

# THE SEVEN HINDRANCES

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BY  
S. K. BHUYAN, M.P.  
M.A. B.L., (Cal.)  
Ph.D. (Lond.), D.Lit.(Lond.)

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## PREFACE

A man's view of life, or the way in which he sees life, shed its influence, visibly and invisibly, on all his thoughts, utterances and actions. My own conclusions relate to the sphere of uninterrupted mindfulness to one's duties, circumstantial and self-imposed, and the hindrances which stand in its way. The observations are gleaned from my own experiences in life, and the thoughts of others have been instrumental in the reinforcement of my own rather than in their original formulation.

- S.K.B.

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## THE SEVEN HINDRANCES

I have often been asked as to what has sustained me in my efforts to accomplish my objects carried on in fair weather and foul. An inner urge to do my bit to my country, in a way congenial to my aptitude and my opportunities has provided me the mainspring of action. Some degree of altruism and spiritual-mindedness, combined with a preference of fundamentals over the superficialities of human existence, has come to me from my ancestors, and it has given me my stay and my fortitude. This trait has at times produced a slackness in the emphasis on the practical outlook on life as it is understood in this work-a-day world. But my unshakeable faith in the moral order of the universe has upheld me in moments of despair and disillusionment. My experience in life have deepened my faith and have encourages me to cultivate a placidity of temper which has given me peace of mind and an unforsaken smile. This temper has been further strengthened by my recent voyagings in the sea of Buddhistic lore. To me work has been worship, and there is no god in my pantheon except the omnipotent call of duty.

I have tried my utmost to eliminate the hindrances which serve as obstacles in the progress of work; because, these hindrances lead to a temporary distemper which enfeebles our energy, and diminishes our inclination and capacity for uninterrupted endeavour.

## **CENTRIFUGAL PRESSURE**

The eternal hindrance in the pursuit of our ideals is the pressure constantly put on us to deviate from the chosen path. This pressure comes from the impact of worldly circumstances and from the whisperings of friends who consider the quest of wealth and power in being of greater moment than the pleasure of the mind and the search for truth which appear to them as unprofitable and vain. Allurements and temptations often beset us obstructing our progress in the service of our country and of humanity. These temptations have been depicted as Maya in Hindu philosophy, as Mara in Buddhism, and as Satan in Christian belief. I have derived my protection from the picture of Lord Srikrishna dancing triumphant on the serpent-hood of Time which tries to devour him with its outstretched fangs. Time and the world will engulf us all by forcing before us considerations of gain and utility, but the true warrior fixes his foot on the earth and gazes at the eternal heavens, and embraces all space and time as the ultimate background of his life's little labour. A boat is tied with a rope to a stake dug into the muddy bank of a river; the boat tosses in the waves caused by storms and the stirrings of passing vessels; but if the rope is strong and the stake is firmly rooted the boat will never stray from its moorings. I have constantly examined the toughness of the rope, and hammered the stake into greater firmness by the searching of my heat and the deepening of my faith.

## **EXPECTATION OF PRAISE**

The second hindrance is the habit of expecting that the world will sing hallelujahs in praise of our little performances, because in the event of frustrations which are sometimes inevitable, we shall be dislodged from the very basis of our endeavours if we work in the expectancy of universal applause. The world is busy with its own preoccupations, and it may not get time to weigh our merit with accuracy and fairness. The proper incentive to action is not reward, but purity of motives and faith in that action's ultimate usefulness. Recognition comes from outside and we cannot bring it by anxiety or pressure whereas purity and disinterestedness lies within the compass of our own discipline and acquisition. Our work if it has to depend on praise, will come to an end when we confront opposition or antipathy. Recognition is welcome if it comes by the way, but it should never be made a motive of our services to our country which should be unconditional like a mother's love for her child, and pure like the shining snows of the Himalayas.

## **BEHAVIOUR OF FRIENDS**

The third hindrance is the habit of being upset at the untoward behaviour of our friends, specially of those to whom we had been kind and helpful in the past. Such upsetting leads to brooding over our friend's ingratitude; it gives us discomfort, robs our sleep, makes us depressed and rejected, and diverts our time which should be devoted to the pursuit of our labours. My remedy has been sought in looking upon my friend's conduct as something which is absolutely his own and over which I have no control. His conduct may be influenced by his own peculiar outlook, his heredity, his upbringing, his likes and dislikes, his predilections and prejudices and his own personal needs. I cannot control his conduct, I can

only regulate mine; and as long as I am just and correct I do not regret at my friend's unfairness. It will be gratifying to me if I can bring my friend to my way of thinking by kind and gentle means till he sees his mistakes and becomes repentant. I am unwilling to nurse an offence, and clutch it to my bosom, because such persistence undermines the geniality of my soul, besides its result is, - I get an offence but I lose a friend.

### **INORDINATE AMBITION**

The fourth hindrance is the cherishing of inordinate ambitions, for it takes away our equilibrium and peace, and plunges us in efforts which may sometimes prove to be beyond our capacity. I remember the Jataka story of a king who planned to conquer three new territories just for segmenting his prestige and fame. The great god Indra having known of the king's preparations to launch a Digvijaya campaign which would inevitably entail human slaughter, appeared before him in the guise of a Brahman, and asked the monarch if he could live in our cities simultaneously, sleep on four beds, or eat from four dishes at the same time. The king realised his mistake, abandoned his intention of war; the lives of men were saved, and the monarch was restored to peace and tranquility of mind. Ambition is good if it is pursued within the limits of one's legitimate opportunities, but it should be abandoned if it causes injury to others or to ourselves by bringing in mental disquietitude.

### **VIGILANCE OVER OTHERS' DEFECTS**

The fifth hindrance is vigilance over the defects of others and averseness to ponder over our own. Much of the ill-feeling which exists between man and man and which saps the very foundations of social harmony arises from our habit of cogitating over the infirmities of our friends without trying to examine ourselves and to remove our own defects one by one. We perhaps aim too much at collective perfection without realizing that mass purity cannot be attained unless every individual member of society first attempts to purify himself. It is a very difficult proposition, for the human mind is unwilling to admit its own shortcomings and still more to consciously attempt to eliminate them. The battle within is harder to win than the direful contests of Kurushetra and Marathon. Much of our energy would be usefully employed in work and the lofty tenure of our mind would remain undisturbed and unpolluted if we could disengage ourselves from reflecting on others' weaknesses. In this connection we should bear in mind the immortal words of Confucius, "The superior man blames himself; the inferior man blames others".

### **JEALOUSY**

The sixth hindrance is envy or jealousy. It produces an uneasiness in the mind when we see our friends becoming prosperous and wealthy. A good house built by a friend will produce that uneasiness or a new vehicle driven by him, or some wealth which he has acquired, or some good fortune which has befallen his family. I have taught myself to be happy when a friend is rich and prosperous, for envy is reprehensible on moral grounds. Besides, reasons, apparently selfish, dictate the efficacy of joy at our friends well-being, for I will be able to take shelter in his big house, or get a lift in his vehicle, or request him for help in times of need. If I greet my fortunate friend with a smile of genuine pleasure he will not be slow to detect my sincerity and reciprocate my feelings. This attitude has given me peace,

increased my working hours, and avoided the regrettable tragedy of loss of friends caused by one's default or shortsightedness. The ascendancy of a man to fortune and to power is often the result of his own unmitigated exertions which should be studied and emulated. It is uncharitable to indulge in associating dishonesty or machination as the eternal accompaniment of such ascendancy.

### **WORRIES**

The seventh hindrance, and a most depressing morbid and corrosive one, is the habit of being worried over undecided issues, unpredictable, consequences, past mistakes and the failure of our expectations. A letter not posted or received in time, the non-arrival of an expected guest, the delay in the homecoming of children, an inaccurate statement in an important document, the sudden, loss of fortune, of the non-attainment of a particular object, are capable of producing worry and suspense and to rob us thereby of peace of mind, the effect of which is seen in the loss of mindfulness, in our work. The sensitive man broods over the incident and magnifies, the consequences hundredfold, and can even become physically prostrate as the result of his imaginary fears ; whereas, the man of stamina and fortitude takes the event as it comes, or begins to search for reasons or explore remedies for rehabilitation. A mistake can be condoned by admission, an inaccurate statement can be rectified in a subsequent communication, the delay in the arrival of a guest can be attributed to some unforeseen cause, the late posting or receipt of a letter can be remedied by a speedier dispatch or an effective reminder, and loss of fortune can be recouped by austerity and increased exertions. As time passes it will be realised that most of the fears were unfounded and that they did not produce the dire results we had apprehended, or our temporary misfortune provided an opportunity and an incentive to bring out the best in our ability. Even if an irreparable calamity, be our lot we can always find consolation in the thought that innocents never escape the thunderbolt. Those who are accustomed to being easily upset should read the literature of Buddhism where worries, anxieties and misgivings have been labelled under one name - 'Utkantha' - and the Blessed Lord has taught diverse means to uproot them altogether from our bosom as they lead to sorrow and loss of equanimity. All worries can be brushed aside if we believe, as did Socrates, that "to the good man no evil thing can happen."

These remedies will perhaps appear too colourless, passive, and insipid to men of the world who can to push their way to fortune and to power by the application of all measures within their reach. But, after their ambitions are satisfied, or even after they are frustrated, and when they are subjected to the woes and sufferings common to all creatures, they will realize that mental composure and inward satisfaction are the things worth trying for, whether you live in a cottage eating your frugal meal, or live in a palace with all the magnificence of a Pharaoh. There is a moral order in the universe, and man's bickering and rivalries violate the principles of that moral order. Civilization implies the adoption of progressive measures for the ultimate triumph of that order ; and it is my earnest conviction that in spite of the daily improvements made in the weapons of destruction, and the division of the nations into hostile camps and power blocs, sanity prevails in the residual mind of man. The world will see in no distant future that the war-drums are beating no longer, and

that the supremacy of the moral order has been established which even the most formidable, array of giants and Goliaths will ever dislodge.

- S.K. BHUYAN

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