



## MY OUTLOOK

Translation of  
Edasseri's essay  
'Ente Kazhchappad'

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Edasseri

The sum total of life is grief. Happiness exists only as an attribute of grief. To walk in the hot sun is the fact while the chill and the flavor of water from a rivulet one relishes during his journey are its attributes only. At the end of the journey we would wisely reflect that, the walk in the scorching sun was so arduous as to feel the water in the rivulet really cool and relishing.

Man is afraid of grief because it is extremely bitter. Even though it is not possible to eliminate grief totally, he wishes to make it at least bearable. The early form of ethical laws (Dharma Sasthras) must have emerged as a consequence of this. Every section of human society has its own ethical laws. Generally speaking, all of them exhort segregation of virtue and vice and advise us to accept only virtue. The laws of ethics advise us to nurture honesty, mercy and love while shunning dishonesty, cruelty and hatred.

The prudential views about right and wrong that the society has been eternally following are already embedded in us as a cultural aspect. Even without the absolute knowledge of these ethical laws, we know that we must not do certain things while it is also imperative that we do certain other things. We have also been able to lessen, to a certain level at least, the impact of some of the man-made grief. But elimination of grief, if that is the dream of the law of ethics, still remains outside the realm of possibility!

The perception that "happiness and sorrow that we reap are the result of virtue and vice that we sow" might be true. But at which point does virtue and vice part ways, or rather do they? Let us note that Diti and Aditi<sup>1</sup> are not only sisters, but co-wives too. If the dictum "don't kill" - was followed, then this country would have been dominated by vicious people. "Tell no lies" - is alright but under what all circumstances? Upon microscopic analysis many surprises surface! There are some most sacred lies which make any great truth lusterless. Remember great Victor Hugo who called out to Sister Sam Plesis "Sister, let that untruth remain along with all your pious deeds." It was Rantidevan<sup>2</sup> who spilled blood by butchering animals in puranic time.

Love is a virtue, but is adept in misleading anyone into tracks of vice. We have seen many a time that the seekers of truth are generally weak in practical life. Instances of damages caused by the kind-hearted are colossal! Reason for this is that the dividing line between virtues and vice is ultra-thin, making it almost impossible for anyone to distinguish between the two.

Is it possible for the laws of ethics to eliminate at least man made grief? Even the most virtuous of the kings Sreerama who scrupulously stuck to the right path (Dharma), abandoned his pregnant and dependent wife in the forest in the name of the same Dharma. If even after ages, this tragic story moves us, one can imagine the mental trauma suffered by that king - a loving husband- as a result of his adherence to Dharma. 'Rishis' (saints) say that 'The truth of dharma lies concealed in the dark cave of the human heart. Was the king erroneous? What would have happened if ignoring the public scandal, Rama had ruled the land along with Seetha? A supposition about such an end to the story is worth the imagination. Under such circumstances and in accordance with the old saying 'as is the ruler so the ruled' the purity of husband-wife relation as sanctified by society would have been vitiated and the paradise, that is the family would have crumbled. Thus, even in such a situation, the result would have been only grief multiplied.

In short, whatever we do can result in grief. That is inevitable also. Then the only thing that we can set aside is fear. Fear multiplies the pain portended many-fold and imposes tremendous pressure. The essence of the lines, "valiant dies only once; cowards die many times" is nothing else. Moreover, it is this fear that confuses us at the labyrinth of life with never ending doubts. It constrains us to the status of a eunuch. In situations where whatever done may end up wrong,



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you must do with firmness what you think is right. Both right and wrong are for us, the humans. And never forget that sin is nothing but the sense of perceived sin.

If I have to destroy sin, I have to destroy the evil within me. Is it possible? In as much as good and evil seem to be eternal truth like light and shadow, they cannot but help exist together. Therefore, they are in me, the love for good and the infatuation for evil. It does not end up here. The universe and the God, the universal spirit, is the aggregation of "me". Whatever is there in me has come from this totality, the universe. I don't believe that virtue has emerged from God and evil from devil. Reason is that there is only 'One' and not 'Two'. Therefore my God, while being very merciful can also be extremely cruel. Even if I attain realization of God by penance, I cannot believe that it would destroy the evil in me in order to help destroy my grief.

What man should do is not to try destroying grief, not to tame it even; but to conquer it. Here the relevance of laws of ethics is significant.

Srirama had the capacity to outlive the sorrow of abandoning Seetha and the more severe pain of reunion and to ensure that the magnificent concept of good governance, Rama Rajya, was carried down through ages, only because he succeeded in holding his crowned head high above grief. Krishna when convinced that even his own race was not worthy of survival triggered the ultimate nemesis discarding grief. It is only from such a merciful Krishna, man can learn the concept of "Duty, without attachment to fruits of action - Nishkama Karma". Look at the Father of our Nation who marched forward trampling on immense grief. When people of India were butchering each other, he called out in a voice echoing on the Himalayan valleys, "Don't kill! Don't kill!" Only such a great soul could elevate the people of a whole nation that suffered degradation for decades, to a state of fearlessness. They all marched forward deriving support from the scriptures which expounded Dharma. That is the very purpose of the laws of ethics, neither destruction of grief nor making it tolerable, but keeping everyone above grief.

"If the mind goes voluntarily seeking grief

Ill fate will discard its anger on its own"

More than anything else, it is the fear about grief that troubles us. Have you not heard the story of the screaming Bhadrakali, drunken with blood? She has a group of henchmen. Devi has got the power to bless. But the only work that these henchmen can perform is to scatter smallpox and plague. More or less similar is the case with grief (Devi) and the fear of grief (henchmen). While the realization of grief lifts man strong and great, the fear of it just makes him miserable.

We can remove this fear only with the realization that grief is inevitable. This can be achieved by continuously indulging in 'karma'; studying contemporary lives of people as closely as possible, reading books written by great men who are lovers of humanity and meditating on the expanse of the universe.

When I turn back to my life which is not very short, I see this great wonder, my young friend E. Narayanan, the author of the collection of beautiful poems "The Treasure of the Sheppard" and who died young. We have spent hour's together sitting on the vast stretch of sands of the river 'Bharatha Puzha'<sup>3</sup> against the back drop of the clamor of the not distant sea, and gazing at the vast expanse of the sky. When he was sitting by my side with tear stained eyes and burning heart; those heart beats were familiar to me. There, along with one of our friend who is still alive, we had engaged in serious discussions and criticisms and ignorantly indulged in heated arguments on subjects which in no way were directly connected to our own lives. The purpose of this was only to forget the existing adverse situations; in other words to keep away the fear of grief. Looking back, as a man who had outlived that terrible time, I can say for sure that to a great extent we succeeded in that attempt. Moreover, under similar circumstances I repeat the following lines of my friend,

"The bud of intense grief, hot tear drop, the golden star,  
The only one in life that sparkle my sky;



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Your rays kissed awake my eyelids

Which were shut in deep reverie"

That was the sparkle of a soul, which had evolved almost to the realization of grief as the eternal truth!

*(Details on this essay are not available. As such the purpose for which this essay was written or the time period it belongs to are not ascertainable. This must have been written in the second half of his life. Manuscript was available with Smt E. Janaki Amma, wife of Edasseri)*

Notes:

- (1) Diti and Aditi, both were daughters of Daksh Prajapati. Both of them were married to Rishi Kashyapa, but were rivals. Aditi was the mother of Gods (Devamatha) while Diti (the bound one), was the mother of Daityas or asuras (Demons of Hell-Naraka)
- 2) Rantideva was a king of the Bharata dynasty. The story goes that Rantideva being of rigid vows and always engaged in due performance of sacrifices, countless animals desirous of going to heaven, came to him for being sacrificed.
- 3) Bharatha Puzha (Nila) is a river which joins the sea at Ponani, the town where Edasseri lived. This beautiful river has inspired many of Edasseri's poems.

*Translated by Edasseri Trust Team*