who will pay our passage."

The other said, "There is no village on this side of the river, no hamlet, no hut, no shelter. We shall be devoured by wild beasts or bitten by snakes or killed by the cold. On the other side of the river we shall be able to spend the night in safety and comfort. I have the money to pay the boatman."

Once they were safely on the other bank he remonstrated with his companion, "Do you see the value of keeping money? I was able to save your life and mine. What would have happened to us if I had been a man of renunciation like you?"

The other replied, "It was your renunciation that brought us across to safety, for you did part with your money to pay the boatman, didn't you? Moreover, having no money in my pocket, your pocket became mine. I have observed that I never suffer; I am always provided for."

\*\*\*\*\*

At a party in Japan a visitor was introduced to a popular Japanese drink. After his first drink he noticed the furniture in the room moving around.

"This is a very powerful drink," he said to his host.

"Not particularly," the host replied. "This happens to be an earthquake."

\*\*\*\*\*

An elephant broke loose from the herd and charged across a little wooden structure that stretched across a ravine.

The worn-out bridge shivered and groaned, barely able to support the elephant's weight.

Once it had gone safely to the other side, a flea that had lodged itself in the elephant's ear exclaimed in mighty satisfaction, "Boy, did we shake that bridge!"

\*\*\*\*\*

An old woman observed how, with scientific precision, her rooster would begin to crow just before the sun rose each day. She therefore came to the conclusion that the crowing of her rooster caused the sun to rise.

So when her rooster suddenly died she hastened to replace it with another lest the sun fail to rise the following morning.

One day she fell out with her neighbours and threatened to move out of the village with her sister several miles away.

When her rooster started to crow next day and, a little later, the sun began to rise serenely above the horizon, she was confirmed in what she had known all along: the sun was now rising here and her village was in darkness. Well, they had asked for it!

It did cause her to wonder, though, that her former neighbours never came to beg her to return to the village with her rooster. She just put it down to their stubbornness and stupidity.

\*\*\*\*\*

“So this was your first flight. Were you scared?”

“Well, to tell you the truth, I didn’t dare put my full weight down on the seat.”

\*\*\*\*\*

A disciple came riding on his camel to the tent of his Sufi Master. He dismounted and walked right into the tent, bowed low and said, “So great is my trust in God that I have left my camel outside untied, convinced that God protects the interests of those who love him.”

“Go tie your camel, you fool!” said the Master. God cannot be bothered doing for you what you are perfectly capable of doing for yourself.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Goldberg had the loveliest garden in town and each time the Rabbi passed by he would call out to Goldberg, “Your garden is a thing of beauty. The Lord and you are partners!”

“Thank you. Rabbi,” Goldberg would respond with a bow.

This went on for days and weeks and months. At least twice a day the Rabbi, on his way to and from the synagogue would call out, “The Lord and you are partners!” until Goldberg began to be annoyed at what the Rabbi evidently meant as a compliment.

So the next time the Rabbi said, “The Lord and you are partners,” Goldberg replied, “That may be true. But you should have seen this garden when the Lord had it all on his own!”

\*\*\*\*\*

In his Narrative of the Saints, Attar tells of the great Sufi Habib Ajami who went to bathe in the river one day leaving his coat lying unattended on the bank. Now Hasan of Basra happened to pass by, saw the coat and, thinking that it had been left there through someone’s carelessness, decided to stand guard over it till the owner showed up.

When Habib came looking for his coat, Hasan said, “In whose care did you leave this coat of yours when you went to bathe in the river? It could have been stolen!”

Habib replied, “I left it in the care of Him who gave you the task of standing guard over it!”

\*\*\*\*\*

A man was lost in a desert. Later, when describing his ordeal to his friends, he told how, in sheer despair, he had knelt down and cried out to God to help him.

“And did God answer your prayer?” he was asked.

“Oh, no! Before He could, an explorer appeared and showed me the way.”

\*\*\*\*\*

A group of expectant fathers sat nervously in the hall. A nurse beckoned to one of them and said, “Congratulations, you have a son!”

Another man dropped his magazine, jumped up and cried, “Hey, what’s the idea? I got here two hours before he did!”

Some things, alas, resist organization!

\*\*\*\*\*

The President of the largest Banking Corporation in the world was in hospital. One of the Vice-Presidents came to visit him with this message: “I bring you the good wishes of our Board of Directors, that you should be restored to health and live

to be a hundred years. That's an official resolution passed by a majority of 15 to 6 with 2 abstentions."

Are we ever likely to stop our efforts?

to burn fire,

wet water

and add colour to the rose?

\*\*\*\*\*

A family of refugees was very favourably impressed with America-especially the six-year-old daughter who rapidly adopted the view that everything American was not only the best but also perfect.

One day a neighbour told her she was going to have a baby, so little Mary marched home and demanded to know why she couldn't have a little baby too. Her mother decided to introduce her to the facts of life right there and, among other things, explained that it took about nine months for a baby to arrive.

"Nine months!" exclaimed Mary indignantly. "But mother, aren't you forgetting that this is America?"

\*\*\*\*\*

"Mummy, I want a baby brother." "But you've just got one." "I want another."

"Well, you can't have one so soon. It takes time to produce a baby brother."

"Why don't you do what Daddy does at the factory?"

"What's that?"

"Put more men on the job."

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman dreamt she walked into a brand new shop in the marketplace and, to her surprise, found God behind the counter.

"What do you sell here?" she asked

"Everything your heart desires," said God.

Hardly daring to believe what she was hearing, the woman decided to ask for the best things a human being could wish for. "I want peace of mind and love and happiness and wisdom and freedom from fear," she said. Then as an after thought, she added, "Not just for me. For everyone on earth."

God smiled. "I think you've got me wrong, my dear," He said. "We don't sell fruits here. Only seeds."

\*\*\*\*\*

A devout religious man fell on hard times. So he took to praying in the following fashion: "Lord, remember all the years I served you as best I could, asking for nothing in return. Now that I am old and bankrupt I am going to ask you for a favour for the first time in my life and I am sure you will not say No: allow me to win the lottery."

Days passed. Then weeks and months. But nothing happened. Finally, almost driven to despair, he cried out one night, "Why don't you give me a break, God?"

He suddenly heard the voice of God replying, "Give me a break yourself! Why don't you buy a lottery ticket?"

\*\*\*\*\*

A young composer once came to consult Mozart on how to develop his talent.

"I would advise you to start with simple things." Mozart said. "Songs, for example."

"But you were composing symphonies when you were a child!" the man protested.

"True enough. But then I didn't have to go to anyone for advice on how to develop my talent."

\*\*\*\*\*

A man in his eighties was once asked the secret of his enormous stamina.

"Well," he answered, "I don't drink, I don't smoke. And I swim a mile a day,"  
"But I had an uncle who did exactly that, and he died at the age of sixty."  
"Ah, the trouble with your uncle was he didn't do it long enough."

One Sunday morning after church God and St Peter went to play golf. God teed off. He gave a mighty swipe and sliced the ball off into the rough beside the fairway. Just as the ball was about to hit the ground, a rabbit darted out of a bush, picked it up in his mouth and ran with it down the fairway. Suddenly an eagle swooped down, picked the rabbit up in its claws and flew it over the green. A man with a rifle took aim and shot the eagle in mid-flight. The eagle let go of the rabbit. The rabbit fell onto the green and the ball rolled out of its mouth into the hole.

St Peter turned to God in annoyance and said, "Come on now! Do you want to play golf or do you want to fool around?"

And bow about you? Do you want to understand and play the game of life or fool around with miracles?

\*\*\*\*\*

Some things are best left as they are:

An enthusiastic young man who had just graduated as a plumber was taken to see Niagara Falls. He studied it for a minute, then said. "I think I can fix this."

\*\*\*\*\*

## THE SAINTS

Some are born holy.

others achieve holiness.

others yet have holiness thrust on them.

An oil well caught fire and the company called in the experts to put out the blaze. But so intense was the heat that the fire-fighters could not get within a thousand feet of the rig. The management, in desperation, called the local volunteer Fire Department to help in any way they could. Half an hour later a decrepit looking fire truck rolled down the road and came to an abrupt stop just fifty feet away from the devouring flames. The men jumped out of the truck, sprayed one another, then went on to put the fire out.

The management, in gratitude, held a ceremony some days later at which the courage of the local fire-men was commended, their dedication to duty extolled - and an enormous cheque was presented to the chief of the fire department. When asked by reporters what he planned to do with the cheque, the chief replied. "Well, the first thing I'm going to do is take that fire truck to a garage and have the damned brakes repaired!"

For others, alas, holiness is no more than a ritual.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lady Pumphampton's gentleman friend had come to tea so she gave her maid a large tip and said, "Here, take this. When you hear me scream for help, you may leave for the day."

\*\*\*\*\*

There once lived a man so godly that even the angels rejoiced at the sight of him. But, in spite of his great holiness, he had no notion that he was holy. He just went about his humdrum tasks diffusing goodness the way flowers unselfconsciously diffuse their fragrance and street-lamps their glow.

His holiness lay in this that he forgot each person's past and looked at them as they were now, and he looked beyond each person's appearance to the very centre of their being where they were innocent and blameless and too ignorant to know what they were doing. Thus he loved and forgave everyone he met-and he saw nothing extraordinary in this for it was the result of his way of looking at people.

One day an angel said to him. "I have been sent to you by God. Ask for anything

you wish and it will be given to you. Would you wish to have the gift of healing?" "No," said the man, "I'd rather God did the healing himself."  
"Would you want to bring sinners back to the path of righteousness?" "No," he said, "it is not for me to touch human hearts. That is the work of angels." "Would you like to be such a model of virtue that people will be drawn to imitate you?" "No," said the saint, "for that would make me the centre of attention."  
"What then do you wish for?" asked the angel. "The grace of God," was the man's reply. "Having that. I have all I desire." "No, you must ask for some miracle." said the angel, "or one will be forced on you" "Well, then I shall ask for this: let good be done through me without my being aware of it "  
So it was decreed that the holy man's shadow would be endowed with healing properties whenever it fell behind him. So everywhere his shadow fell-provided he had his back to it-the sick were healed, the land became fertile, fountains sprang to life and colour returned to the faces of those who were weighed down by life's sorrow.  
But the saint knew nothing of this because the attention of people was so centred on the shadow that they forgot about the man and so his wish that good be done through him and he forgotten was abundantly fulfilled.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Holiness, like greatness, is unself-conscious.  
For thirty-five years Paul Cezanne lived in obscurity producing masterpieces that he gave away to unsuspecting neighbours. So great was his love for his work that he never gave a thought to achieving recognition nor did he suspect that some day he would be looked upon as the father of modern painting.  
He owes his fame to a Paris dealer who chanced upon some of his paintings, put some of them together and presented the world of art with the first Cezanne exhibition. The world was astonished to discover the presence of a master. The master was just as astonished. He arrived at the art gallery leaning on the arm of his son and could not contain his amazement when he saw his paintings on display. Turning to his son he said. "Look, they have framed them!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

Buddha's disciple Subhuti suddenly discovered the richness and fecundity of emptiness: the realisation that everything is impermanent, unsatisfactory and empty of self. In this mood of divine emptiness he sat in bliss under a tree when suddenly flowers began to fall all around him.  
And the gods whispered, "We are enraptured by your sublime teachings on emptiness."  
Subhuti replied, "But I haven't uttered a word about emptiness."  
"True," the gods replied. "You have not spoken of emptiness, we have not heard of emptiness. This is true emptiness." And the showers of blossoms continued to fall. If I had spoken of my emptiness or even been aware of it would it be emptiness?  
Music needs the hollowness of the flute, letters, the blankness of the page, light, the void called a window, holiness, the absence of the self.  
\*\*\*\*\*

An old rabbi was lying ill in bed and his disciples were holding a whispered conversation at his bedside. They were extolling his unparalleled virtues.  
"Not since the time of Solomon has there been one as wise as he," said one of them. "And his faith! It equals that of our father Abraham!" said another "Surely his patience equals that of Job." said a third. "Only in Moses can we find someone who conversed as intimately with God " said a fourth.  
The rabbi seemed restless. When the disciples had gone his wife said to him. "Did you hear them sing your praises?"  
"I did." said the rabbi.  
"Then why are you so fretful?" said his wife.  
"My modesty," complained the rabbi. "No one mentioned my modesty!"

He was indeed a saint who said.  
"I am only four bare walls -with nothing inside.  
No one could be fuller  
\*\*\*\*\*

A ninety-two year old priest was venerated by everyone in town. When he appeared on the streets people would bow low such was the man's reputation for holiness. He was also a member of the Rotary Club. Every time the Club met he would be there, always on time and always seated at his favourite spot in a corner of the room. One day the priest disappeared. It was as if he vanished into thin air because, search as they might, the townsfolk could find no trace of him. The following month, however, when the Rotary Club met, there he was as usual, sitting in his corner.

"But, Father." everyone cried, "'where have you been?" "In prison." said Father calmly. "In prison? For heaven's sake you couldn't hurt a fly! What happened?" "It's a long story," said the priest, "but, briefly, this is what happened: I bought myself a train ticket to the city and was waiting on the platform for the train to arrive when this stunningly beautiful girl appears on the arm of a policeman. She looks me over, turns to the cop and say. "He did it." And to tell you the truth I was so flattered. I pleaded guilty "  
\*\*\*\*\*

Four monks decided to go into silence for a month. They started out well enough but after the first day one monk said, "I wonder if I locked the door of my cell at the monastery before we set out."

Another monk said, "You fool! We decided to keep silence for a month and now you have gone and broken it!"

A third monk said. "What about you? You have broken it too!"

Said the fourth. "Thank God I'm the only one who hasn't spoken yet!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

A man walked into a doctor's office and said, "Doctor, i have this awful headache that never leaves me. Could you give me something for it?"

"I will." said the doctor, "But I want to check a few things out first. Tell me, do you drink a lot of liquor?"

"Liquor?" said the man indignantly, "I never touch the filthy stuff."

"How about smoking?"

"I think smoking is disgusting. I've never in my life touched tobacco."

"I'm a bit embarrassed to ask this, but... you know the way some men are., do you do any running around at night?"

"Of course not. What do you take me for? I'm in bed every night by ten o'clock at the latest."

"Tell me." said the doctor, "this pain in the head you speak of, is it a sharp, shooting kind of pain?"

"Yes," said the man "That's it-a sharp, shooting kind of pain."

"Simple, my dear fellow! Your trouble is you have your halo on too tight. All we need to do for you. is loosen it a bit."

The trouble with your ideals  
is that, if you line up to all of them.  
you become impossible to live with.  
\*\*\*\*\*

An influential British politician kept pestering Disraeli for a baronetcy. The Prime Minister could not see his way to obliging the man but he managed to refuse him without hurting his feelings. He said, "I am sorry I cannot give you a baronetcy, but I can give you something better: you can tell your friends that I offered you the baronetcy and that you turned it down."  
\*\*\*\*\*

One day a bishop knelt before the altar and, in an outburst of religious fervour, began to beat his breast and exclaim. "I'm a sinner, have mercy on me! I'm a sinner, have mercy on me!"

The local priest, inspired by this example of humility, fell on his knees beside the bishop and began to beat his breast and say. "I'm a sinner, have mercy on me! I'm a sinner, have mercy on me!"

The sexton who happened to be in church at the time was so moved he could not restrain himself. He too fell on his knees, beat his breast, and cried out. "I'm a sinner, have mercy on me!"

Whereupon the bishop nudged the priest and, pointing towards the sexton, said with a smile, "Look who thinks he's a sinner!"

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once an ascetic who lived a celibate life and made it his life's mission to fight against sex in himself and others.

In due course he died. And his disciple, who could not stand the shock, died a little after him. When the disciple reached the other world he couldn't believe what he saw: there was his beloved Master with the most extraordinarily beautiful woman seated on his lap!

His sense of shock faded when it occurred to him that his Master was being rewarded for his sexual abstinence on earth. He went up to him and said. "Beloved Master, now I know that God is just, for you are being rewarded in heaven for your austerities on earth."

The Master seemed annoyed. "Idiot!" he said, "this isn't heaven and I'm not being rewarded-She's being punished."

When the shoe fits the foot is forgotten:

When the belt fits the waist is forgotten;

When all things are in harmony the ego is forgotten.

Of what use, then, are your austerities?

\*\*\*\*\*

The local priest was often seen talking to a comely woman of bad repute-and in public places too to the great scandal of his congregation.

He was summoned by his bishop for a dressing down. When the bishop had done, the priest said. "Your Excellency, I have always held that it is better to talk to a pretty woman with one's thoughts set on God than to pray to God with one's thoughts fixed on a pretty woman."

When the monk goes to the tavern the tavern becomes his cell. When the drunk goes to a prison, the cell becomes his tavern.

\*\*\*\*\*

An earthquake hit the town and the Master was pleased to note how impressed his disciples were by his display of fearlessness.

When asked some days later what it meant to conquer fear, he reminded them of his own example. "Did you observe how, while everyone was running to and fro in panic, I sat still, calmly sipping water? Did any of you see my hand shake while I held the glass?"

"No," said a disciple "But it wasn't water you were drinking, sir but soya bean sauce."

\*\*\*\*\*

Nisterus the Great, one of the holy Fathers of the Egyptian Desert, was one day walking in the desert with a large number of disciples who revered him as a man of God

Suddenly a dragon appeared before them and they all ran away.

Many years later, as Nisterus lay dying, one of the disciples said to him.

"Father, were you also frightened the day we saw the dragon?"

"No," said the dying man.

"Then why did you run away with the rest of us?"

"I thought it better to flee the dragon, so I would not have to flee from the spirit of vanity later."

\*\*\*\*\*

When the Egyptian deserts were the abode of those holy men called the Fathers of the Desert a woman suffering from cancer of the breast went in search of one of them, a certain Abba Longinus for the man had the reputation of a saint and a healer.

Now as the woman was walking along the sea, she came upon Longinus himself collecting firewood, and said, "Holy father, could you tell me where the servant of God Abba Longinus lives?"

Longinus said, "Why are you looking for that old fraud? Do not go to see him for he will only do you harm. What's your trouble?"

She told him what it was. He thereupon gave her his blessing and sent her on her way saying, "Go now, and God will surely make you whole again. Longinus would have been of no help to you at all."

So the woman went away, confident in the faith that she had been healed-which she was, before the month was over-and she died many years later quite unaware that it was Longinus who had healed her.

\*\*\*\*\*

Once someone approached a disciple of the Muslim mystic Bahaudin Naqshband and said, "Tell me why your Master conceals his miracles. I have personally collected data that shows beyond any doubt that he has been present in more than one place at a time; that he healed people by the power of his prayers but tells them it was the work of nature; that he helped people in their troubles and then attributes it to their good luck. Why does he do this?"

"I know exactly what you are talking about," said the disciple, "for i have observed these things myself. And I think I can give you the answer to your question. First, the Master recoils from being the centre of attention. And secondly, he is convinced that once people develop an interest in the miraculous, they have no desire to learn anything of true spiritual value."

\*\*\*\*\*

Laila and Rama were lovers, but too poor to get married as yet. They lived in different villages separated by a broad river that was infested with crocodiles. One day Laila heard that her Rama was dangerously ill with no one to nurse him. She rushed to the river bank and pleaded with the boatman to take her across even though she did not have the money to pay him.

But the wicked boatman refused unless she agreed to sleep with him that night. The poor woman begged and pleaded but to no avail so, in sheer desperation, she consented to the boatman's terms.

When she finally got to Rama she found him near to death. But she stayed with him for a month and nursed him back to health. One day Rama asked how she had managed to cross the river. Being incapable of lying to her beloved, she told him the truth.

When Rama heard her tale he fell into a rage for he valued virtue more than life itself. He drove her out of the house and refused to look at her again.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gessen was a Buddhist monk. He was also an exceptionally talented artist. Before he started work on any painting, however, he always demanded payment in advance. And his fees were exorbitant. So he came to be known as the Greedy Monk.

A geisha once sent for him to have a painting done. Gessen said. "How much will you pay me?" The girl happened to be entertaining a patron at that time. She said, "Any sum you ask for. But the painting must be done right now before me."

Gessen set to work at once and when the painting was completed he asked for the highest sum he had ever charged. As the geisha was giving him his money, she said to her patron, "This man is supposed to be a monk but all he thinks of is money. His talent is exceptional but he has a filthy, money-loving mind. How does one exhibit the canvas of a filthy-minded man like that? His work is good enough for my underclothing!"

With that she flung a petticoat at him and asked him to paint a picture on it. Gessen asked the usual question before he started the work: "How much will you give me?" "Oh, any sum you ask for," said the girl. Gessen named his price, painted the picture, shamelessly pocketed the money and walked away.

Many years later quite by chance someone found out why Gessen was so greedy for money. A devastating famine often struck his home province. The rich would do nothing to help the poor. So Gessen had secret barns built in the area and had them filled with grain for such emergencies. No one knew where the grain came from or who the benefactor of the province was

Another reason why Gessen wanted money was the road leading to his village from the city many miles away. It was in such bad condition that ox-carts could not move on it; this caused much suffering to the aged and the infirm when they needed to get to the city. So Gessen had the road repaired.

The final reason was a meditation temple which Gessen's teacher had always desired to build but could not, Gessen built this temple as a token of gratitude to his revered teacher.

After the Greedy Monk had built the road, the temple and the barns, he threw away his paint and brushes, retired to the mountains to give himself to the contemplative life and never painted another canvas again.

A person's conduct generally shows  
what the observer imagines it to show.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two Irish navvies were working on the road outside a house of prostitution. Presently the local Protestant minister came along, pulled down his hat and walked into the building. Pat said to Mike, "Did you see that? What can you expect? He's a Protestant, isn't he?"

Soon after a rabbi arrived on the scene. He pulled his collar up and walked in too. Said Pat, "What a terrible example for a religious leader to give his people!"

Finally, who should pass by but a Catholic priest. He drew his cloak around his head and slipped into the building. Said Pat, "Now isn't it a terrible thing, Mike, to think that one of the girls must have taken ill?"

\*\*\*\*\*

A man was fishing in the northern mountains. One day his guide took to telling him anecdotes about the bishop whose guide he had been the previous summer,

"Yes." the guide was saying, "he's a good man except for his language."

"Are you saying that the bishop swears?" asked the man.

"Oh, but of course, sir," said the guide. "Once he caught a fine salmon. Just as he was about to land it, the fish slipped off the hook, so I say to the bishop, 'That's damned bad luck!' and the bishop, he looks me straight in the eye and he says. 'Yes, it is indeed!' But that's the only time I heard the bishop use such language."

\*\*\*\*\*

During the Meigi era two well-known teachers lived in Tokyo; as unlike each other as it was possible to be. One, Unsho, a Shingon teacher, was a man who meticulously observed every one of Buddha's precepts. He rose well before dawn, retired when the night was young, ate nothing after the sun had passed its zenith and drank no intoxicating drinks. The other. Tanzan was a philosophy professor at the Imperial Todai University. He observed no precepts for he ate when he felt

like eating and slept even during the day time.

One day Unsho visited Tanzan and found him in his cups. This was quite scandalous since not even a drop is supposed to touch the tongue of a Buddhist.

"Hello, my friend," Tanzan exclaimed. "Will you come in and have a drink with me?" Unsho was outraged. But he said in a controlled voice, "I never drink."

"One who does not drink is not human, surely," said Tanzan.

This time Unsho lost his temper. "Do you mean to say I am inhuman because I do not touch what the Buddha explicitly forbade? If I am not human, what am I?"

"A Buddha," said Tanzan happily.

Tanzan's manner of dying was as ordinary as was his manner of living. On the last day of his life he wrote sixty postcards, each of which read; I am departing from this world

This is my last announcement.

Tanzan. July 27, 1892.

He asked a friend to mail these cards for him then quietly passed away.

The Sufi Junaid of Baghdad says, "The good-natured sensualist is better than the bad-tempered saint."

\*\*\*\*\*

A family of five were enjoying their day at the beach. The children were bathing in the ocean and making castles in the sand when in the distance a little old lady appeared. Her grey hair was blowing in the wind and her clothes were dirty and ragged. She was muttering something to herself as she picked up things from the beach and put them into a bag.

The parents called the children to their side and told them to stay away from the old lady. As she passed by, bending down every now and then to pick things up she smiled at the family. But her greeting wasn't returned.

Many weeks later they learnt that the little old lady had made it her lifelong crusade to pick up bits of glass from the beach so children wouldn't cut their feet.

\*\*\*\*\*

Wandering ascetics are common in India and a peasant mother had forbidden her son to have anything to do with them for while some of them were reputed to be holy, others were known to be exploiters in disguise.

One day a mother looked out of her window and saw an ascetic surrounded by the village children. To her surprise, the man, quite unconscious of his dignity, was doing somersaults to entertain them. So impressed was she by the sight that she called out to her little boy and said, "Son, this one's a holy man. You may go out to him."

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a priest so holy that he never thought ill of anyone.

One day he sat down at a restaurant for a cup of coffee which was all he could take, it being a day of fast and abstinence, when, to his surprise, he saw a young member of his congregation devouring a massive steak at the next table.

"I trust I haven't shocked you. Father," said the young fellow with a smile.

"Ah! I take it that you forgot that today is a day of fast and abstinence," said the priest.

"No, no. I remembered it distinctly."

"Then you must be sick. The doctor has forbidden you to fast."

"Not at all. I'm in the pink of health."

At that, the priest raised his eyes to heaven and said, "What an example this younger generation is to us. Lord! Do you see how this young man here would rather admit his sins than tell a lie?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Of the great Zen Master Rinzai it was said that each night the last thing he did

before he went to bed was let out a great big belly laugh that resounded through the corridors and was heard in every building of the monastery grounds. And the first thing he did when he woke at dawn was burst into peals of laughter so loud they woke up every monk no matter how deep his slumber. His disciples asked him repeatedly to tell them why he laughed but he wouldn't. And when he died he carried the secret of his laughter with him to the grave.  
\*\*\*\*\*

The Master was in an expansive mood so his disciples sought to learn from him the stages he had passed through in his quest for the divine.  
"God first led me by the hand," he said, "into the Land of Action and there I dwelt for several years. Then He returned and led me to the Land of Sorrows; there I lived until my heart was purged of every inordinate attachment. That is when I found myself in the Land of Love whose burning flames consumed whatever was left in me of self. This brought me to the Land of Silence where the mysteries of life and death were bared before my wondering eyes."  
"Was that the final stage of your quest?" they asked.  
"No." The Master said, "One day God said. Today I shall take you to the innermost sanctuary of the Temple, to the heart of God himself.' And I was led to the Land of Laughter."  
\*\*\*\*\*

"Prisoner at the bar," said the Grand Inquisitor, "you are charged with encouraging people to break the laws, traditions and customs of our holy religion. How do you plead?"  
"Guilty, your Honour."  
"And with frequenting the company of heretics, prostitutes, public sinners, the extortionist tax-collectors, the colonial conquerors of our nation-in short, the excommunicated. How do you plead?"  
"Guilty, your Honour."  
"Finally, you are charged with revising, correcting, calling into question the sacred tenets of our faith. How do you plead?"  
"Guilty, your Honour."  
"What is your name, prisoner?"  
"Jesus Christ, your Honour."  
Some people are just as alarmed to see their religion practised as they are to hear it doubted.

## THE SELF

An elderly gentleman ran a curio and antique shop in a large city. A tourist once stepped in and got to talking with the old man about the many things that were stacked in that shop.  
Said the tourist, "What would you say is the strangest, the most mysterious thing you have here?"  
The old man surveyed the hundreds of curios, antiques, stuffed animals, shrunken heads, mounted fish and birds, archaeological finds, deer heads... then turned to the tourist and said, "The strangest thing in this shop is unquestionably myself."  
\*\*\*\*\*

A teacher was giving a lecture on modern inventions.  
"Can any of you mention something of importance that did not exist fifty years ago?" she asked.  
One bright lad in the front row raised his hand eagerly and said. "Me!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

There is a revealing story of a monk living in the Egyptian desert who was so tormented by temptation that he could bear it no longer. So he decided to abandon

his cell and go somewhere else.

As he was putting on his sandals to carry out his resolve he saw another monk not far from where he stood who was also putting his sandals on.

"Who are you?" he asked the stranger.

"I am your self." was the reply. "If it is on my account that you are leaving this place, I would have you know that no matter where you go I shall go with you."

Said a despairing client to the psychiatrist, "No matter where I go I have to take myself along-and that spoils everything."

Both what you run away from - and what you yearn for-is within you.

\*\*\*\*\*

A seeker, in search of a Master who would lead him to the path of holiness, came to an ashram presided over by a guru who, in addition to having a great reputation for holiness, was also a fraud. But the seeker did not know this.

"Before I accept you as my disciple," said the guru, "I must test your obedience. There is a river flowing by the ashram that is infested with crocodiles. I want you to wade across the river."

So great was the faith of the young disciple that he did just that: he walked across the river crying, "All praise to the power of my guru!" To the guru's astonishment the man walked to the other bank and back unharmed.

This convinced the guru that he was more of a saint than he himself had imagined, so he decided to give all his disciples a demonstration of his power and thereby enhance his reputation for holiness. He stepped into the river crying, "All praise to me! All praise to me!" The crocodiles promptly seized him and devoured him.

\*\*\*\*\*

The devil, transformed into an angel of light, appeared to one of the holy Fathers of the Desert and said, "I am the Angel Gabriel and I have been sent to thee by the Almighty."

The monk replied, "Think again. You must have been sent to someone else, I have done nothing to deserve the visit of an angel."

With that the devil vanished and never again dared come anywhere near the monk.

\*\*\*\*\*

A tourist in Japan discovered, when he visited the golf links, that most of the good caddies were women.

One day he arrived late at the course and had to take a young lad of ten as caddie. He was a tiny fellow, knew next to nothing about the course or the game and he spoke only three words of English,

Thanks to those three words, however, the tourist made him his caddie for the rest of his stay. After each shot, regardless of the result, the little fellow would stamp his foot-and shout with feeling, "Damned good shot!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman was deeply hurt by the behaviour of her fifteen-year old son. Each time they went out together he would walk on ahead of her. Was he ashamed of her? One day she asked him.

"Oh, Mom, no," was his embarrassed reply. "It's just that you look so young that I'm worried my friends will suspect I have a new girl friend."

Her hurt vanished as if by magic.

\*\*\*\*\*

An elderly man stood at the door with a piece of cake in his hand. "My wife is eighty-six today," he said, "and she wants you to have a piece of her birthday cake." The cake was received gratefully, particularly because the man had walked nearly half a mile to deliver it.

An hour later he was back. "Is anything the matter?" he was asked.

"Well," he replied sheepishly. "Agatha sent me back to say she's only eighty-

five.”

\*\*\*\*\*

A rooster was scratching around in the stall of a large farm horse. When the horse began to get restless and started moving around, the rooster looked up at him and said, “We’d, both of us, better be careful, brother, or we are likely to step on each other’s toes.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Guess what the ant said to the elephant when Noah was lining up all the animals to get them into the ark.

He said, “Stop pushing.’”

\*\*\*\*\*

A flea decided to move with his family into the ear of an elephant. So he shouted, “Mr. Elephant, sir, my family and I plan to move into your ear. I think it only fair to give you a week to think the matter over and let me know if you have any objection.”

The elephant, who was not even aware of the existence of the flea went his placid way so, after conscientiously waiting for a week, the flea assumed the elephant’s consent and moved in.

A month later Mrs. Flea decided the elephant’s ear was not a healthy place to live in and urged her husband to month at least so as not to hurt the elephant’s feelings moth at least so as not to hurt the elephant’s feelings.

Finally, he put it as tactfully as he could: “Mr. Elephant, sir we plan to move to other quarters. This has nothing at all to do with you, of course, because your ear is spacious and warm. It is just that my wife would rather live next door to her friends at the buffalo’s foot. If you have any objection to our moving, do let me know in the course of the next week.”

The elephant said nothing, so the flea changed residence with a clear conscience. The universe is not aware of your existence.’ Relax!

\*\*\*\*\*

The choir was going through its final rehearsal in the midst of pandemonium because the stage crew was busy putting the finishing touches to the stage. When one young fellow began hammering away so loudly that the din became intolerable, the conductor stopped the singing and looked at him pleadingly. There was once a scientist who discovered the art of reproducing himself so perfectly that it was impossible to tell the reproduction from the original. One day he learnt that the Angel of Death was searching for him so he produced a dozen copies of himself. The Angel was at a loss to know which of the thirteen specimens before him was the scientist, so he left them all alone and returned to heaven. “Go right ahead with the singing, conductor.” the merry worker said. “They’re not disturbing me.”

\*\*\*\*\*

But not for long, for, being an expert in human nature, the angel came up with a clever device. He said. “Sir, you must be a genius to have succeeded in making such perfect reproductions of yourself. However, I have discovered a flaw in your work, just one tiny little flaw.”

A woman stepped out of her shower stark naked and was about to reach for her towel when she saw, to her horror, that there was a man on a scaffolding washing her window and eyeing her appreciatively.

So shocked was she by the unexpected apparition that she stood transfixed to the ground, gaping at the man.

“What’s the matter, lady?” the fellow asked cheerfully “Have you never seen a window cleaner before?”

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a scientist who discovered the art of reproducing himself so perfectly that it was impossible to tell the reproduction from the original. One day he learnt that the Angel of Death was searching for him so he produced a dozen copies of himself. The Angel was at a loss to know which of the thirteen specimens before him was the scientist, so he left them all alone and returned to heaven. But not for long, for, being an expert in human nature, the angel came up with a clever device. He said. "Sir, you must be a genius to have succeeded in making such perfect reproductions of yourself. However, I have discovered a flaw in your work, just one tiny little flaw." The scientist immediately jumped out and shouted. "Impossible. Where is the flaw?" "Right here," said the angel, as he picked up the scientist from among the reproductions and carried him off.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was an old Arab judge who was known for his sagacity. One day a shopkeeper came to him to complain that goods from his shop were being stolen but he was unable to catch the thief.

The judge commanded the door of the shop to be taken off its hinges, carried to the market-place and given fifty lashes because it had failed to do its duty of keeping the thief out of the store.

A large crowd collected to see this strange sentence being carried out. When the lashes had been administered, the judge stooped and asked the door who the thief was. Then he applied his ear to the door, the better to hear what it had to say. When he stood up he announced. "The door declares that the burglaries have been committed by a man who has a cobweb on the top of his turban." Instantly the hand of the one man in the crowd went up to his turban. His house was searched and the stolen goods recovered.

All it takes  
is a word of flattery  
or criticism  
to uncover the ego.

\*\*\*\*\*

An old woman died and was taken to the Judgment Seat by the angels. While examining her records however, the Judge could not find a single act of charity performed by her except for a carrot she had once given to a starving beggar. Such, however, is the power of a single deed of love that it was decreed that she be taken up to heaven on the strength of that carrot. The carrot was brought to court and given to her. The moment she caught hold of it, it began to rise as if pulled by some invisible string, lifting her up towards the sky.

A beggar appeared. He clutched on to the hem of her garment and was lifted along with her; a third person caught hold of the beggar's foot and was lifted too. Soon there was a long line of persons being lifted up to heaven by that carrot. And, strange as it may seem, the woman did not feel the weight of all those people who held on to her; in fact, since she was looking heavenward, she did not see them. Higher and higher they rose until they were almost near the heavenly gates. That is when the woman looked back to catch a last glimpse of the earth and saw this whole train of people behind her.

She was indignant! She gave an imperious wave of her hand and shouted, "Off! Off all of you! This carrot is mine!"

In making her imperious gesture she let go of the carrot for a moment-and down she fell with the entire train.

There is only one cause for every evil on earth: "This belongs to me!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A woodcarver called Ching had just finished work on a bell-frame. Everyone who saw it marvelled for it seemed to be the work of spirits. When the Duke of Lu saw it,

he asked, "What sort of genius is yours that you could make such a thing?" The woodcarver replied. "Sire. I am only a simple workman. I am no genius. But there is one thing. When I am going to make a bell-frame I meditate for three days to calm my mind. When I have meditated for three days I think no more about rewards or emoluments. When I have meditated for five days I no longer think of praise or blame, skillfulness or awkwardness. When I have meditated for seven days I suddenly forget my limbs, my body; no. I forget my very self. I lose consciousness of the court and my surroundings. Only my skill remains. In that state I walk into the forest and examine each tree until I find one in which I see the bell-frame in all its perfection. Then my hands go to the task. Having set my self aside, nature meets nature in the work that is performed through me. This no doubt is the reason why everyone says that the finished product is the work of spirits."

\*\*\*\*\*

Said a world famous violinist about his success in playing Beethoven's Violin Concerto: "I have splendid music, a splendid violin and a splendid bow. All I need to do is bring them together and get out of the way."

\*\*\*\*\*

A disciple came to Maruf Karkhi, the Muslim Master, and said, "I have been talking to people about you. The Jews say you are one of their own. The Christians consider you to be one of their saints. And the Muslims look upon you as a glory to Islam."

Maruf replied, "That's what they say here in Baghdad. When I lived in Jerusalem the Jews dubbed me a Christian; the Christians, a Muslim; and the Muslims, a Jew." "Then what are we to think of you?"

"Think of me as a man who said this about himself: Those who do not understand me revere me. Those who revile me do not understand me either."

If you think you are what your friends and enemies say you are, you obviously do not know yourself.

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman in a coma was dying. She suddenly had a feeling that she was taken up to heaven and stood before the Judgement Seat.

"Who are you?" a Voice said to her.

"I'm the wife of the mayor." she replied.

"I did not ask you whose wife you are but who you are."

"I'm the mother of four children."

"I did not ask whose mother you are, but who you are."

"I'm a schoolteacher."

"I did not ask you what your profession is but who you are."

And so it went. No matter what she replied, she did not seem to give a satisfactory answer to the question, "Who are you?"

"I'm a Christian."

"I did not ask what your religion is but who you are."

"I'm the one who went to church every day and always helped the poor and needy."

"I did not ask you what you did but who you are."

She evidently failed the examination for she was sent back to earth. When she recovered from her illness she determined to find out who she was. And that made all the difference.

Your duty is to be. Not to be somebody, not to be nobody

-for therein lies greed and ambition -not to be this or that

- and thus become conditioned-but just to be.

\*\*\*\*\*

A worried looking fellow walks into the psychiatrist's office smoking pot and wearing love-beads, bell-bottom trousers frayed at the ends and shoulder-length

hair.

The psychiatrist says, "You claim you are not a hippie. Then how do you explain the clothes, the hair the pot?"

"That's what I'm here to find out, doctor."

To know things is to be learned.

To know others is to be wise.

To know the self is to be enlightened.

\*\*\*\*\*

A student walked up to the clerk at the language laboratory and said. "May I have a blank tape, please?"

"What language are you studying?" asked the clerk.

"French." said the student.

"Sorry, we don't have any blank tapes in French."

"Well, do you have any blank tapes in English?"

"Yes, we do."

"Good. I'll take one of those."

It makes as much sense to speak of a blank tape as being French or English as it does to speak of a person as being French or English. French or English is your conditioning, not you.

A baby born of American parents and adopted by Russian parents: has no notion he has been adopted and grows up to be a great patriot and poet who gives expression to the collective unconscious of the Russian soul and the aspirations of Mother Russia: is he Russian? American? Neither.

Find out who/what you are.

\*\*\*\*\*

"What is that door doing under your arm?"

"It's the front door of my house. I lost the key, and am taking it to have a fresh key made."

"Make sure you don't lose the door now, or you won't be able to enter your house."

"Well, I left a window open just to be on the safe side."

\*\*\*\*\*

The Zen Master, Bankei, is said to have founded no school. He left no works and no disciples. He was like a bird that leaves no trace of its flight across the sky. Of him it was said, "When he entered the forest not a blade of grass stirred; when he entered the water not a ripple was made."

He did not encumber the earth. No feat of daring, no conquest or accomplishment or spirituality is to be compared with this: not to encumber the earth

A man came to Buddha with an offering of flowers in his hands. Buddha looked up at him and said, "Drop it!"

He couldn't believe he was being asked to drop the flowers. But then it occurred to him that he was probably being invited to drop the flowers he had in his left hand, since to offer something with one's left hand was considered inauspicious and impolite. So he dropped the flowers that his left hand held.

Still Buddha said. "Drop it!"

Perplexed, the man asked, "What is it I am supposed to drop?"

"Not the flowers, son but the one who brought them." was Buddha's reply.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was a Guru who was looked upon by all as Wisdom Incarnate. Each day he would discourse on various aspects of the spiritual life and it was obvious to all that never had anyone surpassed this man for the variety, the depth and the enticing quality of his teaching.

Again and again his disciples would ask him about the source from which he drew this inexhaustible store of wisdom. He told them it was all written down in a book that they would inherit after he was dead.

The day after his death, the disciples found the book exactly where he told them it would be. There was only one page in that book and only one sentence on that page. It read: "Understand the difference between the container and the content and the fount of Wisdom shall be open to you."

\*\*\*\*\*

A tale from the Upanishads:

The sage Uddalaka taught his son Svetaketu to see the One behind the appearance of the many. He did this by means of several parables like the one that follows:

One day he said to his son, "Put this salt in water and come back to me in the morning."

The boy did as he was told and the next day his father said, "Please bring me the salt you put in the water yesterday."

"I cannot find it," said the boy. "It has dissolved."

"Taste the water from this side of the dish," said Uddalaka. "What taste does it have?"

"Salt."

"Sip it in the middle. What is it like?"

"Salt."

"Sip it from the other side of the dish. What is it like?"

The boy did so and observed that after the water had evaporated the salt reappeared. Then Uddalaka said. "You cannot perceive God here, my son but in fact he is here."

Those who seek for enlightenment fail to find it for they fail to understand that the object of the search is the seeker. God, like beauty, is in the I of the beholder.

\*\*\*\*\*

LOVE

"My friend isn't back from the battlefield, sir. Request permission to go out and get him."

"Permission refused," said the officer. "I don't want you to risk your life for a man who is probably dead."

The soldier went, all the same, and, an hour later came back mortally wounded, carrying the corpse of his friend.

The officer was furious. "I told you he was dead. Now I've lost both of you. Tell me; was it worth going out there to bring in a corpse?"

The dying man replied, "Oh, it was, sir. When I got to him he was still alive. And he said to me, 'Jack, I was sure you'd come.'"

\*\*\*\*\*

A little girl was dying of a disease from which her eight-year-old brother had recovered some time before.

The doctor said to the boy, "Only a transfusion of your blood will save the life of your sister. Are you ready to give her your blood?"

The eyes of the boy widened in fear. He hesitated for a while, then finally said, "OK, doctor. I'll do it."

An hour after the transfusion was completed the boy asked hesitantly, "Say, doctor, when do I die?" It was only then that the doctor understood the momentary fear that had seized the child: he thought that in giving his blood he was giving his life for his sister.

\*\*\*\*\*

A disciple very much wanted to renounce the world but he claimed that his family loved him too much to let him go

"Love?" said his guru. "That isn't love at all. Listen..." And he revealed a yogic secret to the disciple whereby he could simulate the state of death. The next day

the man was dead to all outward appearances and the house rang with the cries and wailing of his family.  
The guru then showed up and told the weeping family that he had the power to bring the man back to life if someone could be found to die in his place. Any volunteers?  
To the "corpse's" astonishment every member of the family began to bring forth reasons why it was necessary to keep their own lives. His wife summed up the sentiments of all with the words, "There's really no need for anyone to take his place. We'll manage without him."  
\*\*\*\*\*

Three grown-ups were having morning coffee in the kitchen while the children played on the floor. The conversation turned on what they would do if danger threatened and each of the grown-ups said that the first thing they would do was save the children.  
Suddenly the safety valve of the pressure cooker burst, creating an explosion of steam in the room. Within seconds everyone was out of the kitchen-except for the kids playing on the floor.  
\*\*\*\*\*

At the funeral of a very wealthy man a stranger was seen mourning and weeping as loudly as the others.  
The officiating priest walked up to him and asked. "Are you perhaps, a relative of the deceased?"  
"No."  
"Then why are you crying?"  
"That's why."  
Alt grief-no matter what the occasion -is for the self.  
\*\*\*\*\*

When a factory was burning down, the aged owner of the building was there weeping aloud at his loss.  
"Dad, what are you weeping for?" said his son, "Have you forgotten that we sold the factory four days ago?"  
That instantly stopped the old man's tears.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A saleswoman sold a brightly coloured pair of trousers to a lad who seemed delighted with his purchase.  
The next day he was back to say he wanted to return the trousers. His reason, "My girlfriend does not like them."  
A week later he was back again, all smiles, and wanting to buy the trousers. "Has your girl changed her mind?" asked the saleswoman.  
"Nope," said the young fellow. "I've changed the girl."  
\*\*\*\*\*

Mother: "What does your girlfriend like in you."  
"She thinks I'm handsome, talented, clever and a good dancer."  
"And what do you like about her?"  
"She thinks I'm handsome, talented, clever and a good dancer."  
\*\*\*\*\*

Two women friends met after many years.  
"Tell me," said one, "What happened to your son?"  
"My son? The poor, poor lad!" sighed the other'. What an unfortunate marriage he made-to a girl who won't do a stitch of work in the house. She won't cook, she won't sew, she won't wash or clean. All she does is sleep and loaf and read in bed. The poor boy even has to bring her breakfast in bed, would you believe it?"

"That's awful! And what about your daughter?"

"Ah-now she's the lucky one! She married an angel. He won't let her do a thing in the house. He has servants to do the cooking and sewing and washing and cleaning. And each morning he brings her breakfast in bed, would you believe it? All she does is sleep for as long as she wishes and spends the rest of the day relaxing and reading in bed."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Do you think you will be able to give my daughter what she wants?" a man asked a suitor.

"I certainly do, sir. She says that all she wants is me."

No one would call it love if what she wanted was money. Why it is love if what she wants is you?

\*\*\*\*\*

When Robert, a fourteen-year-old lad fell in love with his fourteen-year-old neighbour, he sold off everything he had and even took on odd jobs to earn enough money to buy his sweetheart the expensive watch she wanted. His parents were dismayed but decided it was best to say nothing.

The day for the purchase arrived and Robert returned from his shopping expedition without spending his money. This is the explanation he gave: "I took her to the jeweller's and she said she didn't want the watch after all. She fancied other things more, like a bracelet, a necklace, a gold ring.

"While she was moving around the shop making up her mind I remembered what our teacher once told us, that before getting something we must ask ourselves what we wanted it for. That's when I realized that I did not really want her after all, so I walked out of the shop and came away."

\*\*\*\*\*

A little boy was heartbroken to find his pet turtle lying on its back, lifeless and still, beside the pond.

His father did his best to console him: "Don't cry son. We'll arrange a lovely funeral for Mr. Turtle. We'll make him a little coffin all lined in silk and get the undertaker to make a headstone for his grave, with Mr. Turtle's name carved on it. Then we'll have fresh flowers placed on the grave each day and make a little picket fence to go all around it."

The little boy dried his eyes and became enthusiastic about the project. When all was ready the cortege was formed-father, mother, maid and child chief mourner-and began to move solemnly towards the pond to bring in the body. But the body had vanished.

Suddenly they spied Mr. Turtle emerging from the depths of the pond and swimming around merrily. The little boy stared at his friend in bitter disappointment then said. "Let's kill him."

It isn't really you I care about  
but the thrill I get from loving you.

\*\*\*\*\*

A nun in search of enlightenment made a wooden statue of Buddha and covered it with a fine gold leaf. It was very pretty and everywhere she went she carried it with her.

Years passed and, still carrying her statue, the nun settled down in a small temple where there were many statues of Buddha, each with its own altar. She began to burn incense before her golden Buddha each day but discovered, to her dismay, that some of the smoke wandered off to the neighbouring altars.

So she made a paper funnel through which the smoke would ascend to her Buddha. This blackened the nose of the golden statue and made it very ugly.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fredrich Wilhelm who ruled Prussia in the early eighteenth century was known to be a short-tempered man. He also detested ceremony. He would walk the streets of Berlin unaccompanied and if anyone happened to displease him-a not infrequent occurrence-he would not hesitate to use his walking stick on the hapless victim. Not surprisingly when people saw him at a distance they would quietly leave the vicinity. Once Fredrich came pounding down a street when a Berliner caught sight of him-but too late, so his attempt to withdraw into a doorway was foiled.

"You there!" said Fredrich. "Where are you going?"

The man began to shake. "Into this house, your Majesty."

"Is it your house?"

"No, your Majesty."

"A friend's house?"

"No, your Majesty."

"Why are you entering it?"

The man now began to fear that he would be taken for a burglar. So he blurted out the truth. "To avoid your Majesty."

"Why would you wish to avoid me?"

"Because I am afraid of your Majesty."

At this Fredrich Wilhelm became livid with rage. Seizing the poor man by the shoulders he shook him violently crying, "How dare you fear me! I am your ruler. You are supposed to love me! Love me, wretch! Love me!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A massively built woman strode into the registrar's office, slamming the door shut behind her.

"Did you or did you not issue this licence for me to marry Jacob Jacobson?" she said, slamming the document on the table.

The registrar inspected the document closely through his thick glasses. "Yes, ma'am, I believe I did. Why?"

"Because," said the woman, "he's escaped. What are you going to do about it?"

\*\*\*\*\*

After a heated argument with his wife a man said, "Why can't we live peacefully like our two dogs who never fight?"

"No, they don't," his wife agreed. "But tie them together and see what happens!"

\*\*\*\*\*

An Arabian princess had set her heart on marrying one of her slaves. Nothing the king said or did succeeded in moving the girl from her resolve. And none of the king's advisers could tell him what to do.

Finally a wise old hakim appeared at court and, on hearing of the king's predicament, said. "Your Majesty is ill advised for if you forbid the girl to marry she will only resent you and be more attracted to the slave."

"Then tell me what to do," cried the king.

The hakim suggested a plan of action.

The king was sceptical but decided to give it a try. He sent for the young woman and said, "I am going to put your love for this man to the test: you will be locked up in a tiny cell with your lover for thirty days and nights. If at the end of that period you still wish to marry him. you shall have my consent."

The princess, beside herself with joy hugged her father and delightedly agreed to the test. All went well for a couple of days but boredom soon set in. Within a week she was pining for other company and exasperated at her lover's every word and action. After two weeks she was so sick of the man she took to screaming and pounding on the door of the cell. When she was finally let out she flung her arms around her father in gratitude for having saved her from the man she had now come to abhor.

Living apart makes living together easier. Without distance one cannot relate.

\*\*\*\*\*

A teacher observed that one of the little boys in her class was pensive and withdrawn.

"What are you worried about?" she asked.

"My parents," he replied. "Dad works all day to keep me clothed and fed and sent to the best school in town. And he's working overtime to be able to send me to college. Mom spends all day cooking and cleaning and ironing and shopping so I have nothing to worry about."

"Why, then, are you worried?" "I'm afraid they might try to escape."

\*\*\*\*\*

A Sunday school teacher told her children she was going to write their names on the blackboard. After each name she would write the one thing that particular child was the most grateful for.

One little boy was thinking hard when his name went on the board. When he was asked what should go after his name, he finally said, "Mother."

So that's what the teacher wrote. She was starting to write the next name when the boy began to wave his hand frantically

"Yes?" said the teacher.

"Please cancel MOTHER," said the little boy, "and write DOG."

Why not?

\*\*\*\*\*

A man offered to pay a sum of money to his twelve-year-old daughter if she mowed the lawn. The girl went at the task with great zest and by evening the whole lawn had been beautifully mowed-well, everything except a large uncut patch of grass in one corner.

When the man said he couldn't pay the sum agreed upon because the whole lawn hadn't been mowed, the girl said she was ready to forego the money, but would not cut the grass in the patch.

Curious to find out why, he checked the uncut patch. There, right in the centre of the patch, sat a large toad. The girl had been too tender-hearted to run over it with the lawn-mower.

Where there is love, there is disorder.

Perfect order would make the world a graveyard.

\*\*\*\*\*

A small crowd collected around the speaker at a street corner. "Come the revolution," he was saying, "everyone will drive around in big black limousines. Come the revolution, everyone will have a telephone in the kitchen. Come the revolution everyone will possess a plot of land they can call their own."

A voice from the crowd protested, "I don't want to own a big black limousine or a plot of land or a phone in the kitchen."

"Come the revolution," said the speaker, "you'll do as you're damned well told."

If you want a perfect world, get rid of the people.

\*\*\*\*\*

One day Abraham invited a beggar to his tent for a meal. When grace was being said the man began to curse God, declaring he could not bear to hear His Name.

Seized with indignation, Abraham drove the blasphemer away.

When he was at his prayers that night, God said to him, "This man has cursed and reviled me for fifty years and yet I have given him food to eat every day. Could you not put up with him for a single meal?"

\*\*\*\*\*

An old woman in the village was said to be receiving divine apparitions. The local priest demanded proof of their authenticity. "When God next appears to you," he said, "ask Him to tell you my sins which are known to Him alone. That should be

evidence enough."

The woman returned a month later and the priest asked if God had appeared to her again. She said He had. "Did you put the question to him?"

"And what did He say?"

"He said. "Tell your priest I have forgotten his sins.

/s if possible

that all of the horrible things you have done

have been forgotten by everyone

except yourself?

\*\*\*\*\*

Once some of the elders were in Scete and Abbot John the Dwarf was with them. While they were dining, a priest, a very old man, got up and attempted to serve them. But no one would take so much as a cup of water from him except John the Dwarf.

The others were somewhat shocked about this and later said to him, "How is it that you considered yourself worthy to accept the service of that holy man?"

He replied, "Well, when I offer people a drink of water I'm happy if they take it. Did you expect me to sadden the old man by depriving him of the joy of giving me something?"

\*\*\*\*\*

When an eight-year-old girl spent her pocket money to buy her mother a gift, her mother was grateful and happy for a mother and house-wife generally gets much work and little appreciation.

The girl seemed to have understood this for she said, "It's because you work so hard, mother, and no one appreciates it."

The woman said, "Your father works hard too."

Said the girl, "Yes, but he doesn't make a fuss about it."

\*\*\*\*\*

An old pilgrim was making his way to the Himalayan Mountains in the bitter cold of winter when it began to ram.

An innkeeper said to him, "How will you ever get there in this kind of weather, my good man?"

The old man answered cheerfully, "My heart got there first, so it's easy for the rest of me to follow."

\*\*\*\*\*

Jeremiah was in love with a very tall woman. Each night he would walk her home from work and each night he longed to kiss her but was too shy to ask.

One night he summoned up the courage. "Will you let me kiss you?" She was agreeable. But Jeremiah was exceptionally small in stature, so they looked around for something he could stand on. They found an abandoned smithy with an anvil in it that gave Jeremiah just the height he needed.

After they had walked on for half a mile or so, Jeremiah said. "Could I have just one more kiss, darling?"

"No," said the woman. "I've given you one. That's enough for tonight."

Jeremiah said, "Then why didn't you stop me from carrying this damned anvil?"

Love bears a burden and feels no burden!

\*\*\*\*\*

A Caliph of Baghdad named Al-Mamun owned a beautiful Arabian horse. A tribesman called Omah was eager to buy the horse so he offered many camels in exchange for it, but Al-Mamun would not part with the animal. This so angered Omah that he decided to get the horse by trickery.

Knowing that Al-Mamun would ride his horse along a certain road, he lay down beside the road disguised as a beggar who was very ill. Now Al-Mamun was a kind-

hearted man so when he saw the beggar he felt sorry for him, dismounted and offered to carry him to a sarai.

"Alas!" cried the beggar, "I have been without food for days and do not have the energy to rise." So Al-Mamun tenderly lifted the man on to his horse meaning to mount after him. No sooner was the disguised beggar in the saddle than he galloped away with Al-Mamun giving chase on foot, shouting to him to stop. After Omah had put a safe distance between his pursuer and himself he stopped and turned around.

"You have stolen my horse," Lshouted Al-Mamun. "I have one request to make of you."

"What is it?" Omah shouted back.

"That you tell no one how you came into possession of the horse."

"Why not?"

"Because some day a man who is really ill may be lying by the roadside and, if your trick is known, people will pass him by and fail to help him."

\*\*\*\*\*

It was time for the monsoon rains to begin and a very old man was digging holes in his garden.

"What are you doing?" his neighbour asked.

"Planting mango trees," was the reply.

"Do you expect to eat mangoes from those trees?"

"No, I won't live long enough for that. But others will. It occurred to me the other day that all my life I have enjoyed mangoes planted by other people. This is my way of showing them my gratitude."

\*\*\*\*\*

Diogenes was standing at a street corner one day laughing like a man out of his mind.

"What are you laughing about?" a passer-by asked.

"Do you see that stone in the middle of the street? Since I got here this morning ten people have stumbled on it and cursed it. But not one of them took the trouble to remove it so others wouldn't stumble."

\*\*\*\*\*

A guru asked his disciples how they could tell when the night had ended and the day begun.

One said, "When you see an animal in the distance and can tell whether it is a cow or a horse "

"No.'-' said the guru.

"When you look at a tree in the distance and can tell if it is a neem tree or a mango tree."

"Wrong again." said the guru.

"Well then, what is it?" asked the disciples.

"When you look into the face of any man and recognize your brother in him; when you look into the face of any woman and recognize in her your sister. If you cannot do this, no matter what time it is by the sun it is still night."

\*\*\*\*\*

A friend came to the famous essayist Charles Lamb and said. "I want to introduce you to Mr So-and-so."

"No, thank you." said Lamb. "I don't like the man."

"But you don't even know him!"

"I know. That is why I don't like him." said Lamb

"When it comes to people, I know what I like."

"You mean you like what you know!"

\*\*\*\*\*

It intrigued the congregation to see their rabbi disappear each week on the eve of the Sabbath. They suspected he was secretly meeting the Almighty, so they deputed

one of their number to follow him.

This is what the man saw: the rabbi disguised himself in peasant clothes and served a paralysed Gentile woman in her cottage, cleaning out the room and preparing a Sabbath meal for her.

When the spy got back the congregation asked, "Where did the rabbi go? Did he ascend to heaven?"

"No." the man replied, "he went even higher."

\*\*\*\*\*

When Earl Mountbatten the last Viceroy of India announced that his nephew, Prince Philip, was engaged to Princess Elizabeth, Mahatma Gandhi said to him. "I am delighted that your nephew is going to marry the future queen. I should like to give them a wedding present, but what can I give them? I have nothing."

"You have your spinning wheel," said the Viceroy. "Get to work and spin them something."

Gandhi made them a tablecloth which Mountbatten sent to Princess Elizabeth with this note: "This you lock up with the crown jewels

... for it was spun by a man who said: "The British must depart as friends."

\*\*\*\*\*

There was an old Sufi who earned his living by selling all sorts of odds and ends. It seemed as if the man had no judgement because people would frequently pay him in bad coins and he would accept them without a word of protest, or people would claim they had paid him when they hadn't and he accepted their word for it.

When it was time for him to die he raised his eyes to heaven and said. "Oh. Allah! I have accepted many bad coins from people, but never once did I judge them in my heart. I just assumed that they were not aware of what they did. I am a bad coin too. Please do not judge me."

And a Voice was heard that said, "How is it possible to judge someone who has not judged others?"

Many can do loving deeds

Rare is the person who can think loving thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*

The family was gathered at dinner. The oldest boy announced he was going to marry the girl across the street.

"But her family didn't leave her a penny," objected his father.

"And she hasn't saved a cent," added mother. "She doesn't know a thing about football." said junior. "I've never seen a girl with such funny hair," said sister. "All she does is read novels," said uncle.

"And such poor taste in the choice of her clothes," said aunt.

"But she isn't sparing of the powder and the paint," said grandma.

"True," said the boy. "But she has one supreme advantage over ail of us."

"What's that?" everyone wanted to know.

"She has no family!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Abbot Anastasius had a book of very fine parchment which was worth twenty pence. It contained both the Old and New Testaments in full. Once a certain monk came to visit him and, seeing the book, made off with it. So that day when Anastasius went to his scripture reading he found that it had gone and knew at once that the monk had taken it. But he did not send after him for fear that he might add the sin of perjury to that of theft.

Now the monk went into the city to sell the book. He wanted eighteen pence for it. The buyer said. "Give me the book so that I may find out if it is worth that much money." With that, he took the book to the holy Anastasius and said, "Father, take a look at this and tell me if you think it is worth as much as eighteen pence." Anastasius said, "Yes, it is a fine book. And at eighteen pence it is a bargain."

So the buyer went back to the monk and said. "Here is your money. I showed the book to Father Anastasius and he said it was worth eighteen pence."  
The monk was stunned. "Was that all he said? Did he say nothing else?"  
"No, he did not say a word more than that."  
\*\*\*\*\*

"Well, I have changed my mind and don't want to sell the book after all "  
Then he went back to Anastasius and begged him with many tears to take the book back but Anastasius said gently, "No. brother, keep it. It is my present to you."  
But the monk said, "If you do not take it back I shall have no peace."  
After that the monk dwelt with Anastasius for the rest of his life.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Jitoku was a fine poet and he had made up his mind to study Zen. So he got himself an appointment with the Master Ekkei in Kyoto. He went to the Master full of expectations but as soon as he entered he received a whack. He was shocked and humiliated. Never before had anyone dared to strike him. But since it was the strict Zen rule never to say or do anything unless invited by the Master, he silently walked out. He went over to where Dokuon, the chief disciple, lived, told him the whole story and also his intention to challenge the Master to a duel. "But the Master was being kind to you." said Dokuon. "Throw yourself into the practice of zazen and you will see that for yourself."  
That is exactly what Jitoku did. For three days and nights, such was the intensity of his efforts that he achieved an ecstatic enlightenment quite beyond anything he could have imagined. This satori of his was approved by Ekkei.  
Once again Jitoku called on Dokuon thanked him for his advice and said, "If it hadn't been for your good sense I would never have had this transforming experience. And as for the Master. I see now that his blow wasn't hard enough!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

Muso, one of the most illustrious Masters of his day was travelling in the company of a disciple. They came to a river and boarded a ferry. Just as it was about to leave the shore a drunken samurai ran up and jumped into the overloaded boat, nearly sinking it. Then he staggered around wildly, endangering the safety of the frail vessel, so the boatman begged him to stay quiet  
"We're stuffed in here like gooseberries in a bottle." said the samurai raucously  
Suddenly he saw Muso and shouted. "Here! Let's throw the holy man overboard!"  
"Please be patient." said Muso "We'll soon be across."  
"What? Me be patient?" he shouted wildly "Look! if you don't jump off. I'll throw you overboard this minute."  
The Master's calm demeanour in the face of these threats so enraged the samurai that he walked up to Muso and struck him across the face, drawing blood. The disciple had had enough. He was a powerful man and he said, "After what he has done, he shall not live."  
"Why get so upset about a trifle?" said Muso with a smile. "It is on occasions like this that our training is put to the test. You must remember that patience is more than just a word." Then he composed a little poem that ran:  
"The beater and the beaten:  
mere actors in a play  
that is as short-lived as a dream."  
\*\*\*\*\*

Seven crazy men were invited to festivities in a neighbouring village. More than mildly intoxicated, they were staggering home towards their own village at night when it began to rain  
So they settled down for the night under a large banyan tree.  
When they woke up the following morning they rent the air with mourning and wailing. "What's the matter?" asked a passer-by.

"Last night, we huddled together under this tree and fell asleep, sir." said one of the crazy men "On walking up this morning we find our limbs all intertwined and we cannot distinguish the owners."

"Easily solved," said the traveller. "Give me a pin." He jabbed the pin sharply into the first leg he saw. "Ouch!" said one of the men. "There." said the traveller to the man, "that leg is yours." Then he pricked an arm. "Ouch!" said another, identifying himself as the owner of the arm. And so on till the limbs were all disentangled and the crazy men went merrily back to their village none the worse for their experience.

When your heart responds instinctively to other people's joys and sorrows you will know you have lost your self and attained the experience of your "one-body-ness" with the human race -and hue has finally arrived.

\*\*\*\*\*

## TRUTH

Truth is not found in formulas.

A man was drinking tea with a friend in a restaurant. He looked long and hard at his cup, then said with a resigned sigh, "Ah. my friend, life is like a cup of tea.

The other pondered this for a while, looked long and hard at his own cup, then asked, "Why? Why is life like a cup of tea?"

The man said, "How should I know? Am I an intellectual?"

\*\*\*\*\*

... or in figures..

"Prisoner at the bar," said the judge, "I find you guilty on twenty-three counts. I therefore sentence you to a total of one hundred and seventy-five years."

The prisoner was an old man. He burst into tears. The judge's facial expression softened. "I did not mean to be harsh," he said. "I know the sentence I have imposed is a very severe one. You don't really have to serve the whole of it."

The prisoner's eyes brightened with hope.

"That's right," said the judge. "Just do as much as you can!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A bishop had decreed that woman housekeepers for priests should be at least fifty years of age. He was startled, in the visitation of his diocese, to discover a priest who thought he was observing the law by keeping two housekeepers, each of whom was twenty-five years of age.

\*\*\*\*\*

..it is not found in names...

When it was time to name their firstborn, a husband and wife began to quarrel. She wanted to name him after her father; he wanted to name him after his. They finally had recourse to the rabbi to settle their dispute.

"What was the name of your father?" the rabbi asked the husband.

'Abijah."

'And what was your father's name?" he asked his wife.

'Abijah."

Then what's the problem?" said the confused rabbi.

...or in figures..

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'And what was your father's name?" he asked his wife.

'Abijah."

Then what's the problem?" said the confused rabbi.

"You see, rabbi," said the woman, "my father was a scholar and his father was a horse-thief. How can I allow my son to be named after a man like that?"

The rabbi gave this very serious thought for the problem was indeed a delicate one. He did not want one party to feel it had won and the other that it had lost. So he finally said, "This is what I suggest you do. Call the boy Abijah. Then wait and see if he becomes a scholar or a horse-thief, and you will know after whom he was named."

\*\*\*\*\*

...or in symbols

"I'm told you sold your bicycle.

"I did."

"How much did you sell it for?"

"Thirty dollars."

"That's a reasonable price."

"it is. But if I had known that the man wasn't going to pay me I would have charged him-twice as much."

\*\*\*\*\*

..in theories-

A manager, who had just returned from a Motivation Seminar, called an employee into his office and said, "Henceforth you are going to be allowed to plan and control your job. That will raise productivity considerably. I am sure."

"Will I be paid more," asked the worker.

"No. no. Money is not a motivator and you will get no satisfaction from a salary raise."

"Well, if production does increase, will I be paid more?"

"Look." said the manager. "You obviously do not understand the motivation theory. Take this book home and read it: it explains what it is that really motivates you."

As the man was leaving, he stopped and said, "If I read this book will I be paid more?"

\*\*\*\*\*

A couple did not know what to do about the jealousy of their three-year-old son towards the new baby. They were enlightened by a Book of Child Psychology

One day when the little fellow was in a particularly bad mood the mother said, "Take this teddy bear, son, and show me how you feel towards baby."

According to the Book he was supposed to punch and squeeze the teddy bear. But the three-year-old grabbed the teddy bear by the leg and, with obvious delight, went over to the baby and hit her on the head with it.

\*\*\*\*\*

...or in words...

"I long to learn spirituality." said a neighbour to Mulla Nasruddin. "Would you come over to my house and talk to me about it?"

Nasruddin did not commit himself. He saw that the man did indeed, have a spark of intelligence above the average, but he also realized that he was under the delusion that mysticism can be transmitted to another by word of mouth.

Some days later the neighbour called from his roof. "Mullah, I need your help to blow my fire. The embers are going out."

"Why of course." said Nasruddin. "My breath is at your disposal. Come over to my house and you can have as much of it as you can take away."

\*\*\*\*\*

A conductor was rehearsing with his orchestra and said to the trumpet player, "I think this part calls for a more Wagnerian approach, if you get what I mean, something more assertive, so to speak, more accentuated, with more body, more depth, more..."

The trumpet player interrupted. "Do you want it louder, sir?"

All that the poor conductor could say was. "Yes, that's what I mean!"

\*\*\*\*\*

... in slogans...

A religious group was in the habit of using, for its many conferences, a hotel whose motto was written in large words over the walls of the lobby: THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS. ONLY OPPORTUNITIES.

A man approached the hotel desk and said, "Excuse me. I have a problem "

The desk clerk said, with a smile. "We have no problems here sir. Only opportunities."

"Call it what you want." said the man impatiently. "There's a woman in the room assigned to me "

\*\*\*\*\*

...in labels...

An Englishman migrated to the United States and became an American citizen. When he went back to England for a vacation one of his relatives reprimanded him for changing his citizenship.

"What have you gained by becoming an American citizen?" she asked him.

"Well, for one thing. I win the American Revolution, was the answer.

\*\*\*\*\*

...in conventions...

When the Russian-Finnish boundary line was being redrawn a farmer was told that the border passed right through the middle of his land. He therefore had the option of having his land taken into Russia or Finland. He promised to give the matter serious thought; and after some weeks announced that he wanted to live in Finland. A host of incensed Russian officials descended on him to explain the advantages of belonging to Russia, not Finland.

The man heard them out then said. "I am in complete agreement with everything you say. In fact, it has always been my desire to live in Mother Russia. But at my age I simply won't be able to survive another of those Russian winters."

\*\*\*\*\*

...or distinctions.

A man was doing his Ph. D in philosophy. His wife realised how seriously he was taking his studies only on the day she said to him, "Why is it you love me so much?"

Quick as a shot he replied, "When you say 'so much' are you referring to

intensity, depth, frequency, quality or duration?"

By dissecting her petals no one ever gathered in the beauty of the rose.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nor is it generally found in statistics...

Nasruddin was arrested and taken to court on the charge that he was stuffing horsemeat into the chicken cutlets he served at his restaurant.

Before passing sentence the judge wanted to know in what proportion he was mixing horsemeat with chicken flesh. Nasruddin said, on oath. "It was fifty-fifty, your Honour."

After the trial a friend asked what exactly "fifty-fifty" meant. Said Nasruddin. "One horse to one chicken."

\*\*\*\*\*

A group of a hundred lumberjacks worked in the forest for six months and two women did their cooking and laundry for them. At the end of that period two of the men married the two women. What the local newspaper said was that two per cent of the men married a hundred per cent of the women.

\*\*\*\*\*

...in logic...

The huge man was preparing to leave the tavern at ten.

'Why so early?' asked the barman.

"Because of the wife."

"So you too are scared of your wife! Are you a man or a mouse?"

"Of one thing I am absolutely sure: I am not a mouse. Because my wife is afraid of mice."

\*\*\*\*\*

A professor of philosophy in Paris one day declared himself the greatest man in the world and proceeded to prove it to his students in the following fashion:

"Which is the greatest nation on earth?"

"France, of course," they all declared.

"And which is the greatest city in France?"

'Paris, obviously.'

"And is not the greatest and holiest place in all Paris its university? And who can doubt that the greatest, the noblest department in any university is its department of philosophy? And, tell me, who is the head of the philosophy, department?"

"You." they said in chorus.

\*\*\*\*\*

Doctor; "That pain in your leg is caused by old age."

Patient: "Don't take me for a fool! The other leg is just as old."

\*\*\*\*\*

...or in abstractions...

A disciple said to the Zen Master Hogen. "When I was Studying with my previous Master I got some insight into what Zen is all about."

"So what is this insight you have?" asked Hogen.

"When I asked the Master who Buddha was (by which, of course. I meant Reality), he said. 'Ping-ting comes for fire.'"

"That was a fine reply." said Hogen. "But I fear you may have got it wrong. Tell me what meaning you gave to his words."

"Well." said the disciple, "Ping-ting is the god of fire. Now to say that the god of fire comes for fire is as absurd as to have me. whose true nature is really Buddha, ask who the Buddha is. How can one who is actually, even though unconsciously, the Buddha, formulate a question regarding the Buddha?"

"Ah, ah!" said Hogen. "Exactly what I feared. You're completely off the mark. Now you ask me."

"Very well. Who is Buddha?"

"Ping-ting comes for fire." said Hogen.

\*\*\*\*\*

The great Gensha once invited a court official to tea. After the customary greetings the official said, "I do not wish to squander this opportunity of spending some time in the presence of so great a Master. Tell me, "what does it mean when they say that in spite of our having it in our daily life we do not see it?"

Gensha offered the man a piece of cake. Then he served him his tea. After eating and drinking, the official, thinking that the Master had not heard his first sentence, repeated the question. "Yes, of course." said the Master. "This is what it means: that we do not see it even though we have it in our daily life."

Those who know, do not say

those who say do not know.

The wise are therefore silent.

The clever speak -the stupid argue.

\*\*\*\*\*

Truth has a way of changing.

A passenger was completely lost between the decks of a great Atlantic liner.

He finally ran into a steward and asked for help in finding his cabin.

"What was the number of your cabin, sir?" asked the steward.

"I couldn't tell you, but I'd know it at once, because it had a lighthouse outside the porthole."

\*\*\*\*\*

Judge: "What's your age."

Convict: "Twenty-two .sir."

Judge: "That's what you've been telling us for the last ten years."

Convict: "That's right, sir. I'm not the type that says one thing today and another tomorrow."

\*\*\*\*\*

Old actress: "I really don't know my age. I\* keeps changing from minute to minute."

\*\*\*\*\*

It can be relative.

An American tourist was travelling abroad for the first time. On arrival at his first foreign airport he was faced with a choice between two passageways, one of which was marked CITIZENS and the other ALIENS.

He promptly headed for the first one. When told later that he would have to stand in the other line, he protested, "But I'm no alien. I'm an American!"

\*\*\*\*\*

When the English playwright Oscar Wilde arrived at his club late at night after witnessing the first presentation of a play that had been a complete failure, someone asked, "How did your play go tonight, Oscar?"

"Oh," said Wilde, "the play was a great success. The audience was a failure."

\*\*\*\*\*

It is concrete...

A monk once said to Fuketsu:

"There is something I heard you say once that puzzled me, namely, that truth can be communicated without speaking and without keeping silent. Would you explain

this please?"

Fuketsu replied:

"When I was a lad in South China, ah! how the birds sang among the blossoms in the springtime?"

I think.

Therefore I am unconscious

At the moment of thought

I well in the UNREAL world

Of abstraction

or of the past

or of the future.

\*\*\*\*\*

...yet immeasurable.

A frog had lived all his life in a well. One day he was surprised to see another frog there.

"Where have you come from?" he asked.

"From the sea. That's where I live," said the other.

"What's the sea like? Is it big as my well?"

The sea frog laughed, "There's no comparison." he said.

The well frog pretended to be interested in what his visitor had to say about the sea. But he thought, "Of all the liars I have known in my lifetime, this one is undoubtedly the greatest-and the most shameless!"

How does one speak of the Ocean

to a frog in the well;

or of Reality

to the ideologue?

\*\*\*\*\*

Truth is really something you do

The disciples of Baal Shem once said, "Tell us, dear Rabbi, how we should serve God."

He replied, "How should I know?"...then went on to tell them the following story:

A king had two friends who were found guilty of crime and sentenced to death. Now even though the king loved them he dared not acquit them outright for fear of giving a bad example to the people. So this is the verdict he gave: A rope was to be stretched across a deep chasm and each of the two men was to walk over it-to safety and freedom or, if he fell, to his death. The first of the two got across safely. The other shouted to the first across the chasm, "Tell me, friend, how you managed it." The first shouted back, "How should I know? All I did was this: When I found myself listing to one side. I leaned to the other."

You don't learn to ride a bicycle in a classroom.

\*\*\*\*\*

Little boy to the electrician: "What exactly is electricity?"

"I really do not know, son. But I can make it give you light."

\*\*\*\*\*

A man asked Bayazid to take him on as a disciple.

"If what you seek is Truth." said Bayazid. "there, are requirements to be fulfilled and duties to be discharged."

"What are these?"

"You will have to draw water and chop wood and do the housecleaning and cooking."

"I am in search of Truth, not employment," said the man, as he walked away.

\*\*\*\*\*

Soon after the death of Rabbi Mokshe, Rabbi Mendel of Kotyk asked one of his disciples. "What did your teacher give the greatest importance to?"

The disciple gave it a moment's reflection, and then said, "To whatever he happened to be doing at the moment."

\*\*\*\*\*

It is best expressed in silence...

Bodhidharma is considered the first Zen Patriarch. He was the man who took Buddhism from India to China in the sixth century. When he decided to return home, he gathered his Chinese disciples around him so he could appoint someone to succeed him. He put their powers of perception to the test by asking each of them this question: "What is truth?"

Dofuku said: "Truth is what is beyond affirmation and negation." Bodhidharma said. "You have my skin."

The nun Soji said. "It is like Anand's vision of Buddhahood-glimpsed in a flash, once and forever." Bodhidharma said. "You have my flesh."

\*\*\*\*\*

Doiku said, "The four elements of wind, water, earth and fire are empty. Truth is nothing " Bodhidharma replied, "You have my bones."

Finally the Master looked at Eka who bowed low smiled, and remained silent.

Bodhidharma said. "You have my marrow."

\*\*\*\*\*

The fifth Zen Patriarch. Hung-jun chose Hui-neng from among five hundred monks to be his successor. When asked why he replied, "The other four hundred and ninety-nine showed a perfect grasp of Buddhism. Hui-neng alone has no understanding of it whatsoever. He's the type of man that ordinary standards will not measure. So the mantle of authentic transmission has fallen on him."

\*\*\*\*\*

...and calls for that most formidable accomplishment of the human spirit: an open mind...

The story has it that when New Mexico became part of the United States and the first court session opened in the new state, the presiding judge was a hardened old former cowboy and Indian fighter.

He took his place on the bench and the case opened. A man was charged with horse-stealing. The case for the prosecution was made; the plaintiff and his witnesses were duly heard.

Whereupon the attorney for the defendant stood up and said. "And now, your Honour, I should like to present my client's side of the case."

Said the judge, "Sit down. That won't be necessary, would only confuse the jury!" If you have one watch you know the time.

If you have two watches you're never sure.

\*\*\*\*\*

... and a fearless heart.

There was a loud knocking in the seeker's heart. "Who's there?" asked the frightened seeker. "It is I, Truth," came the answer.

"Don't be ridiculous," said the seeker. "Truth speaks in silence."

That effectively stopped the knocking-to the seeker's great relief.

What he did not know was that the knocking was produced by the fearful beating of his heart.

The Truth that sets us free is almost always the Truth we would rather not hear. So when we say something isn't true what we all too frequently mean is: "I do not like it."

\*\*\*\*\*

Its clarity need not be dimmed by politeness. .

Rejection slip of a Chinese publishing house that returns a manuscript to its

author:

"We have perused your manuscript with exceptional relish. We fear, however, that if we were to publish your outstanding work, it would be quite impossible for us to ever again publish another work that would not come up to its standard. And we cannot imagine how any other work will be its equal in the next hundred years. So, to our deepest regret, we are compelled to return your incredible composition. And we beg you a thousand times over to pardon our shortsightedness and faintheartedness."

\*\*\*\*\*

...and cultural modes of expression

An American girl taking dancing lessons in an old-time dancing school showed a constant tendency to lead her partner. This often brought protests like. "Hey! Who's doing the leading-you or me?"

One day her dancing partner happened to be a Chinese lad who, a few minutes after the dancing began, whispered politely. "Is it not generally more advantageous if in the dancing process, the lady avoids all preconceived ideas about the direction in which the couple should move?"

\*\*\*\*\*

...it is sometimes concealed by truthfulness...

Two travelling salesmen meet on the platform of a railway station.

"Hello." "Hello." Silence. "Where are you off to?"

"Calcutta." Silence.

"Listen! When you say you're going to Calcutta, you know that I'll think that you are actually going to Bombay. But I happen to know that you are going to Calcutta. So why don't you tell the truth?"

\*\*\*\*\*

..and sometimes revealed by lies...

A drunk wandering through the city streets at night fell into a cesspool. As he sank deeper into the liquid mess, he began to shout. "Fire, fire, fire!"

Several passers-by heard him and came rushing to the rescue. After they had pulled him out they asked why he had shouted "Fire!" when there had been no fire.

He gave them this classic response. "Would any of you have come to the rescue if I had shouted. 'Shit!'"

\*\*\*\*\*

A soldier was rushed back home from the front because his father was dying. An exception was made for him because he was all the family his father had.

When he walked into the Intensive Care Ward he suddenly saw that this semi-conscious old man with tubes coming out of him wasn't his father. Someone had made a colossal mistake and rushed back the wrong man.

"How much longer does he have to live?" he asked the doctor.

"Not more than a few hours. You've only just made it."

The soldier thought of this dying man's son fighting God knew where thousands of miles away. He thought of the old man holding on to life in the hope of being with his son one last time before he died. Then he made up his mind. He leaned forward, held the old man's hand and said softly. "Dad. I'm here. I'm back."

The dying man clutched at the hand offered to him; his unseeing eyes opened to scan the surroundings; a contented smile spread over his face and remained there till he died about an hour later.

\*\*\*\*\*

...but always at one's risk.

A car accident occurred in a small town. A crowd surrounded the victim so a newspaper reporter couldn't manage to get close enough to see him.

He hit upon an idea. "I'm the father of the victim!" he cried. "Please let me

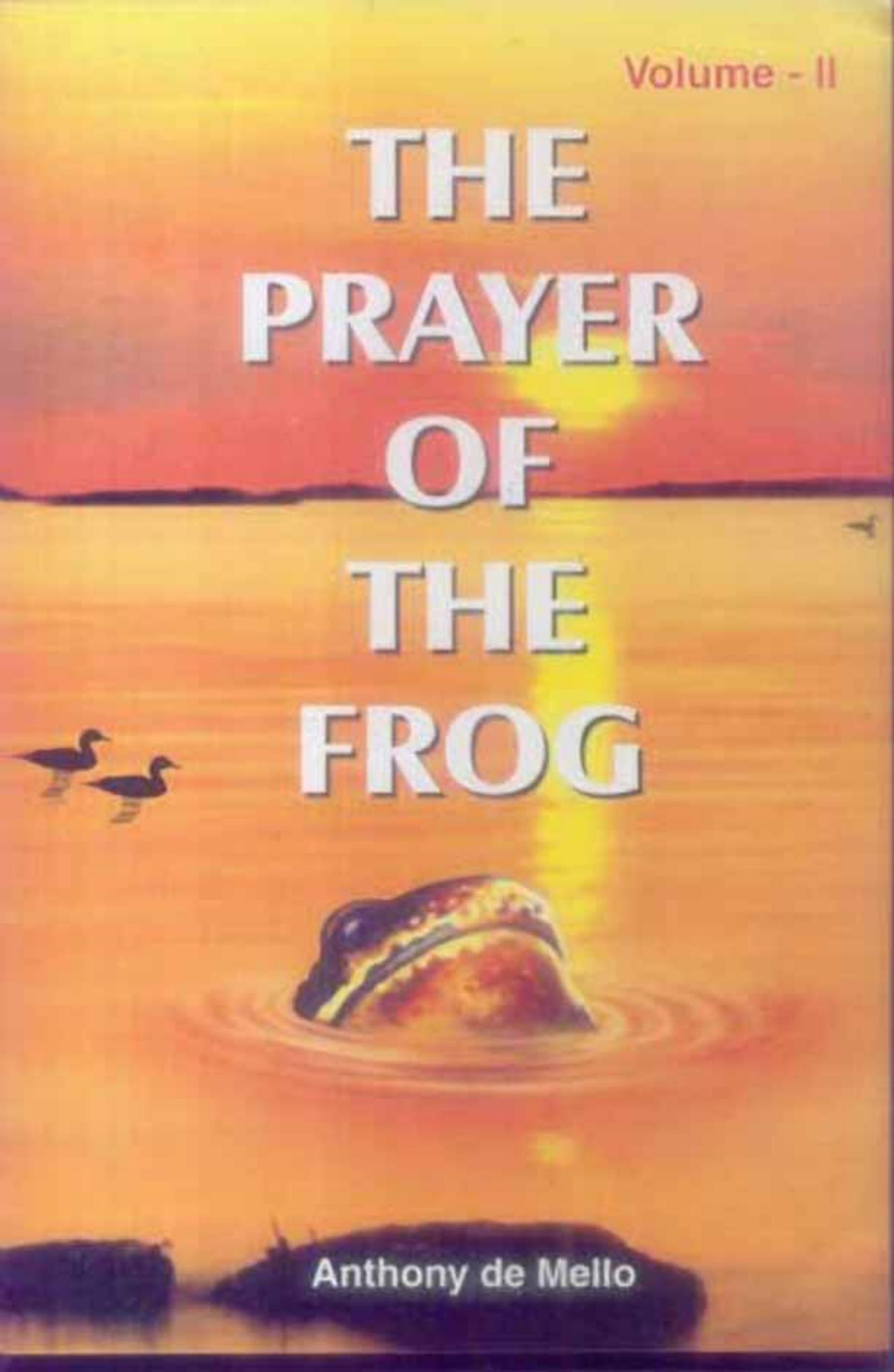
through.”

The crowd let him pass so he was able to get right up to the scene of the accident and discover, to his embarrassment, that the victim was a donkey.

End

Volume - II

# THE PRAYER OF THE FROG



Anthony de Mello

THE PRAYER OF THE FROG  
PART TWO

Author  
Anthony de Mello

FOREWORD

The first image of Tony de Mello that I cherish goes back thirty years-and precisely to Lonavala, to the very house that much later became the home of the Sadhana Institute.

Tony was then a Jesuit student, but engaged in teaching the young men who had just finished their noviciate. The whole group had come up to St Stanislaus' Villa for a brief holiday. I remember Tony with a batch of juniors, as we called them, sitting under the trees outside the kitchen and cleaning vegetables for the day's meals, whilst he regaled a very receptive audience with his inexhaustible fund of stories.

Much has happened to all of us since then; and Tony himself went through innumerable stages of growth and change, of fresh competence and new interests, and of effective service. But he was always an incomparable story-teller. Hardly any of his anecdotes were original, and some were not even exceptionally smart; but on his lips they came alive with meaning and relevance, or just plain fun. For that matter, any theme he touched came alive and captured attention.

And now his parting gift to us which will surely join the ranks of his other best-sellers, is *The Prayer of the Frog*. Though he spoke rather casually of his literary output, he was meticulous in editing his compositions. The last thing he did in India before taking the plane for the United States was to spend more than three hours with the publisher, going over the details of his manuscript. I have not seen the text, but I know of his final concern.

That was in the evening of May 30th, 1987. On June 2nd he was found dead on the floor of his room in New York, having succumbed to a massive heart attack. In between he had made time to write a long letter to a close friend, in which he said, speaking of earlier experiences: "All of that seems to belong to another era and to another world. I find the whole of my interest is now focussed on something else, on the 'world of the spirit', and I see everything else as so trifling and so irrelevant. The things that mattered so much in the past do not seem to matter any more. Things like those of Achaan Chah the Buddhist teacher, seem to absorb my whole interest and I am losing my taste for other things is this an illusion? I do not know. But never before in my life have I felt so happy, so free..."

That just about sums up Tony as he was-and indeed as others perceived him -in his last phase, before he left us so suddenly, three months before his fifty-sixth birthday. And now there is already a body of literature that is growing around him, a veritable golden legend, with testimonies from a variety of people scattered the world over. Quite a few have said they never met him but were profoundly affected by his books. Others had enjoyed the privilege of a deep relationship. Yet others only briefly experienced the magic of his spoken word. Not many would go along with everything that he said or did, especially after he crossed the established boundaries of spiritual venture -nor did Tony expect a docile following, but rather the contrary. What attracted so many to his person and ideas was precisely that he challenged everyone to question, to explore, to get out of prefabricated patterns of thought and behaviour, away from stereotypes, and to dare be one's true self-in fine, to seek an ever greater authenticity.

A relentless quest for authenticity-that is how Tony's vision came across from any angle, at any range and this gave to his multifaceted personality integrity, a wholeness, that had a charm and a power all its own: it reconciled opposites, not in tension but as a harmonious blend. He was most ready to make friends, to share,

yet one felt there was a dimension in him that was out of reach He could be boisterous in company, trotting out outrageous jokes, but no one could doubt his steadfast seriousness of purpose He changed so much and in so many ways along the years, and nevertheless there were constants in his character that stayed firmly in place.

A striking example of this was his commitment as a Jesuit. He had moved far beyond the enthusiastic promotion of the Spiritual Exercises according to the original design of Saint Ignatius-which was the thrust for which he first came to be internationally appreciated; in fact, at the end he was way out of what might be recognized as Ignatian spirituality. But he never surrendered his Jesuit identity. There was obviously no compulsion in this; probably not much reasoning either. It was just that he felt so much in tune with the mind and heart of Ignatius, as he knew and understood the Saint.

In a homily that he addressed to the Jesuit Provincials of India in 1983, before they and he himself participated in the last General Congregation, or Chapter of the Order, he shared .with them an insight into Ignatius which was even more a self-revelation of Tony:

“There is a tradition among our early Fathers that God gave to Ignatius the graces and charismas that He intended for the Society as a whole and for each individual Jesuit. If I were asked to choose for myself and for our Society today from among the many charismas that Ignatius had, I would quite unhesitatingly choose three: his contemplation, his creativity and his courage.”

Parmananda R. Diwarkar S.J. 4th September. 1987

#### WARNING

It is a great mystery that though the human heart longs for Truth in which alone it finds liberation and delight, the first reaction of human beings to Truth is one of hostility and fear. So the Spiritual Teachers of humanity, like Buddha and Jesus, created a device to circumvent the opposition of their listeners: the story. They knew that the most entrancing words a language holds are. “Once upon a time...”, that it is common to oppose a truth but impossible to resist a story. Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata. says that if you listen carefully to a story you will never be the same again. That is because the story will worm its way into your heart and break down barriers to the divine. Even if you read the stories in this book only for the entertainment there is no guarantee that an occasional story will not slip through your defences and explode when you least expect it to. So you have been warned!

If you are foolhardy enough to court enlightenment, this is what I suggest you do: (A) Carry a story around in your mind so you can dwell on it in leisure moments. That will give it a chance to work on your subconscious and reveal its hidden meaning. You will then be surprised to see how it comes to you quite unexpectedly just when you need it to light up an event or situation and bring you insight and inner healing. That is when you will realize that, in exposing yourself to these stories, you were auditing a Course in Enlightenment for which no guru is needed other than yourself!

IB) Since each of these stories is a revelation of Truth and since Truth, when spelt with a capital T, means the truth about you, make sure that each time you read a story you single-mindedly search for a deeper understanding of yourself. The way one would read a Medical Book - wondering if one has any of the symptoms; and not a Psychology Book-thinking what typical specimens one's friends are. If you succumb to the temptation of seeking insight into others, the stories will do you damage.

So passionate was Mulla Nasruddin's love for truth that he travelled to distant places in search of Koranic scholars and he felt no inhibitions about drawing infidels at the bazaar into discussions about the truths of his faith.

One day his wife told him how unfairly he was treating her-and discovered that her husband had no interest whatsoever in that kind of Truth!

It's the only kind that matters, of course. Ours would be a different world, indeed, if those of us who are scholars and ideologues, whether religious or secular, had the same passion for self-knowledge that we display for our theories and dogmas.

"Excellent sermon," said the parishioner, as she pumped the hand of the preacher.

"Everything you said applies to someone or other I know."

See?

#### INSTRUCTION

The stories are best read in the order in which they are set out here. Read no more than one or two at a time-that is, if you wish to get anything more than entertainment from them.

#### NOTE

The stories in this book come from a variety of countries, cultures and religions. They belong to the spiritual heritage-and popular humour-of the human race.

All that the author has done is string them together with a specific aim in mind.

His task has been that of the weaver and the dyer. He takes no credit at all for the cotton and the thread.

#### EDUCATION

The family settled down for dinner at the restaurant. The waitress first took the order of the adults, then, turned to the seven-year-old.

"What will you have?" she asked.

The boy looked around the table timidly and said, "I would like to have a hot dog."

Before the waitress could write down the order the mother interrupted. "No hot dogs," she said. "Get him a steak with mashed potatoes and carrots."

The waitress ignored her, "Do you want ketchup or mustard on your hot dog?" she asked the boy.

"Ketchup."

"Coming up in a minute," said the waitress as she started for the kitchen.

There was a stunned silence when she left. Finally the boy looked at everyone present and said. "Know what? She thinks I'm real!"

"How are your children?"

"Both of them are very well thanking you."

"How old are they?"

The doctor is three and the lawyer is five.

\*\*\*\*\*

Little Mary was on the beach with her mother.

'Mummy, may I play in the sand?"

"No, darling. You'll only soil your clean clothes.

"May I wade in the water?"

"No. You'll get wet and catch a cold.

"May I play with the other children?"

"No. You'll get lost in the crowd."

'Mummy, buy me an ice-cream.

"No. It's bad for your throat."

Little Mary began to cry.

Mother turned to a woman who was standing near by and said. "For heaven's sake!

Have you ever seen such a neurotic child?"

\*\*\*\*\*

A man began to give large doses of cod-liver oil to his Doberman because he had been told that the stuff was good for dogs. Each day he would hold the head of the protesting dog between his knees force its jaws open and pour the liquid down its throat.

One day the dog broke loose and spilt the oil on the floor. Then, to the man's great surprise, it returned to lick the spoon. That is when he discovered that what the dog had been fighting was not the oil but his method of administering it.

\*\*\*\*\*

An ancient legend has it that when God was creating the world He was approached by four angels. The first one asked, "How are you doing it?" The second, "Why are you doing it?" the third, "Can I be of help?" The fourth, "What is it worth?"

The first was a scientist; the second, a philosopher; the third, an altruist; and the fourth, a real estate agent.

A fifth angel watched in wonder and applauded in sheer delight. This one was the mystic.

\*\*\*\*\*

Little Johnny was being tried out for a part in the school play. His mother knew that he had set his heart on it but she feared he would not be chosen. On the day the parts were given out. Johnny, back from school, rushed into his mother's arms, bursting with pride and excitement. "Mother." he shouted, "guess what! I've been chosen to clap and cheer."

From a child's report card: "Samuel participates very nicely in the group singing by helpful listening."

\*\*\*\*\*

One of the few men to walk on the moon (ells how he had to suppress his artistic instincts when he got there.

He remembered looking back at Earth and being enraptured by the sight. For a while he stood rooted to the ground, thinking. "My, that's lovely!"

Then he quickly shook the mood off and said to himself, "Stop wasting your lime and go collect rocks."

There are two educations:

the one that teaches how to make a living  
and the one that teaches how to live.

\*\*\*\*\*

Andrew Carnegie, one of the richest men in the world was once asked: "You could have stopped any time, couldn't you, because you always had much more than you needed?"

He replied: "Yes, that's right. But I could not stop, I had forgotten how to."

Many fear that if they stopped to think and wonder they might not be able to get started again.

\*\*\*\*\*

The old man had lived most of his life on what was considered to be one of the loveliest islands in the world. Now that he had returned to spend his retirement years in the big city someone said to him, "It must have been wonderful to live for so many years on an island that is considered one of the wonders of the world."

The old man gave that some thought, then said, "Well, to tell you the truth, if I had known it was so famous, I'd have looked at it."

People don't need to be taught how to look.

They merely need to be saved from schools that blind them.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the early 1850s American painter, James McNeill Whistler, spent a brief-and academically unsuccessful-period at West Point, the U.S. Military Academy. The story goes that when he was assigned to draw a bridge he drew a romantic stone one, complete with grassy banks and two small children fishing from it. "Get those children off that bridge!" said the instructor. "This is an engineering exercise." Whistler got the kids off the bridge, drew them fishing from the bank of the river and resubmitted the drawing. The angry instructor yelled, "I told you to remove those children. Get them completely out of the picture!" But the creative urge was too strong .in Whistler. His next version had the children "completely out of the picture" indeed. They were buried under two small tombstones on the river bank.

\*\*\*\*\*

Noticing that his father was growing old, the son of a burglar said. "Father, teach me your trade so that when you retire I may carry on the family tradition." The father did not reply but that night he took the boy along with him to break into a house. Once inside, he opened a closet and asked his son to find out what was inside. No sooner had the lad stepped in then the father slammed the door shut and bolted it making such a noise in the process that the whole house was awakened. Then he himself slipped quietly away. Inside the closet the boy was terrified, angry and puzzled as to how he was going to make his escape. Then an idea came to him. He began to make a noise like a cat; whereupon a servant lit a candle and opened the closet to let the cat out. The boy jumped out as soon as the closet door opened and everyone gave chase. Observing a well beside the road he threw a large stone into it and hid in the shadows; then stole away while his pursuers peered into the depths hoping to see the burglar drown. Back home again the boy forgot his anger in his eagerness to tell his story. But his father said. "Why tell me the tale? You are here. That is enough. You have learnt the trade."

\*\*\*\*\*

Education should not be a preparation for life; it should be life. A group of college students begged novelist Sinclair Lewis to give them a lecture, explaining that all of them were to become writers themselves. Lewis began with: "How many of you really intend to be writers?" All hands were raised. "In that case, there is no point in my talking. My advice to you is: go home and write, write, write..." With that, he returned his notes to his pocket and left the room.

\*\*\*\*\*

With the help of a MANUAL OF INSTRUCTIONS a woman tried for hours to assemble a complicated new appliance she had recently bought. She finally gave up and left the pieces all over the kitchen table. Imagine her surprise when she got back several hours later to find the machine put together by the housemaid and functioning perfectly. "How on earth did you do that?" she exclaimed. "Well, ma'am, when you don't know how to read you're forced to use your brains." was the serene reply.

\*\*\*\*\*

A man, who had just retired from forty-seven years of work as a reporter and editor phoned to the local Education Board and. after explaining his background in the newspaper business, said he would like to get involved in the local literacy programme.

There was a long pause. Then someone at the other end said. "That would be fine. But would you want to teach or to learn?"  
\*\*\*\*\*

Three boys accused of stealing watermelons were brought to court and faced the judge nervously, expecting the worst, for he was known to be a severe man. He was also a wise educator. With a rap of his gavel he said. "Any man in here who never stole a single watermelon when he was a boy raise his hand." He waited. The court officials, policeman, spectators-and the judge himself-kept their hands on the desks in front of them  
When he was satisfied that not a single hand was raised in the court, the judge said. "Case dismissed."  
\*\*\*\*\*

Religious-minded woman mourning the ways of the younger generation: "It's because of the cars! Look how far they can go for a dance or a date nowadays. It wasn't that way in your day, was it grandma?"  
Eighty-seven year old lady: "Well, we certainly went as far as we could."  
\*\*\*\*\*

Mother: "Did you know that God was present when you stole that cookie from the kitchen?"  
"And he was looking at you all the time?"  
"Yes."  
"And what do you think he was saying to you?"  
"He was saying. There's no one here but the two of us-take two.'  
\*\*\*\*\*

When the young rabbi succeeded his father everyone began to tell him how completely unlike his father he  
"On the contrary." replied the young man. "I'm exactly like the old man. He imitated no one. I imitate no one."  
'Be yourself!'  
Beware of imitating the behaviour of the great if you do not have the inner disposition that inspired them to act.  
\*\*\*\*\*

When Handel's MESSIAH was first performed in London, the King who was present, was so carried away by religious sentiment during the Alleluia chorus that, against all convention, he stood up in silent respect for the masterpiece he was hearing. When they saw this, all the nobles present followed the example of the King and stood up too. That was the signal, of course, for everyone in the audience to stand up!  
Since then it is considered de rigueur to stand up each time the Alleluia is sung regardless of one's inner disposition or the quality of the performance.  
\*\*\*\*\*

An old sailor gave up smoking when his pet parrot developed a persistent cough. He was worried-that the pipe smoke that frequently filled the room had damaged the parrot's health.  
He had a vet examine the bird. After a thorough check-up the vet concluded that the parrot did not have psittacosis or pneumonia. It had merely been imitating the cough of its pipe-smoking master.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Uncle Joe had come for the weekend and little Jimmy was ecstatic that his great hero was going to share his room and bed.  
Just after lights out Jimmy remembered something. "Oops!" he cried. "I nearly forgot!"

He jumped out of bed and knelt down beside it. Not wishing to set a bad example to the little fellow, Uncle Joe heaved himself out of bed and knelt down on the other side.

"Boy!" whispered Jimmy in awe. "When Mom finds out tomorrow, you'll get it! The pot's on this side."

\*\*\*\*\*

"I wish you would dress more in accordance with your position. I'm sorry you have allowed yourself to become so shabby."

"But I am not shabby."

"Yes, you are. Take your grandfather. He was always so elegantly dressed. His clothes were expensive and well tailored."

"Ha! I've got you there! These are my grandfather's clothes I am wearing!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A philosopher who had only one pair of shoes asked the cobbler to repair them for him while he waited.

"It's closing time," said the cobbler, "so it won't be possible for me to repair them just now. Why don't you come for them tomorrow?"

"I have only one pair of shoes and it won't be possible for me to walk without shoes."

"Very well. I shall lend you a used pair for the day."

"What! Wear someone else's shoes? What do you take me for?"

"Why should you object to having someone else's shoes on your feet when you don't mind carrying other people's ideas in your head?"

\*\*\*\*\*

"What did you have in school today?" a father asked his teenage son.

"Oh, we had lectures on sex," was the reply.

"Lectures on sex? What did they tell you?"

"Well, first there was a priest who told us why we shouldn't. Then a doctor told us how we shouldn't. Finally the principal gave us a talk on where we shouldn't."

\*\*\*\*\*

The Dean of Women was introducing the newcomers to the college and thought fit to touch on the subject of sex morality.

"In moments of temptation, ask yourselves just one question: Is an hour of pleasure worth a lifetime of shame?"

At the end of the lecture she asked if there were any questions. One of the girls timidly raised her hand and said. "Could you tell us how you make it last one hour?"

\*\*\*\*\*

U.S. President William Howard Taft was at dinner one night when his youngest son made a disrespectful remark about his father.

Everyone was shocked at the audacity of the boy and a hush descended on the room.

"Well," said Mrs. Taft, "aren't you going to punish him?"

"If the remark was addressed to me as his father, he will certainly be punished." said Taft, "But if he addressed it to the President of the United States, that is his constitutional privilege."

Why should a father be exempt from criticism that's good for a President?

\*\*\*\*\*

A guru was holding class for a group of young disciples when they begged him to reveal to them the Sacred Mantra by which the dead are restored to life.

"What would you do with a dangerous thing like that?"

"Nothing. It would just serve to strengthen our faith." they replied.

"Premature knowledge is a dangerous thing, my children." the old man said.

"When is knowledge premature?" they demanded.

"When it gives power to someone who does not as yet have the wisdom that must go with its use."

The disciples persisted, however, so the holy man, in spite of himself, whispered the Sacred Mantra into their ears imploring them repeatedly to use it with the greatest discretion.

Not long afterwards the young men were walking along a desert place where they saw a heap of bleached bones. In the spirit of frivolity that generally accompanies a crowd they decided to test the Mantra that should only have been used after prolonged meditation.

No sooner had they uttered the magic words than the bones gained flesh and were transformed into ravenous wolves that chased them and tore them to shreds.

\*\*\*\*\*

At the age of sixty-one Master Soyen Shaku passed from this world, but not before he had fulfilled his appointed task—he left for posterity a more varied and more sublime teaching than that of most Zen Masters. It was said that his pupils would sometimes sleep after the midday meal, overcome with lassitude in the summer. Even though he himself never wasted a minute. Soyen never said a word about this failing in his disciples.

At the age of twelve he was already studying the philosophical tenets of the Tendai school. One summer day the heat was so oppressive that little Soyen observing that his teacher was away, stretched out and fell into a deep sleep that lasted three hours. He only woke up with a start, when he heard the Master enter: but it was too late; there he lay, sprawled across the doorway.

"Please excuse me, please excuse me," his teacher whispered as he stepped reverently over Soyen's prostrate body as if it were the body of some distinguished guest. After that Soyen never again slept, in the day time.

\*\*\*\*\*

A little boy running down the street turned a corner suddenly and collided with a man. "My goodness!" said the man. "Where are you off to in such a hurry?" "Home." said the lad. "And I'm in a hurry because my mother is going to spank me." "Are you so eager to be spanked that you are running home for it?" asked the astonished stranger.

"No. But if father gets home before me he will do the spanking."

Children are mirrors.

When they are in the presence of love, that's what they reflect.

When lone is absent they have nothing to give out.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nasruddin handed a boy a pitcher and told him to go fetch water from the well. Before the kid set out, however, he clouted him on the ear and shouted. "Mind you don't drop it!"

An onlooker said, "How can you strike a poor child before he has done anything wrong?"

Said Nasruddin, "I suppose you would prefer me to strike him AFTER he has broken the pitcher when both the pitcher and the water are lost? When I clout him he remembers and so the pot and the water are both saved."

\*\*\*\*\*

A despairing couple sent urgently for the child psychologist because they just did not know what to do with their little son who had installed himself on the rocking horse of a neighbouring kid and refused to get off. He had three rocking horses of his own at home, but he was adamant that the one he wanted to sit on was THIS one. Attempts to drag him away led to such howls and shrieks that he was put right back on the horse.

The psychologist first settled the matter of his fee, then walked up to the kid,

tousled his hair affectionately, bent down and smilingly whispered something in his ear. Instantly the kid got off the horse and docilely followed his parent's home.

"What kind of magic did you use on the child?" asked the wondering parents. The psychologist collected his fee before he said, "Simple. I just bent down and said, 'If you don't get off that horse this minute I'm going to beat you up so you won't be able to sit down for another week. I'm being paid to do this, so I mean it.'" Before you punish a child ask yourself if you are not the cause of the offence.

\*\*\*\*\*

Parents: "Why is it that though Johnny is younger than you his marks at school are always better?"

Seven-year-old: "Because Johnny's parents are clever."

\*\*\*\*\*

The modern child:

A man wanted to foster a love for music in his children so he bought them a piano. When he got home he found them contemplating the piano in puzzlement. "How," they asked, "do you plug it in?"

\*\*\*\*\*

A little boy was in a village, away from the big city for the first time in his life. He was standing on the sidewalk when an old man drove up in a horse cart and went into a shop. The boy kept gazing in wonder at the horse, an animal he had never seen in his life. When the old man came out of the shop and was preparing to drive away, the kid said, "Hey, mister! Maybe I ought to warn you that he just lost his petrol?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Little girl at fruit store with a banana peel in her hand: "What is it you want, darling?" said the vendor.

"A refill." was the reply.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Master at the school for archery was known to be a Master of Life just as much as of archery.

One day his brightest pupil scored three bull's eyes in a row at a local contest. Everyone went wild with applause. Congratulations poured in for pupil-and Master. The Master, however, seemed unimpressed. Even critical.

When the pupil later asked him why. he said, "You have yet to learn that the target is not the target."

"What IS the target?" the pupil demanded to know.

But the Master would not say. This was something the boy would have to learn on his own some day for it could not be communicated in words.

One day he discovered that what he was meant to aim at was not achievement but attitude; not bull's eye but the disappearance of the ego.

\*\*\*\*\*

A teacher learnt to become a wise and compassionate educator the hard way by making many mistakes. Here is one of them:

He was Principal of a school when a lad came to say he wanted to leave for another school.

"Why, son? What's wrong? What makes you unhappy? Your marks are good."

"Nothing's wrong, sir. I just want to leave."

"Is it the teachers? Is there any teacher you do not like?"

"No, sir. It isn't the teachers."

"Is it the other students? Have you had a fight with someone?"

"No. It's nothing like that."

"Is it the fees? Are those too high?"

"No, sir. It isn't that either."

The Principal then paused for a long while, confident that by his silence he would get the lad to speak. Suddenly the boy was wiping tears from his eyes. The Principal knew he had won. In his softest, most understanding tone he said, "You're crying because something is bothering you, aren't you?"

The boy nodded.

"Well, then, tell me why you are crying."

The boy looked straight at the Principal and said. "Because you are asking me all these questions."

\*\*\*\*\*

There was a question of opening a reformatory for boys and a well-known educationist was called in for advice. He made a passionate plea for humane methods of education at the reformatory, urging the founders to spare no expense in getting the services of kind-hearted and competent educators.

He concluded by saying. "If only one boy is saved from moral depravity, it will justify all the cost and labour invested in an institution like this."

Later a member of the board said to him. "Didn't you get just a wee bit carried away there? Would all the cost and labour be justified if we could save only one boy?"

"If it were my boy, yes?" was the reply.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### AUTHORITY

A tale from the Calcutta mystic, Ramakrishna;

There was a king who used to have the Bhagavad Gita recited to him every day by a priest. The priest would then explain the text and say, "O King, have you understood what I have said?"

And every day the king would neither say Yes or No. He would only say. "You had better understand it first yourself."

This always caused sorrow to the poor priest who had spent hours preparing the daily lesson for the king and knew that his explanation was lucid and clear.

Now the priest was a sincere seeker after Truth. While he was meditating one day he suddenly saw the illusory nature-the relative reality-of all things, house, family, wealth, friends, honour, reputation and everything else. So clearly did he see this that all desire for these things vanished in his heart? He decided to leave home and take up the life of a wandering ascetic.

Before he left home he sent the king this message, "O king! At last I have understood."

\*\*\*\*\*

The woman was afflicted with a bad cold and nothing the doctor prescribed seemed to give her any relief.

"Can you do nothing to cure me, Doctor?" she asked in frustration.

"I have a suggestion," said the doctor. "Go home and have a hot shower, then, before drying yourself, stand stark naked in a draught."

"Will that cure me?" she asked, surprised.

"No, but it will give you pneumonia. And that I can cure."

Has it ever occurred to you that your guru might be offering you the remedy for art illness that he himself was the cause of??

\*\*\*\*\*

"Thank God we took a mule with us on the picnic because when one of the boys was injured we used the mule to carry him back."

"How did he get injured?"

"The mule kicked him!"

"Could you recommend a good doctor?"

"I suggest Dr. Chung. He saved my life."

"How did that happen?"

"Well. I had this serious illness and went to see Dr. Ching. I took his medicine and felt worse. So I went to Dr. Chang. I took his medicine and felt I was dying. So I finally went to Dr. Chung-and he wasn't in."

\*\*\*\*\*

Belief in authority endangers perception:

The doctor bent over the lifeless figure in bed. Then he straightened up and said, "I am sorry to say that your husband is no more, my dear."

A feeble sound of protest came from the lifeless figure in bed: "No, I'm still alive."

"Hold your tongue." said the woman. "The doctor knows better than you."

\*\*\*\*\*

A neighbour came to borrow Nasruddin's donkey.

"It's out on loan." said Nasruddin.

At that moment the animal began to bray from within its stable.

"But I can hear it bray." said the neighbour.

"So whom are you going to believe, the donkey or me?"

\*\*\*\*\*

The crown prince was a duffer so the king employed a special tutor for him.

Lessons began with a careful explanation of Euclid's first theorem.

"Is this clear, your Royal Highness?" asked the tutor.

"No." said his Royal Highness.

So the tutor patiently went over the theorem again. "Is it clear now?"

"No." said the prince.

Once again the tutor went to work on the theorem-with no effect. When even after the tenth attempt the royal duffer could make no sense of the theorem the poor tutor was reduced to tears. "Believe me your Royal Highness." he cried, "this theorem is true and this is the way it is proved."

On hearing these words the prince rose to his feet and said with a solemn bow. "My dear sir I have full faith in what you say so if you assure me the theorem is true I wholeheartedly accept it. My only regret is that you did not give me this assurance earlier so that we could have then proceeded to the second theorem without wasting any time."

That way you have all the right answers without knowing geometry as people have all the -to them!-right beliefs without knowing God. To say to authority, "I'm dumb- Please think for me," is like saying, "I'm thirsty. Please drink for me."

\*\*\*\*\*

Buddha says, "Monks and scholars should not accept my words out of respect but should analyse them as a goldsmith analyses gold by cutting, melting, scraping and rubbing it."

Tall man in movie theatre to little boy sitting behind him:

"Can you see the screen, son?"

"No."

"Not to worry. Just look at me and laugh every time I laugh."

\*\*\*\*\*

Marshal Ferdinand Foch was Commander of the Allied Forces during the First World War. His chauffeur, Pierre, was sedulously cultivated by newspaper reporters who hoped to get information on what was going on in the Marshal's mind. They were always asking him when the war would get over. But Pierre would never say. One day the reporters caught Pierre just as he was leaving headquarters. As they

crowded around him the chauffeur said; "Today the Marshal spoke."

"What did he say?" they asked eagerly.

"He said, 'Pierre, what do you think? When will the war get over?'"

A priest's daughter asked him where he got the ideas for his sermons. "From God." he replied.

"Then why do I see you scratching things out?" asked the girl.

\*\*\*\*\*

The radio genius Marconi, sat up all night with a friend in his laboratory discussing all the intricate aspects of wireless communication.

As they were leaving the laboratory Marconi suddenly said. "All my life I have been studying this matter but there is one thing I simply cannot understand about radio "

"Something you do not understand about radio!" said the astonished friend. "What is it?"

Said Marconi, "Why does it work?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Many years ago a bishop on the east coast of the United States paid a visit to a small religious College on the west coast. He was lodged in the home of the college president who was a progressive young man, a professor of physics and chemistry.

The president one day invited the members of his faculty to dinner with the bishop so they could benefit from his wisdom and experience. After dinner the talk turned to the millennium and the bishop claimed that it could not be far off. One of the reasons he adduced for this was the fact that everything in nature had been discovered and all possible inventions had been made.

The president politely demurred. In his opinion, he said, humanity was on the threshold of brilliant new discoveries. The bishop dared the president to mention one. The president said he expected that within the next fifty years or so humans would learn to fly.

This threw the bishop into a fit of laughter. "Rubbish, my dear man," he exclaimed, "If God had intended us to fly, He would have provided us with wings. Flight is reserved for the birds and the angels."

The bishop's name was Wright. He had two sons named Orville and Wilbur - the inventors of the first aeroplane.

\*\*\*\*\*

An ancient king in India sentenced a man to death. The man begged that the sentence be condoned, and added, "If the king will be merciful and spare my life, I shall teach his horse to fly in a year's time."

"Done," said the king. "But if at the end of this period the horse cannot fly, you will be executed."

When his anxious family later asked the man how he planned to achieve this, he said, "In the course of the year the king may die. Or the horse may die, or who knows, the Horse may learn to fly!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A young scientist was boasting in the presence of a Guru, of the achievements of modern science.

"We can fly, just like the birds," he was saying. "We can do what the birds can do!"

"Except sit on a barbed wire fence," said the Guru.

\*\*\*\*\*

The doctor carefully examined a patient and said, "You have had an attack of pneumonia. You are some sort of a musician, aren't you?"

"Yes," said the man surprised. "And you play a wind instrument." "That's right.

How did you know?"

"Elementary, my dear fellow! There is a distinct straining of the lungs and the larynx is inflamed, undoubtedly because of severe pressure. Tell me, what instrument do you play?"

"The accordion."

The hazards of infallibility!

\*\*\*\*\*

It was the birthday of the parish priest and the children had come with their birthday greetings and gifts.

Father took the gift-wrapped parcel from little Mary and said, "Ah! I see you have brought me a book." (Mary's father ran a bookstore in town)

"Yes, how did you know?"

"Father always knows!"

"And you, Tommy, have brought me a sweater," said Father picking up the parcel Tommy held out to him. (Tommy's father was a dealer in woollen goods). "That's right. How did you know?" "Ah! Father always knows."

And so it went, till Father lifted Bobby's box. The wrapping paper was wet (Bobby's father sold wines and liquors) so Father said, "I see you have brought me a bottle of scotch and spilled some of it!" "Wrong," said Bobby, "it isn't scotch." "Well, a bottle of rum then." "Wrong again." Father's fingers were wet. He put one of them into his mouth but that gave him no clue. "Is it gin?" "No," said Bobby. "I've brought you a puppy!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Owing to a variety of circumstances, the egg of an eagle found its way to a corner of the barn where a hen was hatching her eggs. In time the little eaglet was hatched with the other chickens.

Now as time passed the fledging, quite unaccountably, began to experience a longing to fly. So it would say to its mother, the hen, "When shall I learn to fly?"

The poor hen was quite aware of the fact that she could not fly and hadn't the slightest notion of what other birds did to train their fledglings in the art of flight. But she was ashamed to confess to this inadequacy, so she would say, "Not yet, my child, not yet. I shall teach you when you are ready."

Months passed and the young eagle began to suspect that its mother did not know how to fly. But it could not get itself to break loose and fly on its own for its keen longing to fly had become confused with the gratitude it experienced towards the bird that had hatched it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Going by reports he had heard of him, the Caliph appointed Nasruddin Chief Advisor at the court. Since his authority derived, not from competence, but from the patronage of the Caliph, Nasruddin became a danger to all who came to consult him as became evident in the following case:

"Nasruddin, you are a man of experience," said a courtier. "Do you know of a cure for aching eyes? I'm having a lot of trouble with mine."

"Let me share my own experience with you," said Nasruddin. "I once had a toothache and got no relief till I had the tooth out."

\*\*\*\*\*

The doctor decided that the time had come to tell his patient the truth: "I feel I should tell you that you are a very sick man and are not likely to live for more than another two days at the most. You may want to settle your affairs. Is there anyone you desire to see?"

"Yes," came the answer in a feeble voice.

"Who is it?" asked the doctor.

"Another doctor."

\*\*\*\*\*

A young author once told Mark Twain that he was losing confidence in his ability to write. "Did you ever get that feeling yourself?" he asked.

"Yes," said Twain. "Once, after I had been writing for nearly fifteen years, it suddenly struck me that I did not possess the slightest talent for writing."

"What did you do then? Did you give up writing?"

"How could I? By then I was already famous."

\*\*\*\*\*

A rich man decided to fulfil a life-long dream of leading an orchestra. So he hired one drummer, three saxophonists and twenty-four violinists. At their first rehearsal he conducted so badly that the drummer invited the other musicians to leave with him. But one of the saxophonists said, "Why leave? He's paying us well. Besides, he must know something about music."

At the next rehearsal the conductor just couldn't keep time. Where upon the drummer started to beat his drums furiously. The conductor tapped for silence, glared at the musicians and asked, "Who did that?"

\*\*\*\*\*

A friend once told the manager of an orchestra that he would love to have a position in the orchestra. Said the manager, "I had no idea you could play an instrument,"

"I can't," was the reply. "But I see you have a man there who does nothing but wave a stick around while the others play. I think I could handle his job."

\*\*\*\*\*

To please an official Abraham Lincoln once signed an order transferring certain regiments. Secretary of War Stanton, convinced that the President had made a serious mistake, refused to carry out the order. And for good measure he added "Lincoln is a fool!"

When this was reported to Lincoln he said, "If Stanton said I am a fool then I must be one, for he is almost always right. I think I'll step over and see for myself."

That is exactly what he did. Stanton convinced him that the order was a mistake and Lincoln promptly withdrew it. Everyone knew that part of Lincoln's greatness lay in the way he welcomed criticism.

\*\*\*\*\*

A recruit was assigned to guard the entrance to the army camp and was given instructions to let no car pass if it did not have a special pennant. He had occasion to stop a car bearing a General who promptly told his driver to disregard the sentry and drive on. Whereupon the recruit stepped forward, rifle at the ready, and calmly said, "Pardon me, sir, but I'm new to this. Whom do I shoot? You, sir, or the driver?"

You achieve greatness when you are oblivious of the dignity of those above you, and make those below you oblivious of yours.

When you are neither haughty with the humble nor humble with the haughty.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a Rabbi who was revered by the people as a man of God. Not a day went by when a crowd of people wasn't standing at his door seeking advice or healing or the holy man's blessing. And each time the Rabbi spoke the people would hang on his lips, drinking in his every word.

There was, however, in the audience a disagreeable fellow who never missed a chance to contradict the Master. He would observe the Rabbi's weaknesses and make fun of his defects to the dismay of the disciples who began to look on him as the devil incarnate.

Well, one day the "devil" took ill and died. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. Outwardly they looked appropriately solemn but in their hearts they were glad for no longer would the Master's inspiring talks be interrupted or his behaviour criticised by this disrespectful heretic.

So the people were surprised to see the Master plunged in genuine grief at the funeral. When asked by a disciple later if he was mourning over the eternal fate of the dead man, he said, "No, no. Why should I mourn over our friend who is now in heaven? It was for me I was grieving. That man was the only friend I had. Here I am surrounded by people who revere me. He was the only one who challenged me. I fear that with him gone, I shall stop growing." And as he said these words the Master burst into tears.

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman once came to Rabbi Israel and told him her secret sorrow; she had been married twenty years and had still not borne a son. "What a coincidence!" said the Rabbi. "It was exactly thus with my mother." And this is the story he told her: For twenty years his mother had no child. One day she heard that the holy Bal Shem Tov was in town so she hurried to the house he was in and begged him to pray that she might have a son. "What are you willing to do about it?" the holy man asked. "What can I do?" she replied. "My husband is a poor librarian but I do have something I can offer the Rabbi." With that she rushed home, pulled a katinka out of the chest where it had been carefully stored away and ran back again to offer it to the Rabbi. Now the katinka, as everyone knows, was the cape worn by the bride on her wedding day—a precious heirloom handed down from one generation to another. By the time the woman got back, the Rabbi had left for another town, so that is where she went. Being poor, however, she had to walk the distance; by the time she got there the Rabbi had left for another destination. Six weeks she followed after him from town to town till she finally caught up with him. The Rabbi took the katinka and gave it to the local synagogue. The Rabbi Israel concluded, "My mother walked all the way back home. A year later I was born."

"What a coincidence, indeed!" cried the woman. "I too have a katinka at home. I shall bring it to you at once and if you offer it to the local synagogue God will give me a son."

"Ah, no, my dear," said the Rabbi sadly, "that will not work. The difference between my mother and you is this: you heard her story; she had no story to go by."

After a saint uses a ladder it is thrown away and may never be used again.

\*\*\*\*\*

A large truck was moving through a railway underpass when it got wedged in between the road and the girders overhead. All the efforts of experts to extricate it proved useless and traffic was stalled for miles on both sides of the underpass. A little boy kept trying to get the attention of the foreman but was always pushed away. Finally, in sheer exasperation, the foreman said, "I suppose you've come to tell us how to do this job?"

"Yes," said the kid. "I suggest you let some air out of the tyres."

In the layman's mind there are many possibilities. In the expert's mind there are few.

\*\*\*\*\*

Somewhere in the 1930s a manufacturing concern in the U.S. sent a machine to Japan.

A month later the company received a cable: MACHINE DOES NOT WORK. SEND MAN TO FIX.

The company sent someone to Japan. Before he had the opportunity to examine the machine, the company received a second cable: MAN TOO YOUNG, SEND OLDER MAN.

The company's reply was:

BETTER USE HIM. HE INVENTED MACHINE.

\*\*\*\*\*

A centipede consulted an owl about the pain it felt in its legs.

Said the owl, "You have far too many legs! If you became a mouse you would have only four legs-and one-twenty-fourth the amount of pain."

"That's a very good idea," said the centipede. "Now show me how to become a mouse."

"Don't bother me with details of implementation," said the owl. "I only make the policy in this place."

\*\*\*\*\*

A great painter asked a doctor friend to come and look at what he thought was his finest creation. The doctor subjected the painting to a thorough examination, taking his time over every detail. Ten minutes passed and the artist became somewhat apprehensive. "Well, what do you think?" he asked.

The doctor said, "It appears to be double pneumonia."

\*\*\*\*\*

The dangers of trusting the expert:

A man received a note from a friend written in an illegible hand. After struggling to make sense out of it he finally hit upon the idea of enlisting the help of the local druggist.

The man at the drug store looked hard at the note for a whole minute, then took a large brown bottle from the shelf, placed it on the counter and said, "That will be two dollars, please!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A group of college students was dissatisfied with the poor quality of the beer that the cafeteria served them.

Some of them got the bright idea of pouring some in a bottle and sending it to a hospital laboratory in the hope of finding out what was in the beer.

The following day they received a note that said, "Your horse is suffering from jaundice."

\*\*\*\*\*

A disciple once said to Confucius, "What are the basic ingredients of good government?"

He answered, "Food, weapons and the trust of the people."

"But," continued the disciple, if you were forced to dispense with one of these three, which would you drop?"

"Weapons."

"And if you had to drop one of the other two?"

"Food."

"But without food the people will die!"

"From time immemorial, death has been the lot of human beings. But a people that no longer trusts its rulers is lost indeed."

\*\*\*\*\*

When an accident deprived the village headman of the use of his legs, he took to walking on crutches. He gradually developed the ability to move with speed-even to dance and execute little pirouettes for the entertainment of his neighbours.

Then he took it into his head to train his children in the use of crutches. It soon became a status symbol in the village to walk on crutches and before long everyone was doing so.

By the fourth generation no one in the village could walk without crutches. The village school included "Crutchery-Theoretical-Applied" in its curriculum and the village craftsmen became famous for the quality of the crutches they produced.

There was even talk of developing an electronic, battery-operated set of crutches! One day a Young Turk presented himself before the village elders and demanded to know why everyone had to walk on crutches since God had provided people with legs to walk on. The village elders were amused that this upstart should think himself wiser than them so they decided to teach him a lesson. "Why don't you show us how?" they said.

"Agreed," cried the young man.

A demonstration was fixed for ten o'clock on the following Sunday at the village square. Everyone was there when the young man hobbled on his crutches to the middle of the square and, when the village clock began to strike the hour, stood upright and dropped his crutches. A hush fell on the crowd as he took a bold step forward-and fell flat on his face.

With that everyone was confirmed in their belief that it was quite impossible to walk without the help of crutches.

\*\*\*\*\*

While the wheelwright was making a wheel at the lower end of the hall Prince Huan of Ch'i was reading a book at the upper end.

Putting aside his chisel and mallet the wheelwright called to the Prince and asked him what book he was reading.

"One that preserves the words of the Sages," said the Prince.

"Are those Sages alive?" asked the wheelwright.

"Oh. no." said the Prince "they are all dead."

"Then what you are reading can be nothing but the dirt and scum of bygone people," said the wheelwright.

"How dare you, a wheelwright, find fault with a book that I am reading? Justify your statement or you shall die."

"Well, speaking as a wheelwright," said the man, "this is how I look at the matter: when I am fashioning a wheel, if my stroke is too slow it cuts deep but is not steady; if my stroke is too fast it is steady but does not cut deep. The right pace, neither too fast nor too slow, will not get into the hand if it does not come from the heart. It is something that cannot be put into words; there is an art to it that I cannot hand on to my son. That is why I cannot let him take over my work, so here I am at the age of seventy-five still making wheels. In my opinion it must be the same with those who have gone before us. All that was worth handing on died with them; the rest they put into their books. That is why I said that what you are reading is the dirt and scum of bygone people."

\*\*\*\*\*

In the old days it was common for people to use paper lanterns in Japan. The paper shielded a lit candle and was held together by bamboo sticks.

A blind man happened to be visiting a friend and since it was late, was offered a lantern to take home with him.

He laughed at the suggestion. "Day and night are all one to me," he said. "What would I do with a lantern?"

His friend said, "You do not need it to find your way home, true. But it might help to prevent someone from running into you in the dark."

So the blind man started off with the lantern. It wasn't long before someone crashed into him, knocking him off balance.

"Hey, you careless fellow!" cried the blind man. "Can't you see this lantern?"

"Brother," said the stranger, "your lantern has gone out."

You walk more safely your own darkness than in someone else's light.

## SPIRITUALITY

Given the nature of the spiritual quest...

A man came upon a tall tower and stepped inside to find it all dark. As he groped around he came upon a circular staircase. Curious to know where it led to he began

to climb and, as he climbed, he sensed a growing uneasiness in his heart. So he looked behind him and was horrified to see that each time he climbed a step, the previous one fell off and disappeared. Before him the stairs wound upward and he had no idea where they led; behind him yawned an enormous black emptiness.

\*\*\*\*\*

...true seekers are rare...

When the king visited the monasteries of the great Zen Master Lin Chi he was astonished to learn that there were more than ten thousand monks living there with him.

Wanting to know the exact number of the monks the king asked. "How many disciples do you have?"

Lin Chi replied. "Four or Five at the very most."

\*\*\*\*\*

...impostors many...

A couple on their honeymoon were about to get into bed at their hotel when a masked burglar broke in. He drew a chalk circle on the floor, beckoned to the husband and said, "Stand there in that circle. If you step out of it I shall shoot you through the head."

While the husband stood there bolt upright, the burglar took everything he could lay his hands on threw it all into the sack and was about to get away when he saw the pretty bride covered in nothing more than a sheet. He beckoned to her, turned on the radio, made her dance with him hugged her kissed her-and would have raped her if she hadn't valiantly fought him off.

When the burglar finally took off, the woman turned on her husband and yelled, "What kind of a man are you that you stood there in the middle of that circle doing nothing while I was almost raped!"

"It isn't true to say that I did nothing," the man protested.

"Well, what did you do?"

"I defied him. Each time he had his back turned towards me, I stuck my foot out of the circle!"

The kind of danger we are ready for is the kind we can face from a safe distance.

\*\*\*\*\*

After thirty years of watching television, a husband said to his wife, "Let's do something really-exciting tonight."

Instantly she conjured up visions of a night in town. "Great!" she said, "What shall we do?"

"Welt, let's exchange chairs."

\*\*\*\*\*

In a little frontier town there was an old man who lived in the same house for fifty years.

One day he surprised everyone by moving into the house next door. Reporters from the local papers descended on him to ask him why he had moved.

"I guess it was the gypsy in me," he replied with a self satisfied smile.

Have you heard of the man who accompanied Christopher Columbus on his expedition to the New World and kept worrying the whole time that he might not get back in time to succeed the old village tailor and someone else might snatch the job?

To succeed in the adventure called spirituality one must have one's mind set on getting the most out of life. Most people settle for trifles like wealth, fame, comfort and human company.

A man was so enamoured of fame he was ready to hang on a gibbet if that would get his name in the headlines. Is there really any difference between him and most business people and politicians? (Not to mention the rest of us who set such store by public opinion).

\*\*\*\*\*

...for the one essential is lacking.

According to an ancient Indian fable a mouse was in constant distress because of its fear of the cat. A magician took pity on it and turned it into a cat. But then it became afraid of the dog. So the magician turned it into a dog. Then it began to fear the panther. So the magician turned it into a panther. Whereupon it was full of fear of the hunter. At this point the magician gave up. He turned it into a mouse again saying. "Nothing I do for you is going to be of any help because you have the heart of a mouse."

\*\*\*\*\*

A priest walked into a pub indignant to find so many of his parishioners there. He rounded them up and shepherded them into the church.

Then he solemnly said. "All those who want to go to heaven, step over here to the left." Everyone stepped over except one man who stubbornly stood his ground.

The priest looked at him fiercely and said. "Don't you want to go to heaven?"

"No." said the man.

"Do you mean to stand there and tell me you don't want to go to heaven when you die?"

"Of course I want to go to heaven when I die. I thought you were going now!"

We are ready to go all the way -only when our brakes don't work.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Buddhist nun called Ryonen was born in the year 1779. The famous Japanese warrior, Shingen, was her grandfather. She was considered one of the loveliest women in the whole of Japan and a poetess of no mean talent, so already at the age of seventeen she was chosen to serve at the royal court where she developed a great fondness for Her Imperial Majesty the Empress. Now the Empress died a sudden death and Ryonen underwent a profound spiritual experience: she became acutely aware of the passing nature of all things. That was when she made up her mind to study Zen.

But her family wouldn't hear of it. They practically forced her into marriage but not before she had extracted from them and from her future husband the promise that after she had borne him three children she would be free to become a nun.

This condition was fulfilled when she was twenty-five. Then neither the pleas of her husband nor anything else in the world could dissuade her from the task she had set her heart on. She shaved her head, took the name of Ryonen (which means, to understand clearly! and set out on her quest.

She came to the city of Edo and asked the Master Tet-sugyu to accept her as his disciple. He took one look at her and rejected her because she was too beautiful.

So she went to another Master, Hakuo. He rejected her for the same reason; her beauty, he said, would only be a source of trouble. So Ryonen branded her face with a red hot iron thereby destroying her physical beauty forever. When she came back into Hakuo's presence, he accepted her as a disciple.

Ryonen wrote a poem on the reverse side of a little mirror to commemorate the occasion:

As a handmaid of my Empress  
I burnt incense  
to give fragrance to my lovely clothes.

Now as a homeless-beggar  
I burn my face  
to enter the world of Zen.

When she knew her time had come to depart this world she wrote another poem:

Sixty-six times have these eyes beheld  
the loveliness of Autumn...

Ask no more.  
Only listen to the sound of the pines  
when no wind stirs.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Once upon a time in a concentration camp there lived a prisoner who, even though he was under sentence of execution, was fearless and free. One day he was seen in the middle of the prison square playing his guitar. A large crowd gathered to listen for, under the spell of the music, they became as fearless as he. When the prison authorities saw this they forbade the man to play.

But next day there he was again, singing and playing on his guitar with a larger crowd around him. The guards angrily dragged him away and had his fingers chopped off.

Next day he was back, singing and making what music he could with his bleeding fingers. This time the crowds were cheering. The guards dragged him away again and smashed his guitar.

The following day he was singing with all his heart. What a song! So pure and uplifting! The crowd joined in and while the singing lasted their hearts became as pure as his and their spirits as invincible. So angry were the guards this time that they had his tongue torn out.

A hush descended on the camp, a something that was deathless.

To the astonishment of everyone, he was back at his place next day swaying and dancing to a silent music that no one but he could hear. And soon everyone was holding hands and dancing around his bleeding, broken figure in the centre while the guards stood rooted to the ground in wonder.

Sudha Chandran, a contemporary classical Indian dancer, was cut off in the prime of her dancing career-quite literally, for her right leg had to be amputated.

After she had been fitted with an artificial leg she went back to dancing arid, incredibly, made it right back to the top again. When asked how she had managed it, she said, quite simply, "You don't need feet to dance."

\*\*\*\*\*

A miser hid his gold at the foot of a tree in his garden. Every week he would dig it up and look at it for hours. One day a thief dug up the gold and made off with it. When the miser next came to gaze upon his treasure all he found was an empty hole.

The man began to howl with grief so his neighbours came running to find out what the trouble was. When they found out one of them asked, "Did you use any of the gold?"

"No." said the miser. "I only looked at it every week."

"Well, then." said the neighbour, "for all the good the gold did you you might just as well come every week and gaze upon the hole."

It is not by our money but by our capacity for enjoyment that we are rich or poor. To strive for wealth and have no capacity for enjoyment. is to be like the bald man who struggles to collect combs.

\*\*\*\*\*

A reporter was attempting to get a hum an-interest story out of a very, very old man in a government-run home for the aged.

"Grandpa," said the young reporter, "how would you feel if you suddenly got a letter telling you that a distant relative had left you ten million dollars?"

"Son," said the old man slowly, "I would still be ninety-five years old, wouldn't I?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Two jewel merchants arrived at a caravan sarai in the desert at about the same time one night. Each was quite conscious of the other's presence and, while unloading his camel, one of them could not resist the temptation to let a large

pearl fall to the ground as if by accident. It rolled in the direction of the other who, with affected graciousness, picked it up and returned it to its owner saying, "That is a fine pearl you have there, sir. As large and lustrous as they come."

"How gracious of you to say so," said the other.

"As a matter of fact, that is one of the smaller gems in my collection."

A Bedouin who was sitting by the fire and had observed this drama, rose and invited the two of them to eat with him. When they began their meal, this is the story he told them:

"I too, my friends, was, once upon a time, a jeweller like you. One day I was overtaken by a great storm in the desert. It buffeted me and my caravan this way and that till I was separated from my entourage and lost my way completely. Days passed and I was panic-stricken to realize that I was really wandering about in circles with no sense of where I was or which direction to walk in. Then, almost dead with starvation, I unloaded every bag on my camel's back, anxiously searching through them for the hundredth time. Imagine my excitement when I came upon a pouch that had escaped my notice before. With trembling fingers I ripped it open hoping to find something to eat. Imagine my disillusionment when I found that all it contained was pearls!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A Sufi of forbidding appearance arrived at the doors of the palace. No one dared to stop him as he made his way right up to the throne on which the saintly Ibrahim ben Adam sat.

"What is it you want?" asked the king.

"A place to sleep in this caravan serai."

"This is no caravanserai. This is my palace.

"May I ask who owned this place before you?"

"My father. He is dead."

"And who owned it before him?" "My grandfather. He is dead too."

"And this place where people lodge for a brief while and move on-did I hear you say it was not a caravanserai?"

Everyone's in the departure lounge!

\*\*\*\*\*

A miser had accumulated five hundred thousand dinars and looked forward to a year of pleasant living before he made up his mind how best to invest his money, when suddenly the Angel of Death appeared before him to take his life away.

The man begged and pleaded and used a thousand arguments to be allowed to live a little longer, but the Angel was obdurate. "Give me three days of life and I shall give you half my fortune," the man pleaded. The Angel wouldn't hear of it and began to tug at him, "Give me just one day, I beg of you, and you can have everything I accumulated through so much sweat and toil." The Angel was adamant still.

He was able to wring just one little concession from the Angel-a few moments in which to write down this note: "Oh you, whoever you are that happen to find this note, if you have enough to live on, don't waste your life accumulating fortunes. Live! My five hundred thousand dinars could not buy me a single hour of life!"

When millionaires die and people ask, "How much did they leave?" the answer is, of course, "Everything."

And sometimes. "They didn't leave it. They were taken away from it."

\*\*\*\*\*

The Indian mystic Ramakrishna used to say:

God laughs on two occasions. He laughs when he hears a physician say to a mother, "Don't be afraid, I shall cure the boy." God says to himself, "I am planning to take the life of the child and this man thinks he can save it!"

He also laughs when he sees two brothers divide their land by means of a boundary

line saying, "This side belongs to me and the other side to you." He says to himself, "The universe belongs to me and they claim to own portions of it!" When they came to tell a man that his house had been carried away by the flood, he laughed and said, "Impossible! I have the key to the house right here in my pocket!"

\*\*\*\*\*

And Buddha said:

"This land is mine, these sons are mine,"-such are the words of the fool who does not understand that even he is not his.

You never really possess things,

You merely hold them for a while.

If you are unable to give them away you are held by them.

Whatever you treasure must be held in the hollow of your hand as water is held. Clutch at it and it is gone.

Appropriate it to yourself and you soil it. Set it free and it is forever yours.

\*\*\*\*\*

Here is a story a Master told his disciples to show what damage a single trifling attachment can do to those who have become rich in spiritual gifts:

A villager was once riding past a cave in a mountain at the precise moment when it made one of its rare magical appearances to all who wished to enrich themselves from its treasures. He marched into the cave and found whole mountains of jewels and precious stones that he hurriedly stuffed into the saddlebags of his mule, for he knew the legend according to which the cave would be open for only a very limited period of time so its treasures had to be taken in haste.

The donkey was fully loaded and he set off rejoicing at his good fortune, when he suddenly remembered he had left his stick in the cave. He turned back and rushed into the cave. But the time for the cave to disappear had arrived and so he disappeared with it and was never seen again. After waiting for him a year or two the villagers sold the treasure they found on the donkey and became the beneficiaries of the unfortunate man's good luck.

When the sparrow builds its nest  
in the forest

it occupies but a single branch.

When the deer stakes its thirst

at the river

it drinks no more than its belly can hold.

We collect things

because our hearts are empty.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was an old Zen Master called Nonoko who lived alone in a hut at the foot of a mountain. One night while Nonoko was sitting in meditation a stranger broke into the hut and, brandishing a sword, demanded Nonoko's money. Nonoko did not interrupt his meditation while he addressed the man: "All my money is in a bowl on the shelf up there. Take all you need, but leave me five yen. I have to pay my taxes, next week."

The stranger emptied the bowl of all the money it held and threw five yen back into it. He also helped himself to a precious vase he found on the shelf.

"Carry that vase with care," said Nonoko. "It will crack easily."

The stranger looked around the small barren room once more and was going to leave.

"You haven't said thank you," said Nonoko.

The man said thank you and left.

The next day the whole village was in turmoil. Many people claimed they had been robbed. Someone noticed the vase missing from the shelf in Nonoko's hut and asked if he too had been the victim of the burglar. "Oh, no," said Nonoko, "I gave the

vase to a stranger, along with some money. He thanked me and left. He was a pleasant enough sort of fellow but a bit careless with his sword!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A rich Muslim went to the mosque after a party and had to take off his expensive shoes and leave them outside the mosque. When he came out after prayer the shoes were gone.

"How thoughtless of me," he said to himself. "By foolishly leaving those shoes here I was the occasion for someone to steal them. I would have gladly given them to him. Now I am responsible for creating a thief."

\*\*\*\*\*

True philosopher that he was, Socrates believed that the wise person would instinctively lead a frugal life. He himself would not even wear shoes; yet he constantly fell under the spell of the marketplace and would go there often to look at all the wares on display.

When one of his friends asked why, Socrates said, "I love to go there and discover how many things I am perfectly happy without."

Spirituality is not knowing what you want but understanding what you do not need.

\*\*\*\*\*

People have been known to make a rich life for themselves and others with very few possessions.

There was a group of elderly gentlemen in Japan who would meet to exchange news and drink tea. One of their diversions was to search for costly varieties of tea and create new blends that would delight the palate.

When it was the turn of the oldest member of the group to entertain the others, he served tea with the greatest ceremony, measuring out the leaves from a golden container. Everyone had the highest praise for the tea and demanded to know by what particular combination he had arrived at this exquisite blend.

The old man smiled and said, "Gentlemen, the tea that you find so delightful is the one that is drunk by the peasants on my farm. The finest things in life are neither costly nor hard to find."

\*\*\*\*\*

The guru sat in meditation on the river bank when a disciple bent down to place two enormous pearls at his feet, a token of reverence and devotion.

The guru opened his eyes, lifted one of the pearls and held it so carelessly that it slipped out of his hand and rolled down the bank into the river.

The horrified disciple plunged in after it but, though he dived in again and again till late evening, he had no luck.

Finally, all wet and exhausted, he roused the guru from his meditation: "You saw where it fell. Show me the spot so I can get it back for you."

The guru lifted the other pearl, threw it into the river and said, "Right there!"

Do not attempt to possess things for things cannot really be possessed- Only make sure you are not possessed by them and you will be the sovereign of creation.

\*\*\*\*\*

When Buddha entered the capital of King Pransanjit, the King in person came out to him. He had been a friend of Buddha's father and had heard of the lad's renunciation. So he attempted to persuade Buddha to give up his life as a wandering beggar and return to the palace, thinking he was doing a service to his old friend.

Buddha looked into the eyes of Prasanjit and said, "Answer me truthfully. For all your outer merriment, has your kingdom brought you a single day of happiness?"

Prasanjit lowered his eyes and was silent.

There is no greater joy than to have no cause for sorrow;

No greater wealth than contentment with what one has.

\*\*\*\*\*

A monkey and a hyena were walking through the forest when the hyena said, "Each time I pass by those bushes there a lion jumps out of them and mauls me. I don't know why."

"I'll walk with you this time," said the monkey, "and side with you against the lion."

So they started to walk past the bushes when the lion pounced on the hyena and nearly mauled it to death. Meanwhile the monkey watched the proceedings from the safety of a tree that he had run up the moment the lion had appeared.

"Why didn't you do something to help me?" moaned the hyena.

Said the monkey, "You were laughing so much I thought you were winning."

\*\*\*\*\*

The great Buddhist saint Nagarjuna moved around naked except for a loin-cloth and, incongruously, a golden begging-bowl gifted to him by the king who was his disciple.

One night he was about to lie down to sleep among the ruins of an ancient monastery when he noticed a thief lurking behind one of the columns. "Here, take this," said Nagarjuna, holding out the begging bowl. "That way you won't disturb me once I have fallen asleep."

The thief eagerly grabbed the bowl and made off-only to return next morning with the bowl and a request. He said, "When you gave away this bowl so freely last night, you made me feel very poor. Teach me how to acquire the riches that make this kind of light-hearted detachment possible."

No one can take from you what you never took to yourself.

\*\*\*\*\*

One of Junaid's followers came to him with a purse full of gold coins.

"Have you any more gold coins?" asked Junaid.

"Yes, many more."

"And you are attached to them?"

"I am."

"Then you must keep this too, for your need is greater than mine. Since I have nothing and desire nothing I am much wealthier than you are, you see."

The heart of the enlightened is like a mirror:

It grasps nothing, refuses nothing; it receives but does not keep.

\*\*\*\*\*

A Quaker had this sign put up on a vacant piece of land next to his home: THIS LAND WILL BE GIVEN TO ANYONE WHO IS TRULY SATISFIED.

A wealthy farmer who was riding by stopped to read the sign and said to himself, "Since our friend the Quaker is so ready to part with this plot I might as well claim it before someone else does, I am a rich man and have all I need, so I certainly qualify."

With that he went up to the door and explained what he was there for. "And is thee truly satisfied?" the Quaker asked.

"I am, indeed, for I have everything I need."

"Friend," said the Quaker, "if thee is satisfied, "What does thee want the Land for?"

While others strive for wealth the enlightened, being content with what they have, possess it without striving.

Being well content with little they are rich as kings.

A king himself is a pauper when his kingdom does not suffice him.

\*\*\*\*\*

King Pyrrhus of Epirus was approached by his friend Cyneas and asked, "If you conquer Rome, what will you do next, sir?"

Pyrrhus replied. "Sicily is next door and will be easy to take."

"And what shall we do after Sicily is taken?"

"Then we will move over to Africa and sack Carthage."

"And after Carthage, sir?"

"The turn of Greece will come."

"And what, may I ask, will the fruit of all these conquests be?"

"Then," said Pyrrhus, "we can sit down and enjoy ourselves."

"Can we not," said Cyneas, "enjoy ourselves now?"

The poor think they will be happy when they become rich. The rich think they will be happy when they are rid of their ulcers.

\*\*\*\*\*

A man and his wife went to visit friends in another part of the country and were taken to a racecourse. Fascinated by the sight of horses chasing one another round a track, the two of them kept betting all evening till they had no more than two dollars left.

The following day the man prevailed upon his wife to let him go to the course alone. There was a horse with a fifty-to-one odds on it in the first race. He bet on the horse and it won. He put all the money he won on another long shot in the next race and again he won. He kept doing this all evening and his entire earnings came to fifty-seven thousand dollars.

On the way back home he passed by a gambling den. An inner voice, the same that seemed to have guided him in his choice of horses, seemed to say, "Stop here and go in." So he stopped, went in and found himself standing in front of a roulette wheel. The voice said, "Number thirteen." The man put all of his fifty-seven thousand on number thirteen. The wheel spun. The croupier announced, "Number fourteen."

So the man walked back home with nothing in his pocket. His wife called out to him from the porch. "How did it go?"

The husband shrugged his shoulders. "I lost the two dollars," he said.

Come to think of it, you never lose any more than that no matter what you lose.

\*\*\*\*\*

Buddha seemed quite unruffled by the insults hurled at him by a visitor. When his disciples later asked him what the secret of his serenity was, he said:

"Imagine what would happen if someone placed an offering before you and you did not pick it up. Or someone sent you a letter that you refused to open; you would be unaffected by its contents, would you not? Do this each time you are abused and you will not lose your serenity."

The only kind of dignity

which is genuine

is that which is not diminished

by the disrespect of others.

You don't diminish the majesty

of Niagara Falls

by spitting in it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two inmates of a deaf-and-dumb institution had a quarrel. When an official came to straighten things out between them he found one of the men standing with his back to the other, shaking with laughter.

"What's the joke? Why is your partner here looking so angry?" the official asked, speaking with his fingers.

"Because," the mute replied, also with the fingers, "he wants to swear at me but I refuse to look!"

\*\*\*\*\*

One day Hasan of Basra saw Rabi'a al Adawiya near the riverside. Casting his

prayer mat on the water he stepped on to it and said, "O Rabi'a, come let us pray together."

Rabi'a said, "O Hasan, why have you set yourself up like a salesman in the bazaar of this world? You do this because of your weakness."

With that she threw her prayer mat into the air, flew up on to it and said, "Come up here, Hasan, so that people may see us,"

But that was more than Hasan could accomplish, so he was silent. Rabi'a, wishing to gain his heart, said, "O Hasan, a fish can do what you did and a fly can do what I did. The real work lies beyond both of these; that is what we must occupy ourselves with."

\*\*\*\*\*

Buddha was once threatened with death by a bandit called Angulimal.

"Then be good enough to fulfil my dying wish," said Buddha- "Cut off the branch of that tree-

One slash of the sword, and it was done! "What now?" asked the bandit.

"Put it back again," said Buddha.

The bandit laughed. "You must be crazy to think that anyone can do that."

"On the contrary, it is you who are crazy to think that you are mighty because you can wound and destroy. That is the task of children. The mighty know how to create and heal."

The battering ram can demolish a wall; it cannot heal the breach.

\*\*\*\*\*

A visitor to an insane asylum found one of the inmates rocking back and forth in a chair cooing repeatedly in a soft, contented manner, "Lulu, Lulu..."

"What's this man's problem?" he asked the doctor.

"Lulu. She was the woman who jilted him," was the doctor's reply.

As they proceeded on the tour they came to a padded cell whose occupant was banging his head repeatedly against the wall and moaning, "Lulu, Lulu..."

"Is Lulu this man's problem too?" asked the visitor.

"Yes," said the doctor. "He's the one Lulu finally married."

There are only two afflictions in life-not getting what you are attached to and getting what you are attached to.

\*\*\*\*\*

A young business executive phoned his foreign representative one day and tersely announced: "I am calling to give, instructions. This call will last no more than three minutes. I shall speak and you are not to interrupt. Any comments or queries you have are to be cabled to me later."

With that he went on to deliver his message. His delivery was so rapid that he finished a little ahead of time. "We have twenty seconds left," he told the man at the other end. "Have you anything to say?"

"Yes," came the reply. "You spoke so fast I couldn't understand a word."

A good way to cover less distance in more time is to go faster.

\*\*\*\*\*

A young man came to a Master and asked, "How long is it likely to take me to attain enlightenment?"

Said the Master. "Ten years."

The young man was shocked. "So long?" he asked incredulously.

Said the Master, "No, that was a mistake. It will take you twenty years."

The young man asked, "Why did you double the figure?"

Said the Master, "Come to think of it, in your case it will probably be thirty."

Some people will never learn anything because they grasp everything too soon.

Wisdom, after all, is not a station you arrive at but a manner of travelling. If you travel too fast you will miss the scenery.

To know exactly where you're headed may be the best way to go astray. Not all

those who loiter are lost.

\*\*\*\*\*

An American preacher in Beijing asked the waiter in a restaurant what Religion was for the Chinese.

The waiter took him out to the balcony and asked, "What do you see, sir?"

"I see a street and houses and people walking and buses and taxis plying."

"What else?"

"Trees."

"What else?"

"The wind is blowing."

The Chinese extended his arms and exclaimed, "That is Religion, sir!"

You're searching for it the way someone searches for sight with open eyes!

It Is too clear that it is hard to see.

\*\*\*\*\*

Disciple: "What is the Tao?"

Master: "Everything is Tao."

Disciple: "How can I get it?"

Master: "If you try to get it, you will miss it."

No one is ever natural who tries to be natural; .or tries not to try!

\*\*\*\*\*

An old woman in China supported a monk for more than twenty years. She built him a little hut and fed him while he spent all his time in meditation.

At the end of this period she wondered what progress the man had made, she decided to put him to the test by enlisting the help of a girl aflame with desire. "Go into the hut," she told the girl, "and embrace him. Then say, 'What shall we do now?'"

The girl called on the monk at night to find him at his meditation. Without further ado she began to caress him and said, "What are we going to do now?" The monk got into a towering rage at this impertinence. He took hold of a broom and drove the girl out of the hut.

When she got back and reported what had happened, the old woman was indignant. "To think that I fed that fellow for twenty years," she exclaimed. "He showed no understanding of your need, no disposition to guide you in your error. He need not have given in to passion; but after all these years of prayer he could at least have developed some compassion."

\*\*\*\*\*

The devotee knelt to be initiated into discipleship. The guru whispered the sacred mantra into his ear, warning him not to reveal it to anyone.

"What will happen if I do?" asked the devotee.

Said the guru, "Anyone you reveal the mantra to will be liberated from the bondage of ignorance and suffering, but you yourself will be excluded from discipleship and suffer damnation."

No sooner had he heard those words than the devotee rushed to the marketplace, collected a large crowd around him and repeated the sacred mantra for all to hear. The disciples later reported this to the guru and demanded that the man be expelled from the monastery for his disobedience.

The guru smiled and said, "He has no need of anything I can teach. His action has shown him to be a guru in his own right."

\*\*\*\*\*

When Buddha first embarked upon his spiritual quest he practised many austerities. One day two musicians happened to pass by the tree under which he was sitting in meditation. One was saying to the other, "Do not tighten the strings of your sitar too much or they will snap. Do not keep them too loose either or they will produce

no music. Keep to the middle path.”

Those words hit Buddha with such force that they revolutionized his whole approach to spirituality. He was convinced they had been said for him. From that minute on he gave up all his severities and began to follow a way that was easy and light, the way of moderation. In fact, his approach to enlightenment is called the Middle Path.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a very austere man who let no food or drink pass his lips while the sun was in the heavens. In what seemed to be a sign of heavenly approval for his austerities a bright star shone on top of a nearby mountain, visible to everyone in broad daylight, though no one knew what brought the star there.

One day the man decided to climb the mountain. A little village girl insisted on going with him. The day was warm and soon the two were thirsty. He urged the child to drink but she said she would not unless he drank too. The poor man was in a quandary. He hated to break his fast; but he hated to see the child suffer from thirst. Finally, he drank. And the child with him.

For a long time he dared not look up to the sky for he feared the star had gone. So imagine his surprise when, on looking up after a while, he saw two stars shining brightly above the mountain.

\*\*\*\*\*

## HUMAN NATURE

Human beings react, not to reality, but to ideas in their heads...

A group of tourists, stranded somewhere in the countryside, were given old rations to eat. Before eating the food they tested it by throwing some of it to a dog who seemed to enjoy it and suffered no after effects.

The following day they learnt that the dog had died. Everyone was panic-stricken. Many began to vomit and complained of fever and dysentery. A doctor was called in to treat the victims for food poisoning.

The doctor began by asking what had happened to the body of the dog. Enquiries were made. A neighbour said casually, “Oh, it was thrown in a ditch because it got run over by a car.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Pestilence was on its way to Damascus and sped by a chief’s caravan in the desert.

“Where are you speeding to?” asked the chief.

“To Damascus. I mean to take a thousand lives.”

On its way back from Damascus, Pestilence passed by the caravan again. The chief said, “It was 50,000 lives that you took, not a 1,000.”

“No,” said the Pestilence. “I took a thousand. It was Fear that took the rest.”

\*\*\*\*\*

They see, not what is there but what they have been trained to see.

Tommy had just got back from the beach.

“Were there other children there?” asked his mother.

“Yes,” said Tommy.

“Boys or girls?”

“How could I know? They didn’t have any clothes on.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Their culture and their conditioning offer them an “elevator existence.”

The impatient dowager pressed the elevator button and fumed because it did not appear at once.

When it finally did, she snapped at the operator, “Where have you been?”

“Lady, where can you go in an elevator?”

\*\*\*\*\*

The walls that imprison them are mental, not real.  
A bear paced up and down the twenty feet that was the length of his cage.  
When, after five years, the cage was removed, the bear continued to pace up and down those twenty feet as if the cage was there. It was. For him!  
\*\*\*\*\*

Two gentlemen of unsteady gait waited impatiently at the bus terminal late at night long after the buses had ceased to ply.  
A couple of hours passed before they realised, in their drunken stupor that the last bus had gone. Seeing several buses parked at the depot, they decided to borrow one and drive themselves home.  
To their disappointment, they couldn't find the bus they wanted. "Can you believe it?" said one. "A hundred buses and not a single number 36 in the whole lot!"  
"Never mind!" said the other. "Let's take a 22 up to its last stop and walk the rest of the two miles home."  
\*\*\*\*\*

What they love or hate is not the essence of things or persons but only their configuration.  
A young boy developed what could only be called a sandwich phobia. Any time he saw a sandwich he would tremble and scream with fear. His mother was so upset about this, she took him to a therapist who said, "The phobia is easily removed. Take the lad home and let him see you make a sandwich from beginning to end. This will dispel any silly notions he has about a sandwich and he'll stop trembling and screaming."  
That is just what the mother did. She took two slices of bread in her hands and said, "Are you afraid of this?" The boy said, "No," She showed him the butter. Was he afraid of that? No, he wasn't. She let him see her spread the butter over the bread. Next came the lettuce. Was he afraid of that? No, he wasn't. The lettuce was placed on the bread. How about the tomato slices? Anything to be afraid of there? No, there wasn't. So those went on top of the lettuce. Any fear of the bacon strips? No-fear; none at all. So those went on top of the tomato slices. Now she held one piled up slice in each hand and showed the slices to the boy. Still no fear. But the moment she brought the two slices together to form a sandwich he shrieked, "Sandwich! Sandwich!" and began to tremble and be very frightened.  
A young man blind from birth, fell in love with a girl. All went well until a friend told him the girl wasn't too good looking. At that minute he lost all interest in her. Too bad! He had been "seeing" her very well. It was his friend who was blind!  
\*\*\*\*\*

Examine what they are pleased to call their free and responsible behaviour, and you are likely to find, not conscious action, but mechanical movement...  
It is said that when the Great Library of Alexandria was burnt down, only one book survived. It was a very ordinary book, dull and uninteresting so it was sold for a few pennies to a poor man who barely knew how to read.  
Now that book, dull and uninteresting as it seemed, was probably the most valuable book in the world for on the inside of the back cover were scrawled in large, round letters a few sentences that contained the secret of the Touchstone-a tiny pebble that could turn anything it touched into pure gold.  
The writing declared that this precious pebble was lying somewhere on the shore of the Black Sea among thousands of other pebbles that were exactly like it, except in this one particular that, whereas all the other pebbles were cold to the touch, this one was warm as if it were alive. The man rejoiced at his good luck. He sold everything he had, borrowed a large sum of money that would last him a year and made for the Black Sea where he set up tent and began the painstaking task of

searching for the Touchstone.

This was the way he went about it: he would lift a pebble; if it was cold to the touch he would not throw it back on the shore because if he did that, he might be lifting and feeling the same stone dozens of time; no, he would throw it into the sea. So each day for hours on end he persevered in his patient endeavour: lift a pebble, if it felt cold, throw it into the sea; lift another...and so on, endlessly.

He spent a week, a month, ten months, a whole year at this task. Then he borrowed some more money and kept at it for another two years. On and on he went: lift a pebble, feel it...it was cold, throw it into the sea. Hour after hour; day after day; week after week...still no Touchstone.

One evening he picked up a pebble and it was warm to the touch-and, through sheer force of habit, he threw it into the Black Sea!

\*\*\*\*\*

...and programmed responses.

A scientist had spent ten years researching the possibility of transforming water into petroleum. He was convinced that all he needed was one substance to effect the needed transformation but, try as he might, the formula eluded him.

One day he learnt that high up in the mountains of Tibet there lived a Lama who was all-knowing and could reveal to him the formula he sought,

There were three conditions, however: he had to travel there alone, and the journey was hazardous; he had to travel on foot, and the journey was arduous; and, if he ever made it to the presence of the Lama, he would be allowed to ask one, and only one, question.

It took him many months of hardship and danger to fulfil the first two conditions. And when he was brought into the presence of the Lama, imagine his shock to find, not a wizened, bearded old man he expected but an attractive young woman, lovelier far than anything he could have imagined.

She smiled at him sweetly and, in a voice that to his ear sounded heavenly, she said, "Congratulations, traveller! You have made it to our mountain fastness. Now what is your question."

To his own great surprise the scientist heard himself saying, "Ma'am, may I know if you are married?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Instead of touching reality they respond to stereotypes...

At the final dinner of an international conference, an American delegate turned to the Chinese delegate sitting next to him pointed to the soup and asked, somewhat condescendingly, "Likee soupee?" The Chinese gentleman nodded eagerly.

A little later, it was, "Likee fishee" and "Likee meatee" and "Likee fruitee"-and always the response was an affable nod.

At the end of the dinner the chairman of the conference introduced the guest speaker of the evening- none other than the Chinese gentleman who delivered a penetrating, witty discourse in impeccable English much to the astonishment of his American neighbour.

When the speech was over, the speaker turned to his neighbour and, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, asked, "Likee speechee?"

\*\*\*\*\*

....or rigid principles...

Two game-hunters were involved in a lawsuit against each other. One of them asked his lawyer if it wouldn't be a good idea to send the judge a brace of partridges. The lawyer was horrified. "This judge prides himself on his incorruptibility," he said. "A gesture like this will have just the opposite effect from the one you intend."

After the case was over-and won-the man invited his lawyer to dinner and thanked him for the advice concerning the partridges. "I did send them to the judge, you

know," he said, "on behalf of our Opponent."  
Moral indignation can blind one as effectively as venality.  
\*\*\*\*\*

...or appearances...

A little girl, who had been told that Lincoln wasn't very good-looking, was taken by her father to see the President at the White House. Lincoln took her on his knee and chatted with her for a while in his gentle, humorous way. Suddenly the little girl called out, "Daddy! He isn't ugly at all. He's just beautiful!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

A little black boy was watching the balloon man at the Country Fair. The man was evidently a good salesman, because he allowed a red balloon to break loose and soar high up in the air, thereby attracting a crowd of prospective young customers.

Then he released a blue balloon, then a yellow one and a white one. They all went soaring up into the sky until they disappeared. The little black boy stood looking at the black balloon for a long time, then asked, "Sir, if you sent the black one up would it go as high as the others?"

The balloon man gave the kid an understanding smile. He snapped the string that held the black balloon in place and, as it soared upwards, said, "It isn't the colour, son. It's what's inside that makes it rise."  
\*\*\*\*\*

..or labels...

Issac Goldstein ran into a cousin of his in New York.

"How are things with you?" he asked.

"Haven't you heard?" asked the cousin. "I'm a partner in the firm of Goldstein and Murphy."

"Goldstein and Murphy? Now isn't that wonderful! That's what America is all about: people of different nationalities doing business in partnership. But to you I'll confess it is something of a surprise."

"You call that a surprise? Well, I've got a bigger surprise for you. I'm Murphy!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

A Russian Workers Delegation was visiting a factory in Detroit. The leader asked the foreman how many hours an American worker worked each week.

"Forty," said the foreman.

The Russian shook his head. "In my country," he said, "the average worker works sixty hours a week."

"Sixty hours?" exclaimed the foreman. "You'd never get the men in this factory to work that much. They're a bunch of Commies!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

...well, sometimes, anyway.

A man said to his parish priest, "My dog died yesterday, Father. Could you offer a Mass for the repose of his soul?"

The priest was outraged. "We don't offer Masses for animals here," he said sharply. "You might try the new denomination down the road. They'll probably pray for your dog."

"I really loved that little fellow," said the man. "And I'd like to give him a decent send-off. I don't know what it is customary to offer on such occasions, but do you think five hundred thousand dollars would do?"

"Now wait a minute," said the priest. "You never told me your dog was a Catholic!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

They pride themselves on their reasonableness - which they then proceed to

demonstrate in astonishing ways:

A Governor was visiting a state penitentiary and talking to a tramp who had asked for a pardon.

"What's the matter with this place? You're more comfortably lodged here than you have ever been, aren't you?"

"Yes sir," was the reply. "But I still want to get out."

"Don't they feed you well?"

"They certainly do. That isn't it."

"Then what is it?"

"Well, sir, there's only one objection I have to this place: it's the reputation it has all over the state."

\*\*\*\*\*

A reporter asked several people in a small town if they knew the mayor.

"He's a liar and a cheat," said the gas station attendant.

"He's a pompous ass," said the schoolteacher.

"Never voted for him in my life," said the druggist.

"Most corrupt politician I've ever known," said the barber.

When the reporter finally met the mayor he asked him what kind of salary he received.

"Good heavens, I don't get any salary," said the mayor.

"Then why did you take the job?"

"For the honour."

\*\*\*\*\*

A man at a bar turned to the stranger sitting next to him and said, "I just don't understand it. All it takes is one little drink, just one little drink to make me drunk.

"Really? Just one?"

"Yes. And it is generally the eighth-one."

\*\*\*\*\*

A man in Las Vegas approached a wealthy-looking stranger and said. "Can you spare me twenty-five dollars, sir? I haven't eaten for two days and I have no place to sleep."

"How do I know you won't take the money and gamble with it?"

"No way," said the man. "Gambling money I already have with me."

\*\*\*\*\*

A couple were wondering how to dispose of five attractive puppies they had just acquired. The man drove all around town attempting to give them away but no one would have them.

They announced over the local radio that they had pedigree puppies to give away. No one seemed interested.

Finally a neighbour advised them to advertise. They went back to announce on the radio that they would sell the pups at twenty-five dollars each. Before the day was out every one of the puppies had been sold!

\*\*\*\*\*

Two prospective buyers walked into a used-car lot and began to look around- The attendant began his sales talk when one of them produced a card which said, "Sorry, we're deaf-mutes."

So the salesman pulled out a pad and began to jot down, for their benefit, all the advantages of any car they showed interest in. They finally settled on a neat little Volkswagen.

They took it round the block on a trial run and seemed so pleased that the sale was as good as made. But when they got back to the lot, they both shook their heads emphatically. No good.

The salesman scribbled on the pad, "Why? What's wrong?"  
One of the men took the pad and wrote, "No radio!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

When a man returned from the large city to the 'village of his boyhood years, one of the neighbours said to him, "I suppose you know that old farmer Smith lost his farm?"

"No. What happened?"

"Well, one day he got the idea that his neighbour's fence was five feet into his land. He took to brooding over it. Finally he went to see a lawyer telling him he thought this was encroachment. Well, the lawyer thought so too!"

Voltaire says, "I have never been ruined out but twice: once when I lost a lawsuit and once when I won one."  
\*\*\*\*\*

It is just as astonishing to see the use they make of their imagination....

"If you ever marry or take a mistress after I am gone I shall return to haunt you," said a dying woman to her husband.

So when he fell in love again some months after his wife's death he was horrified, but not surprised, to see her ghost walk into the house that night and accuse him bitterly of infidelity.

This went on night after night till he could take it no more and went to consult a Zen Master who said, "What makes you sure it's a ghost?"

"The fact that she knows and can describe to me every single thing I've said and done and thought and felt."

The Master gave the man a bag of soya beans and said, "Make sure you do not open it and when she appears to you tonight ask her how many beans there are in the bag."

When the man put that question to the ghost, it fled never to return. "Why?" the man asked the Master later.

The Master smiled. "Isn't it strange that your ghost knew only what you knew?" he asked.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A man in Russia took his wife with him into the forest, supposedly to hunt for wolves. But when the wolves came, he ran away and abandoned her to them. The next morning he put a wreath on his door and went into mourning-but not for long, because he had a lover whom he married six months later.

The night of the wedding his former wife appeared to him at night crying, "Help! Help! Help!" To his amazement, his new wife saw and heard nothing. Each night the woman would return and scream for help, till the man could take it no longer. One night he picked up his gun and ran after the woman meaning to kill her a second time. She ran into the forest. He followed, stumbled, and dropped his gun. At that minute the wolves closed in upon him and put an end to his life.  
\*\*\*\*\*

...and their emotions...

A passenger on a train was giving the dining car waiter his order. "For dessert," he said, "I'll have tarts and ice-cream."

The waiter said they had no tarts. The man exploded. "What? No tarts? That's absurd. I am one of the biggest customers this rail board has. Each year I organize trips for thousands of tourists and I have hundred of tons of freight transported on it. And when I myself travel on the line I cannot get a simple thing like tarts! 'I'll take this up with the chairman himself."

The chef called the waiter aside and said, "We can get him the tarts at the next stop."

Right after the next stop the waiter was back again. "I'm happy to inform you, sir that our chef has worked on these tarts especially for you. He hopes you will like

them. And, with them, we would like to offer you this seventy-five year old brandy, compliments of the line."

The passenger threw his napkin on the table, made a fist and shouted. "To hell with the tarts! I'd rather be angry!"

...(how empty our lives would be if we had nothing to resent)...

\*\*\*\*\*

The man was a regular customer and the management did its best to please him. So when he complained one day that only one piece of bread was being given him with his meal, the waiter promptly brought him four slices.

"That's good," he said, "but not good enough. I like bread-plenty of it."

So the next night he was given a dozen slices, "Good," he said. "But you're still being frugal, aren't you?"

Even a basketful of slices on the table next day did not stop his complaints.

So the manager decided to fix him. He had a colossal loaf of bread baked specially for him. It was six feet long and three feet wide. The manager himself, with the help of two waiters brought it in and laid it on an adjoining table, then waited for the reaction.

The man glared at the gigantic loaf, then looked at the manager and said, "So we're back to one piece again!"

(Lighting a candle is good, but cursing the darkness is fun).

\*\*\*\*\*

A former inmate of a Nazi concentration camp was visiting a friend who had shared the ordeal with him.

"Have you forgiven the Nazis?" he asked his friend.

"Yes."

"Well, I haven't. I'm still consumed with hatred for them."

"In that case," said his friend gently, "they still have you in prison."

...(our enemies are not those who hate us but those whom we hate),..

\*\*\*\*\*

...and how proud they feel-generally for the wrong reasons -... Friends of composer, George Gershwin, attempted to convey to his father the fact that "Rhapsody in Blue" was a work of genius.

"Of course, it is," said the old man. "It takes fifteen minutes to perform, doesn't it?"

\*\*\*\*\*

...of their achievements!

A missionary, somewhere in the tropics, decided to impress his parishioners by taking some of them for a ride in a plane. The plane glided over their villages and hills and forests and rivers. Occasionally they would look out of their windows but on the whole they did not seem to be one bit impressed.

Back on the ground his flock trooped out of the plane without a word of comment.

Anxious to get some response, the missionary exclaimed, "Wasn't it wonderful?"

Think of what human beings have achieved! There we were, up in the sky, above the houses, above the trees, above the mountains, looking down on the earth!"

The group listened impassively. Finally, their leader spoke. "Insects can do it," he said.

"And, what's more, they're happy!"

After several thousand years

we have advanced so much

that we bolt our door and windows at night

while the less "advanced" natives

sleep in open huts.

\*\*\*\*\*

Said the psychologist to the client, "So sorry.' I can help you change your behaviour,

But Nature takes her time and follows her own rhythm...

The captain of a submarine, desiring to test his engine room, asked for top speed, then suddenly ordered an emergency stop. His orders were instantly obeyed.

The public address system was turned on. "This is the captain speaking. Well done, engine room. You stopped the sub in exactly 55.05 seconds."

Soon another voice boomed, "This is the chef. The sub may have stopped, but your steak and potatoes kept going. Cold dinner for everyone tonight!"

\*\*\*\*\*

.Moreover, I cannot really solve your problem...

The chief executive of a large company was greatly admired for his energy and drive. But he suffered from one embarrassing weakness: each time he entered the president's office to make his weekly report, he would wet his pants!

The kindly president advised him to see a proctologist. When he appeared before the president the following week his pants were still wet! "Didn't you see the proctologist?" asked the president.

"No. He was out. I saw a psychologist instead. I'm cured. I no longer feel embarrassed!"

\*\*\*\*\*

...I can only exchange it for another...

Soon after World War II a London bus conductor noticed a passenger with a heavy parcel on his lap.

"What's that you have there?" he asked.

"An unexploded bomb that fell near my house. I'm taking it to the police station."

"Good God! You don't want to carry a thing like that on your lap man! Put it under your seal!"

(The solution to a problem, changes the problem.)

\*\*\*\*\*

...or intensify it."

Doctor to patient: "I've been treating you for guilt for the past ten years, and you are still feeling guilty about a trifle like that? You ought to feel ashamed of yourself!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A fellow went to a psychiatrist and was diagnosed as a workaholic. So he had to take a second job to pay for the therapy.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two little boys met.

"How old are you?"

"I'm five. How old are you?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know how old you are?"

"Nope."

"Do women bother you?"

"Nope."

"You're four."

\*\*\*\*\*

A reporter was sent out to get the opinion of the man in the street about modern woman. The first person he ran into was a man who had just celebrated his one-hundred-and-third birthday.

"I'm afraid I won't be of much help to you, son," said the old man regretfully. "I

quit thinking about women nearly two years ago!"

## RELATIONSHIPS

Dialogue is the life-blood of a relationship. But the obstacles to dialogue are many- alas, and those who surmount them, few.

Much is accomplished if, in the first place, we talk less and listen more...

President Theodore Roosevelt had a passion for big-game hunting. When he heard (hat a famous British hunter was visiting the States he invited the man to the White House in the hope of getting some pointers from him.

After a two-hour meeting at which the two of them were closeted together and left undisturbed, the Englishman emerged looking somewhat dazed.

"What did you tell the President?" a reporter asked. "I told him my name." said the worn-out visitor.

\*\*\*\*\*

When Calvin Coolidge was President of the United States, he saw dozens of people each day. Most had complaints of one kind or another.

One day a visiting Governor told the President that he did not understand how he was able to meet so many people in the space of a few hours.

"Why, you are finished with all your visitors by dinner time," said the Governor, "while I am often in my office till midnight."

"Yes," said Coolidge. "That's because you talk."

\*\*\*\*\*

...and refrain from deciding ahead of time what the other is talking about...

A fourteen-year old boy announced at dinner one evening that he had been chosen to teach his class the next day. His father who was an expert in Instructional Methods for the military seized this wonderful occasion to give his son the benefit of his own training and experience.

"This is the way we go about it in the army, son," he said. "We first choose objectives made up of action, situation and level of performance. Now decide ahead of time what ACTION you want your students to perform, in what SITUATION you want them to perform it and. finally HOW WELL you wish them to perform. And remember, all education must be directed at performance, performance, performance."

The boy wasn't impressed. All he said was, "It won't work, Dad."

"Of course it will. It always works. Why would it no! work?"

"Because," said the young fellow. "I'm supposed to give a class on sex."

...and what the other wants...

\*\*\*\*\*

Two trucks were standing back to back and a truck driver was struggling to get a huge crate from one truck to the other.

A passer-by, seeing his desperate situation, volunteered to help. So the two of them huffed and puffed and struggled for well over half an hour with no result at all.

"I'm afraid it's no use," panted the passer-by. "We'll never get it off this truck,"

"Off!" yelled the driver. "Good God, I don't want it off. I want it on!"

\*\*\*\*\*

..and not respond to what we assume the other said...

The village drunkard staggered up Io the parish priest, newspaper in hand, and greeted him politely. The priest, annoyed, ignored the greeting because the man was slightly inebriated.

He had come with a purpose, however, "Excuse me, Father," he said, "Could you tell me what causes arthritis?" The priest ignored that too.

But when the man repeated the question the priest turned on him impatiently and

cried, "Drinking causes arthritis, that's what causes arthritis! Gambling causes arthritis! Chasing loose women causes arthritis..." And only then, too late, "Why did you ask?"

"Because it says right here in the papers that that's what the Pope has!"

\*\*\*\*\*

...nor assume that we know what the other is talking about...

A storekeeper heard one of his salesman say to a customer, "No, ma'am, we haven't had any for some weeks now and it doesn't look as if we'll be getting any soon." Horrified at what he was hearing he rushed over to the customer as she was walking out and said, "That isn't true, ma'am. Of course we'll have some soon. In fact, we placed an order for it a couple of weeks ago."

Then he drew the salesman aside and growled, "Never, never, never, never say we don't have something. If we don't have it, say we've ordered it and it's on its way. Now what was it she wanted?"

"Rain," said the salesman.

\*\*\*\*\*

..nor put our own meaning into the other's words...

A reporter was interviewing a woman on her hundredth birthday. She seemed an extraordinarily vivacious sort of person who delighted in recalling her past. She had lived from the age of the covered wagon to the age of the supersonic jet; and she seemed eager to describe it all.

When the interview was over she still seemed eager to talk, so the reporter tried to think up some question that would keep the conversation going. "Have you ever been bedridden?" he asked.

"Oh, dear, yes," she said with a slight blush, "dozens of times. And twice in a haystack."

\*\*\*\*\*

...but frequently, alas, we don't even hear what the other is saying...

It was their golden wedding and the couple were kept busy all day with the celebrations and the crowds of relatives and friends who dropped in to congratulate them. So they were grateful when, towards evening, they were able to be alone on the porch watching the sunset, relaxing after the tiring day.

The old man gazed fondly at his wife and said, "Agatha, I'm proud of you!"

"What was that you said?" asked the old lady. "You know I'm hard of hearing. Say it louder."

"I said I'm proud of you."

"That's all right," she replied with a dismissive gesture. "I'm tired of you, too."

Perfect listening is listening not so much to others as to oneself. Perfect sight is seeing not others so much as oneself.

For they fail to understand the other who have not heard themselves; and they are blind to the reality of others who have not probed themselves. The perfect listener hears you even when you say nothing.

Woman to husband absorbed in newspaper: "You needn't bother saying, 'uh ha,' any more. I stopped talking ten minutes ago."

\*\*\*\*\*

...and we hardly ever talk about the same things...

"Darling," said the wife, "I'm ashamed of the way we live. Father pays the rent of the house, brother sends us food and money for clothes, uncle pays our water and electricity bills and our friends provide us with tickets for the theatre. I'm not complaining, really, but do think we can do better."

"Of course we can," said the husband. "I've been thinking about it myself lately. You've got a brother and two uncles who don't send us a cent!"

...do we?

\*\*\*\*\*

Nasruddin's wife wanted a pet, so she brought a monkey.  
Nasruddin wasn't pleased. "What's it going to eat?" he asked.  
"Exactly what we eat," said the wife.  
"And where is it going to sleep?"  
"Right in bed with us."  
"With us? What about the smell?"  
"If I can put up with it, I guess the monkey can too."  
\*\*\*\*\*

The surest way to kill a relationship: insist on having things your way.  
Johnny was a sturdy, robust kid of three. He made friends with a Billy goat next door. Each morning he would pull up some grass and lettuce and take them over as breakfast for Billy. So deep was their friendship that Johnny would spend hours in Billy's pleasant company.  
One day it occurred to Johnny that a change of diet would do Billy a lot of good. So he went to visit his friend with rhubarb instead of lettuce. Billy nibbled a bit of the rhubarb, decided he didn't want it, and pushed it away. Johnny caught Billy by one of his horns and attempted to get him to eat the rhubarb. This time Billy butted Johnny away, gently at first, but, as Johnny grew persistent, quite firmly, so that Johnny stumbled and fell with a thump on his backside.  
Johnny was so offended by this that he brushed himself off, glared at Billy and walked away, never to return. Some days later when his father asked him why he never went over to chat with Billy, Johnny replied, "Because he rejected me."  
\*\*\*\*\*

All too frequently, we see people, not as they are, but as we are.  
An active young woman showed signs of stress and strain. The doctor prescribed tranquillizers and asked her to report to him after a couple of weeks.  
When she came back he asked her if she felt any different. She said, "No, I don't. But I've observed that other people seem a lot more relaxed."  
\*\*\*\*\*

A woman complained to a visiting friend that her neighbour was a poor housekeeper, "You should see how dirty her children are-and her house. It is almost a disgrace to be living in the same neighbourhood as her. Take a look at those clothes she has hung out on the line. See the black streaks on the sheets and towels!"  
The friend walked up to the window and said, "I think the clothes are quite clean, my dear. The streaks are on your window."  
\*\*\*\*\*

A woman was at her singing lessons. She had such a jarring voice that a neighbour could take it no more. He managed, finally, to summon up the courage to knock at her door and say, "Madam, if you don't stop your singing I think I'll go mad!"  
"What are you talking about?" said the woman. "I stopped two hours ago!"  
So sorry.' It isn't you I am dealing with but an image in my head."  
\*\*\*\*\*

Samuel was down in the dumps and who could blame him? His landlord had ordered him out of the apartment and he had nowhere to go. Suddenly light dawned. He could live with his good friend Moshe. The thought brought Samuel much comfort, until it was assailed by another thought that said, "What makes you so sure that Moshe will put you up at his place?" "Why wouldn't he?" said Samuel to the thought, somewhat heatedly, "After all it is I who found him the place he is living in now; and it was I who advanced him the money to pay his rent for the first six months. Surely the least he could do is put me up for a week or so when I am in trouble."  
That settled the matter, until after dinner he was once again assailed by the

thought: "Suppose he were to refuse?" "Refuse?" said Samuel, "Why in God's name would he refuse? The man owes me everything he has. It is I who got him his job; it is I who introduced him to that lovely wife of his who has borne him the three sons he glories in. Will he grudge me a room for a week? Impossible!"

That settled the matter, until he got to bed and found he couldn't sleep because the thought came back to say, "But just suppose he were to refuse. What then?" This was too much for Samuel. "How the hell could he refuse?" he said, his temper rising now. "If the man is alive today it is because of me. I saved him from drowning when he was a kid. Will he be so ungrateful as to turn me out into the streets in the middle of winter?"

But the thought was persistent. "Just suppose..." Poor Samuel struggled with it as long as he could. Finally he got out of bed around two in the morning, went over to where Moshe lived and kept his finger pressed against the doorbell button till Moshe, half asleep, opened the door and said in astonishment, "Samuel! What is it? What brings you here in the middle of the night?" Samuel was so angry by now he couldn't keep himself from yelling, "I'll tell you what brings me here at this hour of the night! If you think I'm going to ask you to put me up even for a single day, you're mistaken. I don't want to have anything to do with you, your house, your wife or your family. To hell with you all!" With that he turned on his heel and walked away.

\*\*\*\*\*

We see them mostly through the spectacles of our preconceived notions.

Boss: "You look exhausted. What happened?"

Secretary: "Well, I... No, you wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"Of course I would."

"No, you wouldn't. I know you wouldn't." "I really will believe you. I promise I will." "Well, I worked too hard today."

"I don't believe it."

\*\*\*\*\*

A friend asked Nasruddin for a sum of money. Nasruddin was convinced the money wouldn't be returned. But since he did not want to offend the friend and the sum asked for was a small one, he gave him the money. To his great surprise, exactly one week after the loan was made the man returned the money.

A month later he returned to ask for a slightly larger sum. Nasruddin refused. When the man asked why, he said, "Last time I did not expect you to return the money-and you let me down. This time I expect you to return it-I'm not going to be let down again!"

\*\*\*\*\*

The defects we see in them are mostly our own.

"Excuse me, sir," said a timid student. "I couldn't make out what you wrote on the margin of my last paper."

"I told you to write more legibly," said the teacher.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Darling," says a woman to her husband at a party, "you had better not have any more drinks. You're beginning to look blurred already."

\*\*\*\*\*

Rare, indeed, is the relationship in which the other is not cultivated for what one can get for oneself.

"I hear you have broken your engagement with Tom. What happened?"

"Oh, my feelings towards him changed. That's what happened."

"Are you going to return his engagement ring?"

"Oh, no! My feelings towards the ring haven't changed."

\*\*\*\*\*

A young woman called a Card Shop. "Do you remember those wedding cards I ordered last week? Well, I was wondering if it is too late to make a few changes in them." "Give me the new information, lady, and I shall check." said the shopkeeper. "O.K. It's a different date, a different church and a different man." It is quite impossible to be happily married to another if one does riot first get a divorce from oneself.

\*\*\*\*\*

A farmer decided it was time he got married, so he saddled his mule and set off for the city to find himself a wife. In time, he met a woman he thought would make him a good wife and they were married. After the ceremony they both climbed on to the mule and started back for the farm. After a while the mule stopped and refused to move, so the farmer dismounted and beat the mule with a huge stick until it started to move again.

"That's one," said the farmer.

Some miles later the mule stopped again and once again the farmer dismounted and beat the mule till it started moving again. "That's two," said the farmer.

A few miles later the mule stopped a third time. This time the farmer got down, got his wife down, took out his pistol and shot the mule in the head, killing it instantly.

"You stupid, cruel man!" shouted his wife. "That was a good sturdy animal that could have been valuable on the farm and now, in a fit of temper, you have destroyed it. If I had known what a hard-hearted man you are, I would never have married you..." and so on, for nearly ten minutes.

The farmer heard her out till she paused for breath. Then he said, "That's one." The story goes that they lived happily ever after.

\*\*\*\*\*

"You look all in today, Jack, what's the trouble?"

"Well, I didn't get home until morning and just as I was undressing, my wife woke up and said, 'Aren't you getting up pretty early, Jack?' So, to avoid an argument, I put on my clothes and came back to work."

What price peace?

Two hippies, feeling high, are strolling down the street. Another hippy, walking towards them, gently lifts his hand in greeting and says, "Hi there!"

Four blocks later, one hippy turns to the other and says, "Man, I thought he'd never stop talking!"

Reactions are relative...

\*\*\*\*\*

...or are they?

A farm boy was so taciturn that his girl friend, after five years of courtship, decided that he was never going to propose to her and that she would have to take the initiative.

One day when they were sitting alone in the garden, she said to him, "John, let's get married. Shall we get married, John?"

A long silence followed. Finally John said, "Yes."

Another long silence. Finally the girl said, "Say something, John. Why don't you say something?"

"I'm afraid I've said too much already!"

\*\*\*\*\*

In ancient India water used to be drawn out of wells by means of the Persian wheel, a convenient device whose only drawback was the great noise it made when in operation.

One day a horseman happened to pass by a farm and demanded water for his horse.

The farmer gladly put the Persian wheel in motion but the horse, unaccustomed as it was to the noise, wouldn't come anywhere near the well.

"Can't you stop the noise so that my horse can drink?" asked the horseman.

"I'm afraid that isn't possible, sir," said the farmer. "If your horse wishes to drink he will have to take the water with the noise, for water comes only with noise here."

And friendship with failings.

\*\*\*\*\*

To relate is to react.

To react is to understand oneself.

To understand oneself is to be enlightened.

Relationships are schools for enlightenment.

## SERVICE

A farmer, whose corn always took the first prize at the State Fair, had the habit of sharing his best corn seed with all the farmers in the neighbourhood.

When asked why, he said, "It is really a matter of self-interest. The wind picks up the pollen and carries it from field to field. So if my neighbours grow inferior corn the cross-pollination brings down the quality of my own corn. That is why I am concerned that they plant only the very best."

All that you give to others you are giving to yourself.

\*\*\*\*\*

Once upon a time the members of the body were very annoyed with the stomach. They were resentful that they had to procure food and bring it to the stomach while the stomach itself did nothing but devour the fruit of their labour.

So they decided they would no longer bring the stomach food. The hands would not lift it to the mouth. The teeth would not chew it; the throat would not swallow it. That would force the stomach into doing something.

But all they succeeded in doing was make the body weak to the point that they were all threatened with death. So it was finally they who learnt the lesson that in helping one another they were really working for their own welfare.

\*\*\*\*\*

It is impossible to help another without helping yourself, or to harm another without harming yourself.

Nasruddin was muttering to himself delightedly when his friend asked him what it was all about.

Said Nasruddin, "That idiot Ahmed keeps slapping me on the back each time he sees me. Well, I've put a stick of dynamite under my coat today, so this time when he slaps me he'll blow his arm off!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Said a Colonial Governor to a native leader, "I deplore the oppression to which my people subject yours. You must help me solve the problem."

"Where's the problem?" asked the leader.

"Listen my dear fellow. If I had you tied to a stake and lit a fire around you, you would have a problem, wouldn't you?"

"Would I? If you got me released, all would be well. If you let me burn, I would die. And you would have the problem!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A commuter hopped on to a train at New York and told the conductor he was going to Fordham. "We don't stop at Fordham on Saturdays," said the conductor, but I'll tell you what I'll do. As we slow down at Fordham station I shall open the door

and you jump off. Make sure you're running along with the train when you hit the ground or you'll fall flat on your face."

At Fordham the door opened and the commuter hit the ground running forward. Another conductor, seeing him, opened the door and pulled him in as the train resumed speed. "You're mighty lucky, buddy," said the conductor. "This train doesn't stop at Fordham on Saturdays!"

In your own small way you can be of service to people -by getting out of their way.

There is the noble art of getting things done and the noble art of leaving things undone.

\*\*\*\*\*

According to the newspapers the heat wave was causing fainting spells, so the young lady was not surprised to see the middle-aged man next to her in church slump down towards the floor. Quickly she knelt down beside him, placed a firm hand on his head and pushed it down between his knees. "Keep your head down," she whispered urgently. "You'll feel better if you can get the blood into your head." The man's wife looked on convulsed with laughter and did nothing to help her husband or the young lady. She must be quite heartless, the young lady decided. Then, to her dismay, the man managed to break loose from her muscular hold and hissed, "What are you up to, you meddling fool? I'm trying to retrieve my hat from under the bench!"

People who try hard to improve things frequently achieve remarkable success in making them worse.

In the final analysis the solution to problems lies neither in action nor in inaction but in understanding, for where there is true understanding there is no problem.

\*\*\*\*\*

A priest was walking down a street when he saw a little boy jumping up and down trying to ring a door bell. The poor kid was too small and the bell too high. So the priest went up and rang the bell for the little fellow. Then, turning to the kid with smile, he asked, "What do we do now?"

The little fellow said, "Run like hell."

\*\*\*\*\*

A teacher asked her class of small pupils to tell about their acts of kindness to dumb animals.

There were several he art-stirring stories.

When it was Tommy's turn he said proudly, "Well, I once kicked a boy for kicking a dog."

As well wage a war to end all wars or engage in violence that will lead to love.

\*\*\*\*\*

Long ago a rare bird, never seen before in China, alighted in the suburb of the capital city. The emperor was delighted. He ordered that food from his own table be offered to the bird and that his orchestra be brought in to play for its enjoyment.

But the bird looked miserable and dazed. It refused to touch any of the food offered to it and, in a short time, contracted a sickness and died.

\*\*\*\*\*

A bird ate poisonous berries which did it no harm. One day it collected some for its meal and sacrificed a portion of its meal to feed its friend, a rabbit who not wishing to seem ungrateful, ate the berries and died.

If the charge was one of breaking and entering with the intention of doing good, how many of us could plead not guilty?

\*\*\*\*\*

A beggar saw a banker coming out of his office and said. "Could you give me a dime, sir, for a cup of coffee?"  
The banker felt sorry for this man who looked bedraggled and distraught. He said, "Here's a dollar. Take it and have ten cups of coffee."  
The next day the beggar was there again at the steps of the banker's office and as the banker came out he punched him.  
"Hey," said the banker. "What are you doing?"  
"You and your lousy ten cups of coffee. They kept me awake the whole of last night!"  
I confess to having helped you. Can you now find it in your heart to forgive me and let me go?  
\*\*\*\*\*

One day Nasruddin asked a wealthy man for some money.  
"What do you want it for?" "To buy an elephant."  
"If you have no money, you will not be able to maintain the elephant."  
"I asked for money," said Nasruddin, "not advice."  
\*\*\*\*\*

A woman member of the Ambulance Brigade was on first aid duty at the shore. She noticed many empty bottles scattered over a grassy spot and was afraid that people might inadvertently step on them and hurt themselves. So she put down her first-aid kit and started picking up the bottles.  
Then an elderly gentleman, distracted by what she was doing, tripped over her first-aid kit and hurt himself.  
\*\*\*\*\*

"Wake up, sir!" says the nurse, shaking the sleeping patient.  
"What's the matter? What's gone wrong?" asked the startled patient.  
"Nothing, I just forgot to give you your sleeping tablets."  
We had a fire at our home yesterday. Fortunately it was put out before the fire department could do any damage.  
\*\*\*\*\*

I get a great kick out of serving you-but I still insist that you be grateful.  
A bejewelled dowager stepped out of a fashionable hotel in London where she had been dining and dancing all evening at a Charity Ball for the support of street urchins.  
She was about to get into her Rolls Royce when a street urchin walked up to her and whined, "Spare me sixpence, ma'am, for charity. I haven't eaten for two days."  
The duchess recoiled from the kid. "You ungrateful wretch!" she exclaimed. "Don't you realize I have been dancing for you all night?"  
\*\*\*\*\*

Thank God our motives in serving others are hidden from the public eye.  
The seaside concert was poor and got no reviews in the local papers. Attendance dropped sharply after the first performance. Yet one little man came every night and did not miss a single show. However, even his presence, gratifying as it was to the performers, could not keep the show afloat financially.  
On the last night the manager stepped before the curtain and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, before taking leave of you, we wish to thank our friend here in the front row for his much valued patronage. He has not missed a single show!"  
The little man rose to stammer his acknowledgement. "It's very decent of you," he said, "but as a matter of fact, this is the only place where my wife would never think of looking for me!"  
\*\*\*\*\*

"It was very kind of you to stay till the end of my speech when everyone else walked away!"

"Nice of you to say so. But I'm the next speaker, you see."

\*\*\*\*\*

Once upon a time there was an inn called THE SILVER STAR. The innkeeper was unable to make both ends meet even though he did his very best to draw customers by making the inn comfortable, the service cordial and the prices reasonable. So in despair he consulted a Sage.

After listening to his tale of woe the Sage said, "It is very simple. You must change the name of your inn."

"Impossible!" said the innkeeper. "It has been THE SILVER STAR for generations and is well known all over the country."

"No," said the Sage firmly, "You must now call it THE FIVE BELLS and have a row of six bells hanging at the entrance."

"Six bells? But that's absurd. What good would that do?"

"Give it a try and see," said the Sage with a smile.

Well, the innkeeper gave it a try. And this is what he saw. Every traveller who passed by the inn walked in to point out the mistake, each one believing that no one else had noticed it. Once inside, they were impressed by the cordiality of the service and stayed on to refresh themselves, thereby providing the innkeeper with the fortune that he had been seeking in vain for so long.

There are few things the ego delights in more than correcting other people's mistakes.

\*\*\*\*\*

Once upon a time God gave a party to all the virtues, great and small, humble and heroic. They all gathered together in a splendidly decorated hall in heaven and soon began to enjoy themselves because they were well acquainted with one another; some were even closely related.

Suddenly God spotted two fair virtues who seemed not to know each other at all and were somewhat ill at ease in each other's company. So He took one of them by the hand and formally introduced her to the other. "Gratitude," he said, "this is Charity."

But God had hardly turned around when they were again parted. And so the story has gone around that even God cannot bring Gratitude to be where Charity is.

\*\*\*\*\*

A group of newly arrived missionaries hired a native to take them for a canoe ride on the Congo.

After a while they started hearing the steady beat of jungle drums. All along the route, at steady intervals, the sounds were repeated.

"What are the drums saying?" asked one of the missionaries fearfully.

The native guide listened to the drums and translated: "Drums say: Three white people. Very rich. Raise prices."

Saadi of Shiraj used to say: "No one learnt archery from me who did not, in the end, make a target out of me."

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman was leaning over the victim of a street accident and the crowd was looking on.

Suddenly she was roughly pushed aside by a man who said, "Step back, please. I've had a course in first aid."

The woman looked on for a few minutes while the man got busy with the victim. Then she said calmly, "When you come to the part where you have to send for the doctor, I'm already here?"

Oftener than you imagine, the doctor is already there - inside the person you are attempting to help!

So why bother with first aid? Summon the doctor!

\*\*\*\*\*

An enthusiastic young priest was appointed chaplain of a hospital.

He was one day glancing through the admission cards of recently arrived patients and found one which stated that the patient was a Catholic.

There was also a curious note affixed to that card: "Does not want to see a priest unless she is unconscious."

Something to ask yourself each time you think you need help or advice: "Am I sure I'm conscious?"

\*\*\*\*\*

The story goes that a fire broke out in a house in which a man was fast asleep. They tried to carry him out through the window. No way. They tried to carry him out through the door. No way. He was just too huge and heavy.

They were pretty desperate till someone suggested: "Wake him up, and then he'll get out by himself."

Only sleepers and children need to be taken care of. Wake up! Or grow up!

\*\*\*\*\*

A young man in training to be a priest was told that what people expect of a priest is that he listen to their woes. Just listen, listen, listen... Maybe he wouldn't be able to lend a helping hand, but he could always lend a sympathetic ear. So this is what he determined to do when he arrived at his first parish assignment.

No matter how much the whole of him revolted, he forced himself to listen, listen, listen... and the people were most appreciative. But something seemed to be going wrong somewhere. For instance, an old lady would come in and complain of a headache. Such a terrible, awful headache. "Tell me what's bothering you," the priest would say invitingly. So she would talk and talk and talk while the priest listened and listened and listened.

It always seemed to work. "I came in here an hour ago with such a headache, Father. And now it's gone, gone, gone."

And the priest would think, "I know, I know, I know. Because now I've got it!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A course on HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE was in progress. A young businessman was explaining to the class how he applied all the principles of the course in an encounter with a business prospect. And it worked marvellously-well, not quite!

"I did everything I was told to do here," he added. "I began by greeting him warmly, -then I smiled at him and asked him about himself. I paid the closest attention to everything he said. I went out of my way to agree with his views and told him every now and then what a fine person I thought he was. He talked and talked for more than an hour. And when we finally parted company I knew I had made a friend for life."

Everyone in the classroom applauded politely. When the applause died down the speaker said with feeling, "But boy! What an enemy he made!"

Why make someone a gift you cannot emotionally afford to give.

\*\*\*\*\*

Old people are not lonely because they have no one to share their burden but because they have only their own burden to bear.

An eighty-five-year-old woman was being interviewed on her birthday. What advice would she have for people her age, the reporter asked.

"Well," said the old dear, "at our age it is very important to keep using all our potential or it dries up. It is important to be with people and, if it is at all possible to earn one's living through service. That's what keeps us alive and

well."

"May I ask what exactly you do for a living at your age?"

"I look after an old lady in my neighbourhood," was her unexpected, delightful reply.

Love heals everyone -both those who receive it and those who give it.

\*\*\*\*\*

There is a story that before Moses led the people from the land of Egypt he was apprenticed to a great Master as a preparation for becoming a prophet. The first discipline that the Master imposed on Moses was that of silence. The two of them wandered through the countryside one day and Moses was so dazzled by the beauties of nature that he found it easy to be silent. But when they got to the bank of a river, he saw a child drowning on the other shore and its poor mother crying aloud for help.

Moses could not keep silent before such a sight. "Master," he said, "can't you do something to save that child?" "Silence!" said the Master. So Moses held his breath.

But his heart was troubled. He thought, "Can it be that this Master of mine is really a hard-hearted, insensitive man? Or is he powerless to help those in need?" He was afraid to think such thoughts against his Master, but he could not dispel them either.

In the course of their wandering they came to the sea shore and saw a boat going down with all its crew. Moses said, "Master, look! That boat is sinking!" Once again the Master bade him keep to his discipline of silence, so Moses did not speak any further.

But his heart was sorely troubled, so when they got back home he took the matter up with God who said to him, "Your Master was right. The child who was drowning was meant to bring about a war between two nations in which hundreds of thousands would have perished. This disaster was averted by his drowning. And as for that sinking ship, it was manned by pirates who were planning to make for a seaside town, there to pillage and plunder and massacre many innocent, peace-loving people."

Service is a virtue only when accompanied by wisdom.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Ministry of Agriculture decreed that sparrows were a menace to the crops and should be exterminated.

When this was done hoards of insects that the sparrows would have eaten descended on the harvest and began to ravage the crops, whereupon the Ministry of Agriculture came up with the idea of costly pesticides.

The pesticides made the food expensive. They also made it a hazard to health. Too late it was discovered that it was the sparrows who, though feeding on the crops, managed to keep the food wholesome and inexpensive.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a man who had a golden belly button but what to most people would have been a source of pride, to him was a source of embarrassment for each time he took a shower or a swim he was the burl of his friend's teasing.

So he prayed and prayed that his belly button would be taken away. One night he dreamt that an angel came down from heaven, unscrewed his belly button and went back to heaven.

When he woke in the morning the first thing he did was check to see if the dream was true. It was! There on the table lay the unscrewed belly button, all bright and shining. The man jumped out of bed in joy-and his bottom fell off!

Only the wise can be safely entrusted with the tasks of changing others or themselves.

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman in a village was surprised to find a fairly well-dressed stranger at her door asking for something to eat. "I'm sorry," she said. "I have nothing in the house right now."

"Not to worry," said the amiable stranger. "I have a soup stone in this satchel of mine; if you will let me put it in a pot of boiling water I'll make the most delicious soup in the world. A very large pot, please."

The woman was curious. She put the pot on the fire and whispered the secret of the soup stone to a neighbour. By the time the water began to boil all the neighbours had gathered to see the stranger and his soup stone. The stranger dropped the stone into the water then tasted a teaspoonful with relish and exclaimed, "Ah, delicious! All it needs is some potatoes."

"I have potatoes in my kitchen," shouted one woman. In a few minutes she was back with a large quantity of sliced potatoes that were thrown into the pot. Then the stranger tasted the brew again. "Excellent!" he said. But added wistfully, "If we only had some meat, this would become a tasty stew."

Another housewife rushed home to bring some meat that the stranger accepted graciously and flung into the pot. When he tasted the broth again he rolled his eyes heavenwards and said, "Ah, tasty! If we had some vegetables it would be perfect, absolutely perfect."

One of the neighbours rushed off home and returned with a basketful of carrots and onions. After these had been thrown in too and the stranger tasted the mixture, he said in a voice of command, "Salt and sauce." "Right here", said the housewife. Then came another command, "Bowls for everyone." People rushed to their homes in search of bowls. Some even brought back bread and fruit.

Then they all set down to a delicious meal while the stranger handed out large helpings of his incredible soup. Everyone felt strangely happy as they laughed and talked and shared their very first common meal. In the middle of the merriment the stranger quietly slipped away, leaving behind the miraculous soup stone that they could use any time they wanted to make the loveliest soup in the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

A great festival was to be held in a village and each villager was asked to contribute by pouring a bottle of wine into a giant barrel. When the banquet began and the barrel was tapped what came out of it was water. One of the villagers had had this thought: "If I pour a bottle of water in that giant barrel, no one will notice the difference." But it hadn't occurred to him that everyone else in the village might have the same thought.

\*\*\*\*\*

A tale from the Fathers of the Egyptian Desert:

There was an old hermit, very ascetical in body and holy in spirit, but somewhat unclear in his thoughts. This man went to see Abba John to ask him about forgetfulness. Having received a word of wisdom he returned to his cell. But on the way back he forgot what the Abba John had told him.

So he went back and got the same word. But, once again, on the way back to his cell, he forgot it. This happened several times. He would listen to Abba John and, on his way back to the cell, would be overcome by forgetfulness.

Many days later he happened to meet Abba John and he said, "Do you know, Father, that I have once again forgotten what you told me? I would have come back again but I had been enough of burden to you already and did not want to overburden you."

Abba John said to him, "Go and light a lamp." The old man lit the lamp. Then John said, "Bring in some more lamps and light them from the first one." This too the old man did.

Then Abba John said to the old man, "Did the first lamp suffer any loss from the fact that the other lamps were lit from it?"

"No," said the old man.

"Well, then, so it is with John. If not only you, but the whole town of Scetis

were to come to me to seek help or advice I would not suffer the slightest loss. So come to me whenever you wish, without any hesitation.”  
\*\*\*\*\*

Another tale from the Fathers of the Desert:

A Brother once put this question to one of the elders: “There are two brothers, one of whom remains praying in his cell, fasting six days a week and practising much austerity. The other spends all his time taking care of the sick. Which one’s work is more pleasing to God?”

The elder replied: “If the brother who fasts and prays were to hang himself up by the nose, he would not equal even one act of kindness of the one who takes care of the sick.”

\*\*\*\*\*

A disciple came up to his Master and said, “I am a wealthy man and have just come into a large fortune. How best can I use it so it will redound to my spiritual benefit?”

Said the Master, “Come back after a week and I shall give you an answer.”

When he returned, the Master said with a sigh, “I am at a loss what to say to you. If I tell you to give it to your friends and relatives, it will do you no spiritual good. If I tell you to give it to the temple, you will only feed the avarice of the priests. And if I tell you to give it to the poor, you will take pride in your charity and fall into the sin of self-righteousness.”

Since the disciple pressed the Master for an answer, he finally said, “Give the money to the poor. At least they will benefit from it, even though you will not.”

If you do not serve, you injure others.

If you do, you injure yourself.

Ignorance of this dilemma is the death of the soul.

Freedom from this dilemma is eternal life.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a man who was busy building a home for himself. He wanted it to be the nicest, warmest, cosiest home in the world.

Someone came to him to ask for help because the world was on fire. But it was his home he was interested in, not the world.

When he finally built his home he found he did not have a planet to put it on.

\*\*\*\*\*

A schoolteacher gave up teaching for social work. When his friend wanted to know why, this is what he had to say:

“Little can be done in school if nothing is done in the home and the world. At school I felt like a man who was searching for ivory in the forest. When he finally found it, he discovered it was attached to a large elephant.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Wife to husband whose face is buried in the newspaper:

“Has it ever occurred to you that there might be more to life than what’s going on in the world?”

Most people hate humanity. It’s the person next door they cannot stand.

\*\*\*\*\*

## ENLIGHTENMENT

Once upon a time there was a stonecutter. Each day he went up to the mountains to cut stones. And while he worked he sang for, though he was a poor man, he desired no more than he had, so he had not a care in the world.

One day he was called to work on the mansion of a nobleman. When he saw the

magnificence of the mansion he experienced the pain of desire for the first time in his life and he said with a sigh, "If only I were rich! Then I would not have to earn my living in sweat and toil as I do now."

Imagine his astonishment when he heard a voice say, "Your wish has been granted. Henceforth anything you desire will be given to you." He did not know what to make of the words till he returned to his hut that evening and found in its place a mansion as magnificent as the one he had been working on. So the stonecutter gave up cutting stones and began to enjoy the life of the rich.

One day when the afternoon was hot and humid he happened to look out of his window and saw the king go by with a large retinue of noblemen and slaves. He thought, "How I wish I were a king myself, sitting in the cool of the royal carriage!" His wish was promptly carried out and he found himself reclining in the comfort of the royal carriage. But the carriage turned out to be warmer than he had assumed it to be. He looked out of the carriage window and began to marvel at the power of the sun whose heat could penetrate even the said to himself. Once again his wish was granted and he found himself sending out waves of heat into the universe.

All went well for a while. There on a rainy day, he attempted to pierce through a thick bank of clouds and could not. So he got himself changed into a cloud and gloried in his power to keep the sun away-till he turned into the rain and found, to his annoyance, a mighty rock that blocked his path so he was obliged to flow around it.

"What?" he cried. "A mere rock more powerful than I? Well, then I wish to be a rock." So there he was standing tall upon a mountainside. He barely had time to rejoice in his fine figure, however, when he heard strange chipping sounds proceeding from his feet. He looked down and, to his dismay, found a tiny human being sitting there engaged in cutting chunks of stone from his feet.

"What?" he shouted. "A puny creature like that more powerful than an imposing rock like me? I want to be a man!" So he found he was once again a stonecutter going up into the mountain to cut stone earning his living in sweat and toil but with a song in his heart because he was content to be what he was and to live by what he had.

Nothing is as good as it seems before we get it.

Every month the disciple faithfully sent his Master an account of his spiritual progress.

In the first month he wrote, "I feel an expansion of consciousness and experience my oneness with the universe." The Master glanced at the note and threw it away. The following month this is what he had to say: "I have finally discovered that the divine is present in all things." The Master seemed disappointed.

In his third letter the disciple enthusiastically explained "The mystery of the One and the many has been revealed to my wondering gaze." The master yawned.

His next letter said, "No one is born, no one lives and no one dies, for the self is not." The Master threw his hands up in despair.

After that a month passed by, then two, then five; then a whole year. The Master thought it was time to remind his disciple of his duty to keep him informed of his spiritual progress. The disciple wrote back. "Who cares?" When the Master read those words a look of satisfaction spread over his face. He said, "Thank God, at last he's got it!"

Even the hankering for freedom is bondage. Are you ever truly free till it no longer matters to you if you are free or not? Only the content is free.

\*\*\*\*\*

A great and foolish king complained that the rough ground hurt his feet, so he ordered the whole country to be carpeted with cowhide.

The court jester laughed when the king told him of his order. "What an absolutely crazy idea, your Majesty," he cried. "Why all the needless expense? Just cut out two small pads of cowhide to protect your feet!"

That is what the king did. And that is how the idea of shoes was born.

The enlightened know that to make the world a painless place you need to change

your heart-not the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

Wolves were discovered in the village near Master Shoju's temple, so each night for a whole week Shoju went to the village cemetery and sat there in meditation. This put an end to the nightly attacks of the wolves. The villagers were ecstatic. They begged him to reveal to them the secret rites he had performed so that they could do the same in future. Said Shoju: "I did not have to resort to secret rites. While I sat there in meditation a number of wolves gathered around me. They licked the tip of my nose and sniffed my windpipe. But because I remained in the right state of mind I wasn't bitten."

\*\*\*\*\*

A Maharaja went out to sea when a great storm arose. One of the slaves on board began to cry out and wail in fear, for the man had never been on a ship before. His crying was so loud and so prolonged that everyone on board began to be annoyed and the Maharaja was for throwing the man overboard. But his Chief Advisor who was a sage said, "No. Let me deal with the man. I think I can cure him." With that he ordered some of the sailors to hurl the man into the sea. The moment he found himself in the sea the poor slave began to scream in terror and to thrash out wildly. In a few seconds the sage ordered him to be hauled on board. Back on board the slave lay in a corner in absolute silence. When the Maharaja asked his advisor for the reason, he replied, "We never realize how lucky we are till our situation gets worse."

\*\*\*\*\*

During the Second World War a man was adrift on a raft for twenty-one days before he was rescued.

Asked if he had learnt anything from the experience he replied, "Yes. If I can only have an abundance of food to eat and plenty of water to drink I shall be riotously happy for the rest of my life."

An old man says he complained only once in all his life - when his feet were bare and he had no money to buy shoes.

Then he saw a happy man who had no feet. And he never complained again.

\*\*\*\*\*

The present moment is never unbearable if you live in it fully. What is unbearable is to have your body here at 10. a. m. and your mind at 6. p. m.; your body in Bombay and your mind in San Francisco.

The clock master was about to fix the pendulum of a clock when, to his surprise, he heard the pendulum speak.

"Please, sir, leave me alone," the pendulum pleaded. "It will be an act of kindness on your part. Think of the number of times I will have to tick day and night. So many times each minute, sixty minutes an hour, twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. For year upon year... millions of ticks. I could never do it."

But the clock master answered wisely, "Don't think of the future. Just do one tick at a time and you will enjoy every tick for the rest of your life."

And that is exactly what the pendulum decided to do. It is still ticking merrily away.

\*\*\*\*\*

Here is a parable that the Lord Buddha told his disciples:

A man came across a tiger in a field. The tiger gave chase and the man fled. He came upon a precipice, stumbled and began to fall. Then he reached out and caught hold of a little strawberry bush that was growing along the side of the precipice.

There he hung for some minutes, suspended between the hungry tiger above and the deep chasm below where he was soon going to meet his death. Suddenly he spied a luscious strawberry growing on the bush. Grasping the bush with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other and put it into his mouth. Never in his life had a strawberry tasted so sweet! To the enlightened the awareness of death gives sweetness to life.  
\*\*\*\*\*

The nervous tourist was afraid to get too close to the cliff. "What would I do," he said to the guide, "if I fell over the edge?" "In that case, sir," said the guide enthusiastically don't fail to look to the right. You'll love the view!" Only if you too are enlightened, of course!  
\*\*\*\*\*

There was a crowd in the doctor's waiting room: An elderly gentleman rose and approached the receptionist. "Madam," he said courteously, "my appointment was for ten o'clock and it is almost eleven now. I cannot wait any longer. Would you kindly give me an appointment for another day?" One woman in the crowd leaned over to another and said, "He must be at least eighty years old. What sort of urgent business can he have that he cannot afford to wait?" The man overheard the whispered remark. He turned to the lady, bowed and said, "I am eighty-seven years old, lady. Which is precisely the reason why I cannot afford to waste a single minute of the precious time I have left." The enlightened do not waste a minute because they have understood the relative unimportance of everything they do.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Socrates was in prison awaiting his execution. One day he heard a fellow prisoner singing a difficult lyric by the poet, Stesichoros. Socrates begged the man to teach him the lyric. "Why?" asked the singer. "So that I can die knowing one thing more," was the great man's reply. Disciple: Why learn something new one week before you die? Master: For exactly the same reason that you would learn something new fifty years before you die.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Tajima no Kami was fencing master to the Shogun. One of the Shogun's bodyguards came to him one day asking to be trained in swordsmanship. "I have watched you carefully," said Tajima no Kami and you seem to be a Master in the art yourself. Before taking you on as a pupil I request you to tell me what Master you studied under." The bodyguard replied, "I have never studied the art under anyone," "You cannot fool me," said the teacher. "I have a discerning eye and it never fails." "I do not mean to contradict your Excellency," said the guard, "but I really do not know a thing about fencing." The teacher engaged the man in swordplay for a few minutes then stopped and said. "Since you say you have never learnt the art. I take your word for it. But you are some kind of a Master. Tell me about yourself." "There is one thing," said the guard. "When I was a child I was told by a samurai that a man should never fear death. I therefore struggled with the question of death till it ceased to cause me the slightest anxiety," "So that's what it is." cried Tajima no Kami. "The ultimate secret of

swordsmanship lies in being free from the fear of death. You need no training. You are a Master in your own right."

The unenlightened are always anxious. Like the man in the river who doesn't know how to swim. He becomes frightened. So he sinks. So he struggles to keep afloat. So he sinks even deeper. If he dropped his fear and allowed himself to sink, his body would come up to the surface on its own.

There was once a man who fell into a stream while he was having an epileptic fit. When he came to later he was surprised to find himself lying on the bank. The fit that had thrown him into the river had also saved his life by removing his fear of drowning...that's enlightenment.

\*\*\*\*\*

Kenji was a Japanese kamikaze pilot. He had prepared himself to die for his country but the war ended sooner than expected and he never got his chance to die with honour. So the man became depressed; he lost all appetite for living and wandered listlessly around town unsure what to do with himself.

One day he was told of a thief who was holding an old woman hostage in her apartment on the second floor of a building. The police were afraid to move into the apartment because the man was armed and known to be dangerous.

Kenji rushed into the building and demanded that the man release the woman. A fight with knives ensued in which Kenji killed the thief but he was mortally wounded himself. He died a little later in hospital with a contented smile on his lips. His wish to die a useful death had been fulfilled.

Only those do good who have lost their fear to die.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a huge dragon in China who went from village to village killing cattle and dogs and chicken and children indiscriminately. So the villagers called upon a wizard to help them in their distress. The wizard said, "I cannot slay the dragon myself for, magician though I am, I am too afraid. But I shall find you the man who will."

A king ran into a dervish and, in keeping with the custom of the East when a king met a subject, he said, "Ask for a favour."

The dervish replied, "It would be unseemly for me to ask a favour of one of my slaves."

With that he transformed himself into a dragon and took up position on a bridge so everyone who did not know it was the wizard was afraid to pass. One day, however, a traveller came up to the bridge, calmly climbed over the dragon and walked on. The wizard promptly took on human shape again and called to the man, "Come back, my friend. I have been standing here for weeks waiting for you!"

The enlightened know that fear is in the way you look at things not in the things themselves.

\*\*\*\*\*

"How dare you speak so disrespectfully to the king," said a guardsman. "Explain yourself or you shall die."

The dervish said, "I have a slave who is the master of your king."

"Who?"

"Fear," said the dervish.

When the body perishes life is no more. Hence the erroneous conclusion that to keep the body alive is the same as living.

Enter where the assassin's bullet does not take lift away; neither does the prolongation of life lengthen the duration of one's being.

\*\*\*\*\*

When the Greek philosopher Diogenes was captured and taken to be sold in the slave market it is said that he mounted the auctioneer's platform and cried aloud, "A Master has come here to be sold. Is there some slave among you who is desirous of

purchasing him?"

It is impossible to make slaves of the enlightened for they are just as happy in a state of slavery as in a state of freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*

A merchant in Baghdad sent his servant on an errand to the bazaar and the man came back white with fear and trembling. "Master," he said, "While I was in the marketplace I walked into a stranger. When I looked him in the face I found that it was Death. He made a threatening gesture at me and walked away. Now I am afraid. Please give me a horse so that I can ride at once to Samarra and put as great a distance as possible between Death and me."

The merchant in his anxiety for the man-gave him his swiftest steed. The servant was on it and away in a trice.

Later in the day the merchant himself went down to the bazaar and saw Death loitering there in the crowd.

So he went up to him and said, "You made a threatening gesture at my poor servant this morning. What did it mean?"

"That was no threatening gesture, sir," said Death. "It was a start of surprise at seeing him here in Baghdad."

"Why would he not be in Baghdad? This is where the man lives."

"Well, I had been given to understand that he would join me in Samarra tonight, you see."

Most people are so afraid to die that, from their efforts to avoid death, they never live.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a holy man who lived in a state of ecstasy but was regarded by everyone as insane. One day, having begged for food in the village, he sat by the roadside and began to eat when a dog came up and looked at him hungrily. The holy man then began to feed the dog; he himself would take a morsel, and then give a morsel to the dog as though he and the dog were old friends. Soon a crowd gathered around the two of them to watch this extraordinary sight.

One of the men in the crowd jeered at the holy man. He said to the others, "What can you expect from someone so insane that he is not able to distinguish between a human being and a dog?"

The holy man replied, "Why do you laugh? Do you not see Vishnu seated with Vishnu? Vishnu is being fed and Vishnu is doing the feeding. So why do you laugh, oh Vishnu?"

\*\*\*\*\*

The Lord Krishna said to Arjun, "You speak of me as of an incarnation of God. But today I wish to reveal something special to you. Follow me."

Arjun followed the Lord a short distance. Then Krishna pointed to a tree and said, "What do you see there?"

Arjun replied, "A huge vine with clusters of grapes hanging on it."

The Lord said, "Those are not grapes. Go closer and look at them carefully."

When Arjun did that he could hardly believe his eyes for there before him were Krishnas hanging in bunches from Krishna."

The disciples asked the Master to speak to them of death: "What will it be like?"

"It will be as if a veil is ripped apart and you will say in wonder, 'So it was You all along.'" "

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a king in India who had an elephant that ran amuck. It marched from village to village destroying everything in its path and no one dared attack it because it belonged to the king.

Now one day a self-styled ascetic was about to set out from a village when all the villagers begged him not to, because the elephant had been sighted on the road and

was attacking passers-by.

The man rejoiced in the occasion he now had for demonstrating his superior wisdom, for he had just returned from a lecture of his guru who had taught him to see Rama in everything. "Oh, you poor ignorant fools!" he said, "Have you no insight at all into spiritual matters? Have you never been told that we must see Rama in everyone and everything and that all those who do so will enjoy the protection of Rama? Let me go. I have no fear of the elephant."

The people thought that the man was about as spirituality insightful as the mad elephant. They knew it was useless to argue with a holy man, so they let him go. He had hardly got onto the road when the elephant rushed towards him, lifted him up with its trunk and hurled him against a tree. The man began to howl in pain. To his good luck the king's guards appeared in the nick of time and captured the elephant before it could kill the deluded ascetic.

It was many months later before the man was well enough to set out on his travels again. He went straight to his guru and said, "The teaching you gave me was false. You told me to see everything as being pervaded by Rama. That is exactly what I did and look what happened?"

Said the guru, "How foolish you are! Why did you fail to see Rama in the villagers who warned you against the elephant?"

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a candy maker who had candy in the shapes of animals and birds of different colours and sizes. When he sold his candy to children they would begin to quarrel with words such as these: "My rabbit is better than your tiger...My squirrel may be smaller than your elephant, but it is tastier..."

And the candy maker would laugh at the thought of grown-ups who were no less ignorant than the children when they thought that one person was better than another.

Enlightenment knows that it is our culture and conditioning, not our nature that divides us.

\*\*\*\*\*

A shepherd was grazing his sheep when a passer-by said, 'That's a fine flock of sheep you have. Could I ask you something about them?' "Of course," said the shepherd. Said the man, "How much would you say your sheep walk each day?" "Which ones, the white ones or the black ones?" "The white ones." "Well, the white ones walk about four miles a day." "And the black ones?" "The black ones too."

"And how much grass would you say they eat each day?" "Which ones, the white or the black?" "The white ones." "Well, the white ones eat about four pounds of grass each day." "And the black ones?" "The black ones too." "And how much wool would you say they give each year?" "Which ones, the white or the black?" "The white ones." "Well, I'd say the white ones give some six pounds of wool each year at shearing time." "And the black ones?" "The black ones too."

The passer-by was intrigued. "May I ask you why you have this strange habit of dividing your sheep into white and black each time you answer one of my questions?" "Well," said the shepherd, "that's only natural. The white ones are mine, you see." "Ah! And the black ones?" "The black ones too," said the shepherd. The human mind makes foolish divisions in what Love sees as One.

\*\*\*\*\*

Plutarch tells the story of Alexander the Great who came upon Diogenes looking attentively at a heap of human bones.

"What are you looking for?" asked Alexander.

"Something that I cannot find," said the philosopher.

"And what is that?"

"The difference between your father's bones and those of his slaves."

The following are just as indistinguishable: Catholic bones from Protestant bones. Hindu from Muslims bones, Arab bones from Israeli bones, Russian bones from

American bones.

The enlightened fail to see the difference even when the bones are clothed in flesh!

\*\*\*\*\*

In a little Indian village lived a weaver who was a very pious soul. All day long he would pronounce the name of God and people trusted him implicitly. When he had woven a sufficient amount of cloth he would take it to be sold in the marketplace. There, if anyone asked him the price of a piece of cloth, he would reply in this fashion: "By the will of Rama the price of the yarn is 35 cents; the labour is 10 cents; the profit, by the will of Rama, is 4 cents. So the price of this piece, by the will of Rama, is 49 cents." People had such faith in the man that they never bargained with him; they just paid the price he asked for and took the goods. Now the weaver was in the habit of going to the village temple at night to chant the praises of God and sing the glories of his name. Late one night, while he was at his chanting, a band of robbers burst in. They needed someone to carry their stolen goods for them so they said, "Come with us." The weaver meekly accompanied them with the goods on his head. Soon the police gave chase and the robbers began to run; the weaver ran with them but being an older man the police soon caught up with him and, finding the stolen goods on him, they arrested him and threw him in jail.

The following morning he was produced before the judge and accused of burglary. When the judge asked him what he had to say for himself, this is what the man said, "Your Honour, by the will of Rama I finished my meal last night and by the will of Rama I went over to the temple, there to chant his praises. That is when suddenly, by the will of Rama, a band of robbers burst in and, by Rama's will, invited me to carry their goods for them. They put such a load on my head that when, by the will of Rama, the police gave chase, I was easily caught. Then, by the will of Rama, I was arrested and thrown in jail. And here I am standing before you this morning, by the will of Rama."

The judge said to the policeman, "Let the man go. He is evidently out of his mind."

Back home when asked what had happened the pious weaver said, "By the will of Rama I was arrested and tried in court. And by the will of Rama I have been acquitted."

\*\*\*\*\*

There was a rabbi who lived in a village on the steppes of Russia. Every morning for twenty years he crossed the village square to pray in the synagogue and every morning he was closely watched by a policeman who hated Jews.

Finally one morning the policeman walked up to the rabbi and demanded to know where he was going.

"I don't know," said the rabbi.

"What do you mean you don't know? For the past twenty years I have seen you go to that synagogue across the square and now you say you don't know? I'll teach you a lesson!"

With that he grabbed the old man by his beard and dragged him off to jail. As he was turning the key on the prison cell the rabbi looked at him with a twinkle in his eye and said, "See what I meant when I said I didn't know?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Traveller; "What kind of weather are we going to have today?"

Shepherd: "The kind of weather I like."

"How do you know it will be the kind of weather you like?"

"Having found out, sir, that I cannot always get what I like, I have learnt always to like what I get. So I am quite sure we will have the kind of weather I like."

Happiness and unhappiness are in the way we meet events, not in the nature of those events themselves.

\*\*\*\*\*

An old nun who had tried out the new habit was discussing her funeral with the Mother Superior.

"I'd like to be buried in the old habit," she said.

"Of course," said the Superior, "if you'll be more comfortable in that!"

When the self is no more, one has died-and like a corpse one is comfortable in anything.

After all, someone whose mind is set on drowning does not insist on a set of dry clothes to make the drowning more agreeable.

\*\*\*\*\*

A Hasidic tale:

One night Rabbi Isaac was told in his dream to go to faraway Prague and there to dig (or a hidden treasure under a bridge that led to the palace of the king. He did not take the dream seriously but when it recurred four or five times he made up his mind to go in search of the treasure.

When he got to the bridge he discovered to his dismay that it was heavily guarded day and night by soldiers. All he could do was gaze at the bridge from a distance. But since he went there every morning the captain of the guards came up to him one day to find out why. Rabbi Isaac, embarrassed as he was to tell his dream to another soul, told the captain everything for he liked the good-natured character of this Christian. The captain roared with laughter and said, "Good heavens! You a Rabbi and you take dreams so seriously? Why if I were stupid enough to act on my own dreams I would be wandering around in Poland today. Let me tell you one that I had last night that keeps recurring frequently: A voice tells me to go to Cracow and dig for treasure in the corner of the kitchen of one Isaac son of Ezechie! Now wouldn't it be the most stupid thing in the world to search around in Cracow for a man called Isaac and another called Ezechie when half the male population there probably has one name and the other half the other?"

The Rabbi was stunned. He thanked the captain for his advice, hurried home, dug up the corner of his kitchen and found a treasure abundant enough to keep him in comfort till the day he died.

The spiritual quest is a journey without distance. You travel from where you are right now to where you have always been. From ignorance to recognition, for all you do is see for the first time what you have always been looking at.

Who ever heard of a path that brings you to yourself or a method that makes you what you have always been? Spirituality, after all, is only a matter of becoming what you really are.

\*\*\*\*\*

A young man became obsessed with a passion for Truth so he took leave of his family and friends and set out in search of it. He travelled over many lands, sailed across many oceans, climbed many mountains and, all in all, went through a great deal of hardship and suffering.

One day he awoke to find he was seventy-five years old and had still not found the Truth he had been searching for. So he decided, sadly, to give up the search and go back home.

It took him months to return to his hometown for he was an old man now. Once home, he opened the door of his house-and there he found Truth that had been patiently waiting for him all those years.

Question: Did his journeying help him to find Truth?

Answer; No, but it prepared him to recognize it.

\*\*\*\*\*

A woman tourist from the West was admiring a native's necklace. "What is it made of?" she asked.

"Alligator teeth, ma'am," said the native,

"Oh, I see. I suppose they have the same value for you people that pearls have for

us,"

"Not quite. Anyone can open an oyster,"

The enlightened understand that a diamond is a stone until endowed with value by the human mind.

And that things are as big or as small as your mind chooses to make them.

\*\*\*\*\*

A young American got a clerical job at the White House and had just participated in a reception given to all White House staffers by the President; He thought his mother would be thrilled to get a call from the White House, so he placed a call through the White House switchboard.

"Mother," he said proudly, "this is a big day for me. You know what? I am calling you from the White House."

The response he got from the other end was not quite as excited as he had expected it to be. Towards the end of the conversation his mother said, "Well, son, it's been a big day for me too."

"Really? What happened?"

"I finally managed to clean out the attic."

\*\*\*\*\*

The unenlightened fail to see themselves as the cause of all their grief's.

It was lunch time at the factory and a workman opened his lunch box dolefully. "Oh no," he said aloud. "Cheese sandwiches again!"

This happened a second and a third and a fourth day. Then a co-worker who had heard the mutterings of the man said, "If you hate cheese sandwiches so much why don't you get your wife to make you some other type?"

"Because I'm not married. I make those sandwiches myself."

\*\*\*\*\*

John and Mary were walking down the road in the late evening. "I'm terribly afraid, John," said Mary.

"And what would you be afraid of?"

"I'm afraid you might be going to kiss me."

"And how would I kiss you with me carrying a bucket in each hand and a hen under each arm?"

"I was afraid that you might put a hen under each bucket and then kiss me."

Oftener than you think what people do to you is what you've asked them to.'

\*\*\*\*\*

A couple of soldiers in northern India were on their way back home in a rickshaw when they saw, ahead of them, another rickshaw with a couple of sailors in it.

In a few minutes the rivalry between the services erupted into a race in which the driver of the soldiers' rickshaw took an early lead.

They were settling back to savour their victory when, to their amazement, they saw their opponents shoot by. They were even more astonished to see the driver in the passenger seat lustily cheering one of the sailors who had taken over from him.

The enlightened would rather be contented than victorious.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two gunfighters were about to engage in a duel and a space was cleared for them in the saloon. One was an unimposing tiny little man, but a professional fighter. The other was a huge, hefty fellow who protested, "Wait a minute! This isn't fair. He's shooting a larger target."

The little fellow was quick to offer a suggestion. Turning to the saloon owner he said, "Chalk out a man of my size on my opponent. Any bullet of mine that hits outside the line doesn't count."

The enlightened care more about living than about winning.

The unenlightened would sell their souls to prove they are right!

"Before I go out in the evening, I bet my wife ten dollars that I'll be back by midnight."

"And then?"

"And then I let her win."

\*\*\*\*\*

An infallible sign of enlightenment: one no longer cares what people think and say.

A furniture company sent this note to one of its customers:

"Dear Mr. Jones,

What would your neighbour think if we had to send a truck to your house to repossess the furniture that you have still not paid for?"

They got the following reply:

"Dear Sir,

I have discussed the matter with my neighbours to find out what they would think. They all think it would be a dirty trick of a mean, low-down company."

\*\*\*\*\*

A man grew up with the decision that he would be satisfied with nothing but the very best. This decision helped him to become very successful and very rich, so he now had the means with which to provide himself with nothing but the best.

Now it so happened that he was suffering from a severe attack of tonsillitis, a condition that could have been dealt with effectively by any qualified surgeon in the land. But, Impressed as he was with a sense of his own importance, and goaded by his obsession to provide himself with the very best that the medical world had to offer, he began to move from one town to another, one country to another in search of the best man for the job.

Each time some particularly competent surgeon was recommended to him he began to fear that there might just possibly be someone who was even more competent.

One day his condition became so bad and his throat so infected that an operation had to be performed immediately for his life was in danger. But the man was in a semi-comatose state in a god-forsaken village where the only person who had used a knife on a living creature was the village butcher.

He was a remarkably good butcher and went to work with a will but when he got to the man's tonsils he didn't quite know what he was supposed to do with them. And while he was busy consulting people who knew as little as he, the poor patient for whom nothing but the very best was good enough bled to death.

\*\*\*\*\*

A lion was taken into captivity and thrown into a concentration camp where, to his amazement, he found other lions who had been there for years, some of them all their lives, for they had been born there. He soon became acquainted with the social activities of the camp lions. They banded themselves into groups. One group consisted of the socializes; another was into show business; yet another was cultural for its purpose was to carefully preserve the customs, the tradition and the history of the times when lions were free; other groups were religious-they gathered mostly to sing moving songs about a future jungle where there would be no fences; some groups attracted those who were literary and artistic by nature; others still were revolutionary, they met to plot against their captors or against other revolutionary groups. Every now and then a revolution would break out, one particular group would be wiped out by another, or the guards would all be killed and replaced by another set of guards.

As he looked around, the newcomer observed one lion who always seemed deep in thought, a loner who belonged to no group and mostly kept away from everyone.

There was something strange about him that commanded everyone's admiration and everyone's hostility for his presence aroused fear and self-doubt. He said to the newcomer, "Join no group. These poor fools are busy with everything except what is essential."

"And what is that?" asked the newcomer.  
"Studying the nature of the fence."  
Nothing -but nothing-else matters!'  
\*\*\*\*\*

The human condition is perfectly depicted in the case of the poor drunk standing late at night outside the park, bearing on the fence and yelling, "Let me out!" It is only your illusions that prevent you from seeing that you are-and have always been-free.  
\*\*\*\*\*

A basic ingredient in the attainment of freedom: adversity that brings awareness. A traveller lost in the desert despaired of ever finding water. He struggled up one hilltop, then another and another in the hope of sighting a stream somewhere. He kept looking in every direction with no success. As he staggered onwards his foot caught on a dry bush and he stumbled to the ground. That's where he laid, with no energy even to rise, no desire to struggle any more, no hope of surviving this ordeal. As he lay there, helpless and dejected, he suddenly became aware of the silence of the desert. On all sides a majestic stillness reigned, undisturbed by the slightest sound. Suddenly he raised his head. He had heard something. Something so faint that only the sharpest ear and the deepest silence would lead to its detection: the sound of running water. Heartened by the hope that the sound aroused in him, he rose and kept moving till he arrived at a stream of fresh, cool water.  
\*\*\*\*\*

There isn't any world other than this one. But there are two ways of looking at it. In ancient India there was a king, called Janaka, who was also a sage. One day Janaka was taking a nap on his flower-strewn bed with his servants fanning him and his soldiers standing guard outside his door. As he dozed off he had a dream in which a neighbouring king defeated him in battle, took him prisoner and had him tortured. As soon as the torture began Janaka woke with a start to find himself lying on his flower-stream bed with his servants fanning him and his soldiers on guard. Once again he dozed off and had the same dream. And once again he woke up to find himself safe and comfortable in his palace. Now Janaka began to be disturbed by a thought: While he was asleep the world of his dreams had seemed so real. Now that he was awake the world of the senses seemed real. Which of these two worlds is the real one, he wanted to know.  
\*\*\*\*\*

None of the philosopher, scholars and seers he consulted could give him an answer. And for many years he searched in vain till one day a man called Ashtavakra knocked at the door of the palace. Now Ashtavakra means entirely deformed or crooked and he got that name because that is exactly what he had been from birth. At first the king was not disposed to take this man seriously. "How can a misshapen man like you be the carrier of a wisdom denied to my seers and scholars?" he asked. "Right from my childhood, all avenues have been closed to me-so I avidly pursued the path of wisdom" was Ashtavakra's reply. "Speak, then," said the king. So this is what Ashtavakra said, "O king, neither the waking state nor the dream state is real. When you are awake, the world of dreams does not exist and when you dream the world of the senses does not exist. Therefore, neither is real," "If both the waking and the dream states are unreal, then what is real?" asked the king.

"There is a state beyond these two. Discover that, it alone is real."

The enlightened consider themselves to be awake so, in their folly they call some people good and others bad, some happenings joyful and others sad.

The awakened are no longer at the mercy of life and death, growth and decay, success and failure, poverty and riches, honour and disgrace. For them, even hunger, thirst, heat and cold, experienced as transient in the river of life no longer retain their sting. They have come to realize that there is never any need to change what they see - only the way they see it.

And so they come to take on the quality of water which is soft and pliant yet irresistible in its power; which does not strive yet benefits all beings. By their egoless action, others are transformed; through their detachment, the whole world prospers; owing to their desirelessness others are left unspoiled.

Water is drawn out of the river to irrigate fields. The water is quite indifferent to whether it is present in the river or in the fields. Thus it is that the enlightened act and live sweetly and powerfully in accordance with their destiny. These are the ones who become the sworn enemies of society which hates living pliability and thrives on drill, order, routine, on orthodoxy and conformity.

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Mamiya became a well-known Zen Master, but he had to learn Zen the hard way. While he was a disciple his Master asked him to explain the sound of one hand clapping.

Mamiya gave it all he had, skimping on food and sleep so that he could come up with the correct answer. But his Master was never satisfied. He even said to him one day, "You're not working hard enough. You are far too comfort-loving; too attached to the good things of life; even too attached to finding the answer as quickly as possible. It would be better if you died."

The next time Mamiya came before the Master he did something dramatic. When asked to explain the sound of one hand clapping he fell over and stayed still as if he were dead.

Said the Master, "All right. So you're dead. But what about the sound of one hand clapping?"

Opening his eyes, Mamiya replied, "I haven't been able to solve that one yet."

At this the Master shouted in fury, "Fool! Dead men don't speak. Get out!"

You may not be enlightened but you could at least be consistent!

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Anand was Buddha's most devoted disciple. Years after Buddha's death a Great Council of the Enlightened was planned and one of the disciples went to tell Anand about it.

Now at that time Anand was still not enlightened himself though he had worked at it strenuously for years. So he was not entitled to attend the Council.

On the evening of the Council Meet he was still not enlightened so he determined to practise vigorously all night and not stop till he had attained his goal. But all he succeeded in doing was making himself exhausted. He had not made the slightest progress in spite of all his efforts.

So towards dawn he decided to give up and get some rest. In that state in which he had lost all greed, even for enlightenment, he rested his head on the pillow. And he suddenly became enlightened!

Said the river to the seeker: "Does one really have to fret about enlightenment? No matter which way I turn I'm homeward bound."

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end