

To forgive is to set a prisoner free
and to discover that the prisoner was
you.

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"Forgiveness is the attribute of one who
is strong and courageous, not of one who
is weak and coward" - Mahatma Gandhi

This quote by the father of our
nation is being heard by us since childhood
but we never bothered to ask what
Gandhi ji meant by 'being strong'? Is
it mean being physically strong or
mentally or more than that?

We may not have answer to this
question as children but now as we all
are grown up we know that he was
talking about being 'morally strong'. One
whose ethical values like compassion,
integrity are firm can forgive. This

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strength helps them to give one more chance to persons making mistakes to improve.

However, this is only one side of the story. The person who forgives is not strong just because they are letting go of pain someone has caused them but also, ^{because} they are giving up on their desire to take revenge. They are not accommodating the urge to be violent, to give punishment to the person who is guilty. In this process, they are making themselves free just like a prisoner from prison of polluted thoughts.

Hence it can be said that to forgive is to set a prisoner free and to discover that the prisoner was you.

Being a prisoner in prison of self

"The best way to keep a ^{prisoner} ~~person~~ away from escaping is - telling that s/he won't realise that s/he is in a prison"

- Fodor Dostoevsky

Interesting it seems, how it is possible that a prisoner is unaware of the fact that s/he is a prisoner? It is possible when prisoner is none other than ourselves and prison is not that of iron barricades but that of our own thoughts. It isn't wrong to say that "we are prisoners of our own thoughts" and our whole life passes away without knowing this fact. We keep on struggling with our insecurities, fears, incitement to take revenge and suffer in our relationships and in lives.

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As Gautam Buddha says, the cause of suffering is desire and when this desire is faulty in itself like desire to take revenge and not to forgive then even its fulfilment will cause suffering. So, how does forgiveness break this prison of 'narrow self' and sufferings?

Above question can be answered by referring to event of reunion of two sets of freedom fighters - 'moderates and extremists' from the history of freedom struggle of India. When both of these sets were not ready to compromise, it resulted in 'Surat split' thus retarding the pace of national movement. However in Lucknow session, when both forgave each other, it opened new avenues of cooperation. Their power got doubled

due to convergence so as The pace of movement

Thus, when inner ego ^{and} intolerance got subdued by force of forgiveness, the prison breaks.

Not just for an individual or some people, forgiveness holds much significance for countries also.

India after independence has continued good bilateral relations with Britain even after the dark past of colonial rule.

This relationship now has been elevated to strategic economic and defence partnership holding much significance in multilateralism.

But what made India to achieve this?

Ofcourse, it's the strength of our country to forgive and set itself free from the shackles of dark past and from the prison of narrow mindedness.

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As Gandhiji said, hate the sin, but love the sinner, India has been strong opponent of imperialism and colonialism but pursued new paths of development and cooperation with Britain.

Art of letting go and it's miracles

The Stoicism school of Philosophy says that there are some things which we can never change and need to accept them no matter how unfavourable they seem to us. It is only our response to them which is in our control and can create a difference.

Similarly, if we are hurt by someone no matter how much grave is the pain, we need to accept it because it can't be changed. Now, going by Stoicism, what

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Should be our ideal response to being
change - hurting people back; punish
them or ask them to apologise?

Here comes the 'art of letting go'
which enables us to simply accept,
move on and forgive other person.

As we discussed in beginning of this
essay, this will create peace within
us and relaxes our self. This will
also create miracles for other person
and for society at large.

We are aware of 'Buddha-Angulimale'
story in which Buddha forgave
Angulimale despite the fact that latter
insulted him and gave death threats.
The forgiveness by Buddha, most
unexpected moment, caused a 'change
of heart' in him.

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Hence, it can be said that unconditional forgiveness can give the recipient a moment for self introspection. That self-reflection can help them to bring change in the aspect which caused suffering to others in the first place.

Similarly, an important component of reformatory justice is to forgive and give one more chance to convicts to get integrated with society. 'Open Prison' in Jaipur, Rajasthan is a prominent success story where prisoners were given a chance to live with family and earn livelihood decently. Now, they are integrated with society and participate in social welfare based activities like - planting trees and acting as volunteer force during disasters.

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The positive force of forgiveness creates 'domino effect' also. It enables other to accept their mistakes and realise their responsibility towards others. Last year, when Canadian Prime Minister ~~Mr.~~ Mr. Trudeau asked, apologised for 'Komagata maru' incident at global level, it showed that they understand their responsibility towards families of victims. In 'war and arms' based world order, this gesture gives a ray of hope for humanity.

Thus, it can be said that to forgive and to ask for forgiveness both require certain strength. Let us delve deeper into elements of that strength.

It takes 'courage' and fortitude to resist temporary gratification which can be gained by penalising the guilty.

This courage and temperance will help a person to develop compassion for others, understand their emotions, i.e., emotional intelligence. Combining effect of this will make a person able for both - to forgive and to apologise.

However, as Syādvāde doctrine of ^{Jainism} ~~Buddhism~~ says, a truth is conditional that is whether it'll be reasonable or true depends on situations. Similar is the case with attribute of forgiveness. In some heinous crimes, creation of deterrence is necessary to maintain dignity and social fabric of society. For instance, in rape cases convicts should

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be punished because if in such crimes, they will be forgiven then it'll create a negative domino effect. As Tubidas

in Ramcharitmanas has also said,

"Bhaya Bina hoje na Preet" (sometimes fear is necessary for love and peace.)

To sum up, it can be said that forgiveness makes a person shed their baggage of past, insanity, revenge, selfishness, violence and narrow mindedness.

It offers them a path of peace to future.

This holds true for any entity - whether family, country, society or world at large.

But we should also be mindful enough that "forgiveness should not become a license to justify wrongs". Hence

adopting Nachyama Marg of Buddhism will be the key to achieve peace in inner and outer world. - ;

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There is more to life than simply increasing its speed

"An unexamined life is not worth living" - Socrates

When Socrates gave above quote, what did he mean by unexamined life? Did he mean - a life which has not passed some examination? If yes, then what kind of exam, life needs to pass? If no, then is there any different interpretation of 'unexamined life'?

Well, both of these interpretations hold truth as per Anēkāntavāda doctrine, which highlights maniness of reality.

By unexamined life, he meant two things - that a life in which person hasn't stepped out of their comfort zone and also a life in which persons or

institution gave up on challenges which time threw at them. They didn't pass that examination of their capabilities.

living life in one's comfort zone, abiding by firmly established beliefs and morals and never examining one's strengths -

mean that we are just spending our lives in a rat race, simply increasing its speed, once it'll reach finishing line, it'll end. That's all.

But if we want to make our lives worth then we have to assess, examine and challenge ourselves. To find its true meaning, we must remember that, there is more to life than simply increasing its speed.

Now the whole question is of finding this 'more'. What is this 'more'? Answering this question will require us to go with Anekantavada doctrine again - That is, many meanings of 'more' for different persons.

For some people, true meaning of 'life', i.e., 'more' lies in finding a 'Purpose' and then working with dedication towards it. Gandhi ji was one of them. He had choice to spend his life simply as a barometer but he chose to fight for Indian residents in South Africa first and then for India's independence later. He challenged his strength of truth and non violence to fight all obstacles.

Apart from 'Purpose', 'more to life' for Buddha meant finding truth of life, suffering and ways to get rid

of those sufferings. He left his comfort
of life as a prince because he knew
that life is not only about enjoying
luxuries but to do something for humanity.

This notion of serving others forms
the basis of a compassionate character like
Mother Teresa, lady who spent her life
in taking care of leprosy patients. For her,
meaningful life is one in which
'we care and live for others'

Hence, it is clear that finding
'more' of life needs self introspection and
some changes to oneself. However, the
story doesn't end here. Sometimes
'Purpose' of life and its achievement
also requires changing and challenging
external world too.

Taking Challenge to Change

"Two roads diverged in wood, And I-
took the road less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference"

— [Robert Frost]

These last lines of closing stanza of Frost's poem 'the road not taken' shows that sometimes we need to take some challenging path, which others don't choose to make a difference.

This was done by all persons or institutions who didn't want to live simply and easily but want to fulfil some goal for larger welfare.

It requires courage to challenge status quo of society in which we live. But as [Gandhi ji] said, "Be the change you want to see in the world",

Arunachalam Murganathan, padman.

of India became that change. He mainstreamed issue of menstrual hygiene and made women empowered to access and make affordable sanitary pads.

This broke taboos regarding menstruation and reproductive health was emphasized.

Similarly, challenge to ensure last mile public delivery was accepted by District Magistrate of a district in Kerala. She couldn't continue her life as bureaucrat by simply abiding by rules after looking at rural urban disparity in availing healthcare services. She chose the road less travelled by and brought telemedicine revolution by installing computer and wifi in a remote tribal village. Doctors of public health centres were directed

to schedule online consultations regularly. This innovative use of technology helped in bridging the existing gap. This shows that even bureaucracy as a institution can do more rather than simply following rules and being status quoist.

The remarkable change in political and administrative arena - "Right to Information Act" - is was result of challenges taken by daily wage labourers of Kishangarh district in Rajmer. As

[Sigmund Freud] said, "Out of your vulnerabilities, comes your strength", these labourers decided to fight against exploitation rather than living passively and demanded accountability from government.

Thus, this process of changing external world, finding more to life and examining our own capabilities require

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lot of qualities - courage, patience, Perseverance and adaptability. Those who inculcate these choose to live a life which has some meaning and worth.

More is Magic

Apart from giving sense of purpose to one's life, his 'more to life' creates a magical world. What kind of magic it does? It does a magic of - seeking improvement and becoming better. As it is said, "There are always better practices to best practices", countries, institutions and people always strive for something better. They never choose to continue with same efforts without looking for improvements. Real success lies there only.

Sometimes, external circumstances also make it compulsory to look for 'more'.

This quest for becoming better is visible from India's transition from Green Revolution to Energreen revolution, from Development for women to women led development and from economic growth to inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Changing goals with time after achieving success in former one shows that a nation shouldn't become complacent with its way of development. It should be accommodative of other stakeholders like environment and our neighbours.

This shows that even nations have more magic to create rather than simply increasing their speed of development.

Similarly, never ending efforts of an individual like Dr BR Ambedkar

helped in inter-generational mobility of
hit-hereto disadvantaged sections like Untouchables and
untouchables. The magic ~~is~~ of his 'more'
is visible in socio political upliftment
of those sections.

[All that glitters not Gold]

Not always, 'Purpose' of an ^{entity} person
creates magic, sometimes it creates
black magic too. When 'purpose' of life
is based on narrow self interest of power
and destruction of humanity, it will
create negative impacts.

As evident from Hitler's Holocaust
against Jews as he didn't want to
live simply as emperor but as dictator.
Similarly, terrorists like Osama Bin Laden
who chose to strike terror by destroying
lives - their 'more' has destroyed other
meaningful lives.

These examples call for the need to unite our aspirations with larger welfare goals. How can this be ensured?

This can be ensured by following Japanese philosophy of Ikigai which says - The real purpose of life which can make us happy lies in finding Common between - what is good for us, where our passion lies, what is right to do and where the collective welfare of humanity lies. When we are able to think about others along with thinking ^{realise} about ourselves, only then we will be true meaning of 'make to life'.

Hence, whenever confused whether we should follow simple and comfortable life or try to do something great, one should remember. "The ship is safe in harbour but it is not built for staying there only".