



Forgiveness

“The trouble is, you think you have time.” Buddha

Swami Kshamyanda, July 31, 2020

“Forgive others for their misdeeds over and over again. This gesture fosters inner ease. Forgive ourselves over and over and over again. Then try to do better next time.” Epictetus

“Against our will, our souls are cut off from truth.” Plato

“Truth, yes, and justice, self-control, kindness... Important to keep this in mind. It will make you more patient with other people.” Marcus Aurelius

Forgiveness...

I learned many valuable lessons from my fraternal grandmother, who we called Ya-Ya. She called me her ‘Sunshine.’ She taught me to crush matso crackers into my coffee. She taught me to bake and always lick the ‘varecka,’ or wooden spoon, to always laugh, to be adventurous, and to love and respect the beauty and power of nature. Ya-Ya also taught me the most valuable of lessons - forgiveness.



As a small child believing I was helping her with the gardening, I pulled a couple handfuls of what I thought were weeds out of her plant beds. I proudly brought them to her, desperate for her approval, and I can now with adult eyes look back and see what was initially horror on her face. I had pulled out her prized Easter Lily bulbs. Ya-Ya being Ya-Ya, she quickly pulled it together and praised me lavishly and thanked me for my help. She took my small hand in hers, and we went in for a cup of coffee.

Instant forgiveness.

We had not many years together after that time, and how I wish there had been more. But as the Buddha said, that is the trouble, we think we have time.

Whether our study be of Stoicism, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, the Bhagavad Gita, or Kriya Yoga, the lessons are replete with the concept of forgiveness. Forgiveness sets us free, it requires great strength as it vivifies us with strength. Forgiveness provides us with a means to peace and healing, be it through religion or philosophy. Poet and philosopher David Whyte says of forgiveness, "To forgive is to assume a larger identity than the person who was first hurt." Sometimes, forgiveness is simply an expression of love.

In one of Epictetus' teachings on forgiveness, he urges us to remember that we are not privy to the stories behind another person's actions - to their karma. We need to be patient with them he teaches, and suspend our judgment, for we must recognize the limits of our understanding. His philosophy may be likened to the yogi mastering kshama, the practice of forgiveness, forbearance, patience, and pardon. It may even be likened to teachings of our Guru, the practice of simply observing and saying, "Isn't that interesting."

The truth is, we don't know how much time we have. A wise member of our sangha suggested we make a list of the people with whom we need find forgiveness. Yes! Make a list, say 'I'm sorry,' practice the Kriya Yoga forgiveness ritual, meditate, pray, bless them. Be strong and free and at peace. Forgive others and yourself over and over again.

For the trouble is, we think we have time.