

Bhagavan Das
Adultery, Lust, Malice



If the springs of the stream are poisoned, all its subsequent length will show the taint.

From Bhagavan Das. *The Science of the Emotions*. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1924 (3rd ed.). Ch. VIII, COMPLEX EMOTIONS, pp. 194-202. (A searchable PDF of the 2nd ed., of 1908, can be found in our Constitution of Man Series.)

Adultery

The commonness of Adultery, too, is due to causes somewhat similar to those underlying sadism and masochism. Adultery excites not only the emotion of Lust, but also of Malice, sometimes of Revenge, or of Pride and Conquest, and again of Fear, which — by a particular perversion, that will be treated later on in more detail under the subject of the Philosophy of Poetry and Literature — becomes, in a certain aspect, a pleasurable, from being originally a painful, sentiment. Sometimes the motives are the opposite; the miseries of an unhappy marriage may drive the spouses apart from each other and into the companionship of others who can better satisfy their natural human craving for the affection of some fellow-being; in such cases the adultery would be more technical and not so much the lustful one referred to before. Yet it should be remembered that the miseries of such marriages are mostly due to senseless nagging at one another; which again is due to the desire of one to *dominate* the other, even while inwardly full of affection and the craving for affection and the remembrance of the romance and tenderness of the first dawn of love for that other. Stories, especially of “high life” in the capital towns of the West, show how sometimes “sheer cussedness,” that is to say, mutual *arrogance*, the wish that the other should be humble and bow first, prevents newly-married bride and bridegroom from giving effect to their love for each other, and, by reaction, leads them into the arms of designing knaves of both sexes, who vampirise their exuberant youthful vitality, made yet more vibrant by the emotional excitements surrounding marriage, and bring life-long sorrow on their lives. In this wish to *dominate* is the touch of sadism; and in the simultaneous presence of deep affection is illustration of ambivalence. What probably happens in yet other cases is that people become surfeited with the quieter joys of the family-life, and, beginning to find them stale, plunge into the wild ways that bring more “sensation,” for “stolon sweets are sweeter,” and “their tameness is shocking to me.”¹ The reverse happens also, and “fast” persons settle down, “turn

¹ William James has some instructively humorous remarks in his *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*, on the boredom bred by “the ideal life” of the artificial paradise at Chautauqua. [Chautauqua was an adult education movement in the United States, highly popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chautauqua assemblies expanded and spread throughout rural America until the mid-1920s.]

over a new leaf,” “sinners become sober, at least, if not saints,” in consequence of the everlasting swing of the soul between the “pairs of opposites” which make up the world-process.

The real and full significance of the statement in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*,¹ “Adultery leadeth unto hell,” is to be found in this very fact, that it has its root in the evil Emotions, and so shall have branches and fruits in them too. If the springs of the stream are poisoned, all its subsequent length will show the taint. Let the emotion, the whole mood of the parents, be pure, peaceful, happy, and loving, in the moment they produce and “set apart” from their own bodies a new body, and then this nucleus, partaking as it must of the pure nature of its parent bodies, shall become fit abode for a pure jīva. Otherwise it will be evil and attract an evil jīva only into itself.² Herein is to be found the true use and significance of a formal and public celebration and consecration of marriage, whereby all false and evil emotions of shame and fear and jealousy of other claimants are removed, and only pure and peaceful affection, recognised and undisturbed, in given the best opportunity of growing between the married pair, to the benefit of the progeny. The sanctification of marriage, the holiness of wedlock, *is*, and consists in, and is made by, the public *recognition and* therefore the public well-wishing and blessing of it, and the forbiddance of all interference with the married pair.

Hopefulness

The converse of Jealousy

The converse of jealousy — *viz.*, attraction plus the consciousness of a possible superiority in another which will *help* one to secure the object of one’s wish — has apparently no distinctive name in the English language. Confidence, trust, faith, reliance are the nearest terms. Perhaps the idea is better expressed by Hopefulness; the emotion in the parent corresponding to the “promisingness” of his child; the emotion which is indicated in the Sanskrit saying:

Let a man wish to excel all others, but let him wish that his son should excel him.

Envy

Envy is Jealousy wherein the superiority of the object thereof is more pronounced, the Repulsion as great, and the active endeavour to make the envied person inferior to oneself is weaker, because less hopeful. Jealousy and Envy cease as soon as the disputed object is definitely secured by one of the rivals: the emotion that is left behind in the mind of the loser is then neither Envy nor Jealousy, but Hate — the Hate of Malice. But sometimes the word Envy is used in a comparatively good sense, that of emulousness, “noble Emulation,” in the spirit of the advice,³ “Be envious of the causes, not of the results,” *i.e.*, be envious and emulous of the merits which secure prosperity, and strive to develop them in yourself; be not envious and jealous of the resultant prosperity in any given case.

¹ i, 42

² See p. 32, *supra*.

³ *Charaka-Samhitā*, Sūtrasthāna, viii

Malice

Malice is Hate plus Fear. Its converse is Tyranny, Cruelty, Oppression. Slyness is a milder form of it. It does not strike openly, but seeks to injure by an underhand blow, by insinuation, or by some crooked method, so that the assailant may not appear as such, and so may escape the return blow which he fears and wishes to avoid by keeping in the background. It sometimes appears in one who is on the whole stronger, towards one who is on the whole weaker. It then takes the form of a desire to inflict pain and feel power over another in a way which does not admit of any immediate show of resentment on the other side; it watches for the opportunity to stab, when retort would place the victim in an even worse position than silent endurance. Here, the fear is fear of others, the fear of losing reputation with them and being treated by them accordingly. In the inferior towards the superior, it is often the effort to be revenged upon tyranny. Many that call others malicious and mean are worse themselves, for they are oppressors and misappropriators, have themselves by their own wrong-doing created Malice and Meanness in their victims, and are angry that they should be resisted by those victims in the ways that appear malicious and mean. Spitefulness is allied to, perhaps the same as, Malice.

Meanness

Meanness is Strictness where Benevolence or Magnanimity is expected and proper. Niggardliness is an allied emotion. Usage confines the latter word to money-matters.

Extravagance

Extravagance, Carelessness, Recklessness, False Magnificence, are the converse moods. They are Benevolence, or mere Self-Display, where strictness is desirable.

Insolence

Insolence, Impertinence, Stiff-neckedness, Stiff-backedness, Brag, Bullying, Presumptuousness, *etc.*, are the opposite of Humility, the converse of Malice, the kin of Tyranny. They are the assumption in oneself of equality or superiority, where the fact is inferiority, to the object of the mood. The desire here is the desire of Repulsion, though it is not very prominent in the beginning. An “insult” is the pointed expression of one’s consciousness of the inferiority of the object of the insult.

Craftiness

Crookedness and Craftiness are the more active forms of Spitefulness and Malice; but the element of dislike is more hidden.

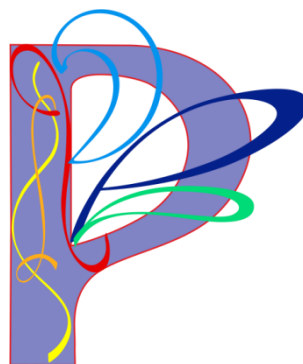
Admiration

Admiration too appears to be a complex emotion. Of course, in order to say that an emotion which is described by a special name is simple or complex, we must be guided by current usage in deciding what emotion is really denoted by that word. This reflection comes up at once in connection with a word like Admiration, which is used — like so many others, on account of the paucity of words in languages, resulting from the absence, on the part of the races using those languages, of the feeling of any need for more minute and elaborate expression — to indicate many distinguish-

able though related phases of the same mood.¹ For our present purpose we have to take the sense in which the word is used most often. Taking that sense, *i.e.*, scrutinising the majority of the particular instances in which the word is used, it appears that it is employed mostly where there is a consciousness of the superiority of the object of it, but the feeling of Attraction accompanying it is neutralised or diminished by collateral circumstances.

We admire the skill of a juggler. We recognise the superiority of skill and like the results, but not very much. They appear trivial to us, or perhaps even wasteful of time and energy. So also we admire the skill of a general in the successful conduct of a war. But, if we are neutral to the parties warring, while recognising the superiority of skill in manipulating armies, we are perhaps full of sadness and regret at the fearful results in slaughter and rapine. If we are not neutral but interested, then there is no admiration; the successful fighter becomes an object of apotheosis or satanisation; his name becomes a name to worship or a name to hate, according as we have gained or suffered by his skill. Again, we admire the beauty of a person; we admit the superiority in that respect, but there is something, some drawback, which prevents the attraction from ripening into reverence or love, and the feeling remains one of admiration only.

Thus admiration is attraction plus consciousness of superiority in the object in some respects, plus consciousness of its inferiority in some other respects. It comes very near to esteem. In esteem the element of attraction is stronger perhaps, and the objects of it, the attributes liked, are different; they are qualities of a work-a-day usefulness, *indirectly* pleasurable. In the case of admiration they are more directly pleasurable. Such seems to be the distinction between them; but it refers, of course, to one special sense and use of each term.



¹ This is a matter of racial temperament and of type rather than degree of civilisation. Some so-called savage or semi-savage tribes have scores of words for distinguishing minute differences of relationship which are all covered in English by the single word cousin.