

Ghalib's Most Famous and Popular Shers Translated and Discussed



Maharaj Kaul translates and discusses Mirza Ghalib's (1797 – 1869)

most popular and famous shers:

Ghalib Sher 24:

qafas meñ mujh se rūdād-e-chaman kahte na Dar hamdam

girī hai jis pe kal bijlī vo merā āshiyāñ kyuuñ ho

Translation:

in the cage, telling me the events of the garden, don't be afraid, friend
the one on which lightning has fallen yesterday, why would that be my nest?

Discussion:

As it happens with some of Ghalib's verses, several meanings can be alluded to this one. He was a master of compression: in the least number of words, he could construct a meaning that could be interpreted differently by different readers. My

interpretation of this verse is that a bird in a garden was captured by a gardener and put in a cage in the garden, from where he could see the garden. A new bird is captured by the gardener and put in the same cage in which the earlier bird has been a prisoner. The new bird after he is put in the cage starts at once a conversation about the lightning that struck the garden a day earlier, destroying the earlier prisoner's nest. But in midway of his conversation he stops, afraid that the news of the destruction of the earlier bird's nest will pain him. But in spite of the halted news of the new bird, the old bird realizes that the new bird wanted to tell him about the destruction of his nest, as he had either seen it himself yesterday, or by judging the new bird's hesitation to give the bad news. The old bird has made peace with the destruction of his old nest, as he lives there no more. He has a new life in the cage, with which he wants to make peace. This is expressed by the old bird telling the new bird that the destruction of his old nest is irrelevant, as he leads a new existence living in the cage.

Below three verses of Ghalib are being grouped together, as they are thematically connected. Because of this the verse numbering in this posting had to be put in the descending order:

Ghalib Sher 21:

*rahye ab aisī jagah chal kar jahāñ ko'ī nah ho
ham-sukhan ko'ī nah ho aur ham-zabāñ ko'ī nah ho*

Translation:

one should go now and live in such a place where there would be no one
there would be no speech-sharer and there would be no language-sharer

Discussion:

Ghalib would like to move to such a place where there would be no companion, no one to talk with, and no one who would understand his language. It is because he has had with them, they have given him a lot of grief. He wants absolute isolation.

Ghalib Sher 22:

*be-dar-o-dīvār sā ik ghar banāyā chāhiye
ko'ī ham-sāyah nah ho aur pāsbāñ ko'ī nah ho*

Translation:

without-door-and-walls-ish house ought to be made
there would be no neighbor and there would be no gatekeeper

Discussion:

Ghalib would like to have a house made without doors and walls. Obviously, it implies that no neighbors exist. It is like living in a desert or an island without people. Obviously again no doorman would be needed in such an existence. All these requirements are needed by Ghalib because he has had enough grief with people.

Ghalib Sher 23:

*paṛye gar bīmār to ko'ī nah ho bīmār-dār
aur agar mar jā'īye to nauḥah-ḵhvāñ ko'ī nah ho*

Translation:

if one would fall sick then there would be no sick-attendant

and if one would die then there would be no lament-reciter

Discussion:

Ghalib does not want any attendant to help him, if he got ill. Nor would he want any lament-reciter to lament his death, as was required by the prevalent culture. It is all because he is so sick and tired of human society. He has had enough of it.

General Discussion on The Above Three Verses:

The above three verses are considered among the worst of Ghalib's poetry. Such negativity, such emotionalism. He wants to live in an unpopulated place, where he won't see even the face of a human being, as he has been deeply hurt by them. Such a childish emotion.

In 1862 Ghalib is supposed to have written to some Ala'i:

I envy the situation of island-dwellers in general, and of the lord of Farrukhabad in particular, whom they put off the ship and left on the shore of the land of Arabia. Hah! [*ahāhāhā*]: {127,3}. (Arshi 246)

What he is expressing is that he would like to live on an island, cut-off from the commotion of the world. But in the above three verses he has gone even beyond that in wanting to live without human beings around him.

These three verses are independent of each other, but thematically they are similar, so they are like a ghazal.

Their popularity also stems from Suraiya's singing of them.

Ghalib Sher 20:

***go hāth ko junbish nahīñ āñkhoñ meñ to dam hai
rahne do abhī sāghar-o-mīnā mire āge***

Translation:

although there is no movement in the hand but eyes have power

let the wine glass and flagon remain before me

Discussion:

Due to old age or dissipation of passion the body feels weak, but still the eyes have power. It is not all over yet. So, let the wine glass and the flagon (a large container of wine, which has a handle and a spout) stay on. Man's life is dependent on the vigor of body, but beyond that the mind still exerts power over his existence.

Ghalib Sher 19:

***bāzīchah-e atfāl hai dunyā mire āge
hotā hai shab-o-roz tamāshā mire āge***

Translation:

a game of children the world is before me
happens night and day a spectacle in front of me

Discussion:

Ghalib sees the world as games that children play. The spectacle goes on day and night. He does not think much of it, he is unaffected by it. This means that he has an inner life that he lives for and by it. His division of his internal and the external

lives is strong. This is clearly different from run of the world people.

Ghalib Sher 18:

***ham ne mānā kih taḡhāful nah karoge lekin
ḡhāk ho jā'eñge ham tum ko ḡhabar hote tak***

Translation:

I concede that you won't show negligence but
dust I will become by the time the news reaches you

Discussion:

The lover has come to concede that his beloved will not be negligent in taking care of him when he is in some dire condition, but the problem is that she may have gone so far away or is in some difficult situation such that his bad news may not reach her in time. So, this is the dark cloud hanging over the lover's head.

Ghalib Sher 17:

***ham ko un se vafā kī hai ummīd
jo nahīñ jānte vafā kyā hai***

Translation:

*we have hope for faithfulness from the one
who doesn't know what faithfulness is*

Discussion:

Ghalib says that the irony is that we are expecting faithfulness from a beloved who does not know what faithfulness means. It could be that she is so young yet to know what it is, or that she is old enough to know what it is, but does not think it is required of her. That is faithfulness is not a requisite in love. On one hand the lover is going in the full fever of love with all its trappings, but on the other hand the beloved does not seem to care for faithfulness.

Ghalib Sher 16:

ishq mujh ko nahīñ vaḥshat hī sahī
merī vaḥshat tirī shuhrat hī sahī

Translation:

love it may not be let it be madness

my madness your fame let it be

Discussion:

Ghalib tells his beloved that let it be his madness as she feels his love is. But his madness has imparted a fame of specialness on her. In other words, even though she thinks his passion for her is madness, but nevertheless it has cast her as a special person in society.

Ghalib Sher 15:

yih nah thī hamārī qismat kih viṣāl-e yār hotā
agar aur jīte rahte yihī intizār hotā

Translation:

this was not our destiny that union with the beloved would take place
if we had kept on living there would have been the same waiting

Discussion:

Ghalib laments that it has not been his luck to have had a union with his beloved. Also, he has come to the realization that had he and his beloved waited longer, the union between them would still not materialize. This is so because it is their destiny.

Ghalib Sher 14:

ishq se ṭabī‘at ne zīst kā mazā pāyā

dard kī davā pā’ī dard-e be-davā pāyā

Translation:

through passion the being found the relish of life
found cure for a pain found an incurable pain

Discussion:

Ghalib says that by means of passion a human being can make life enjoyable, but that passion is not easy to cultivate and hold on to, because of the problems associated with it. So, while the enjoyment in life is cultivatable, but the fuel to support it is problematic.

Ghalib Sher 13:

muḥabbat meñ nahīñ hai farq jīne aur marne kā

usī ko dekh kar jīte haiñ jis kāfir pah dam nikle

Translation:

in love there is no difference between living and dying

seeing her we live the infidel who would make us die

Discussion:

Ghalib says that in love one lives as well as dies, as it is a challenging experience that involves a relationship with another person. Depending on her state of mind one's feelings can swing from living to dying.

Ghalib Sher 12:

baskih dushvār hai har kām kā āsāñ honā

dmī ko bhī muyassar nahīñ insāñ honā

Translation:

it is difficult for every task to be easy

even for man it is not easy to be human

Discussion:

It is difficult for every human task to be easy. For man also to be human is not easy. Man is the physical aspect of the human race, being human is his qualities of love, sacrifice, compassion, etc.

Ghalib Sher 11:

nah thā kuchh to ʔhudā thā kuchh nah hotā to ʔhudā hotā

ḍuboyā mujh ko hone ne nah hotā maiñ to kyā hotā

Translation:

when there was nothing there was God if nothing happened God would be created

I was drowned by my existence if I didn't exist what would happen

Discussion:

It is a deeply philosophical sher by Ghalib. He says that when there was nothing in the universe, there still existed God; and if nothing was going on in the universe, the phenomenon of God would still be occurring. Ghalib says that his existence has ruined him. Because if he had not existed, he would be a part of God, a superior situation than his human situation.

Ghalib Sher 10:

hazāroñ ʔhvāhisheñ aisī kih har ʔhvāhish pah dam nikle

bahut nikle mire armān lekin phir bhī kam nikle

Translation:

all the thousands of longings are such that over every longing I would die

many of my wishes were fulfilled but still few were fulfilled

Discussion:

Ghalib says there are thousands of desires in life such that, for each of them one would sacrifice his life. Many of his desires were fulfilled, but still they turned out to be few.

Ghalib Sher 9:

ko'ī vīrānī-sī vīrānī hai

dasht ko dekh ke ghar yād āyā

Translation:

it is a desolation like desolation

seeing the desert home came to mind

Discussion:

This is a famous sher known for its vast ambiguity. Is Ghalib reminded of his home seeing the desolation of the desert? Or is he longing to be at his home, seeing the desolation of the desert? Or, is he in a state of the mood of desolation; then, seeing the desert he is reminded of his home, as a state of relief. We cannot understand what Ghalib had in his mind writing this couplet.

Ghalib Sher 8:

ko'ī mere dil se pūchhe tire tīr-e nīm-kash ko

yih khalish kahāñ se hotī jo jigar ke pār hotā

Translation:

let someone ask my heart about your half-drawn arrow

where would this romantic pain have been if it had gone through beyond the liver

Discussion:

The half-drawn arrow thrown by Ghalib's beloved at him, whether by amateurishness or by design, has produced a beautiful pain in him. On the other hand, had it been thrown fully by her, he would have been dead, but without any pain. This pain is what produces the feeling of love. So, he is better off in pain than being dead.

Ghalib Sher 7:

gham-e hastī kā asad kis se ho juz marg 'ilāj

sham'a har rang meñ jaltī hai sahar hote tak

Translation:

for the grief of life Asad what would be the cure except death

the candle in every color burns until the coming of dawn

Discussion:

Ghalib asks what is the cure of the unavoidable grief of life. He answers his question by saying it is death. He laments further that life is like a candle, which keeps on burning all night till dawn. Then when its wax runs out it extinguishes. When the flame of life is burning it can encompass everything imaginable. This is the inherent tragedy of human life. The second line of the sher is awesome, as it tells that while alive a man can be an element in all the possibilities. That is, the scope of human life is great; man's consciousness can take him anywhere.

Notes:

Asad is the middle name of Ghalib. His full name was Assad Ullah Khan Ghalib.

Ghalib Sher 6:

āh ko chāhiye ik ‘umr aśar hote tak

kaun jītā hai tirī zulf ke sar hote tak

Translation:

a sigh needs a lifetime until the appearance of an effect

who lives until the subduing of your curls

Discussion:

It is among the most famous as well as popular shers of Ghalib. Most of its translations into English have been marred by the translation of the second line of the sher. They have been given to the effect: " who will live until she deigns to pay attention to her lover." The word "sar" means subduing or disentangling or softening. So, "zulf ke sar hote tak" means " until the hair curls are disentangled, subdued, or softened."

Ghalib says that his sighs for his beloved will need a lifetime to be effective, as it is the nature of human life. But while he is waiting miserably, his beloved does not pay any attention to him, as she is busy disentangling the curls of her hair. This is the utterly painful contrast between the two.

Ghalib Sher 5:

ham ko ma.alūm hai jannat kī haqīqat lekin

dīl ke khush rakhne ko ‘ghālib’ ye khayāl achchhā hai

Translation:

we know the reality of paradise but

to keep the heart happy Ghalib this idea is good

Discussion:

This is one of Ghalib's famous shers. It says that we know what paradise is actually, an illusion; but to keep oneself happy and distracted this idea is good.

Ghalib Sher 4:

merī qismat meñ ġham gar itnā thā

dil bhī yā-rab ka.ī diye hote

Translation:

in my fate if so much sorrow was ordained

hearts Oh God many should I have been given

Ghalib Sher 3:

dil hī to hai na sañg-o-ķhisht dard se bhar na aa.e kyuñ

ro.eñge ham hazār baar koī hameñ satā.e kyuñ

Translation:

it's just a heart no stony shard why shouldn't it fill with pain

I will cry a thousand times why should someone complain

Ghalib Sher 2:

ishq par zor nahīñ hai ye vo ātish ‘ghālib’

ki lagā.e na lage aur bujhā.e na bane

Translation:

love we do not have power over it is that flame Ghalib

it may not ignite when we ignite it nor it may extinguish when we try

Ghalib Sher 1:

ishrat-e-qatra hai dariyā meñ fanā ho jaanā

dard kā had se guzarnā hai davā ho jaanā

Translation:

the desire of a drop is to obliterate itself in a river

pain growing beyond limit becomes its own cure

Discussion:

Ghalib says that the ecstasy of a drop of water is to lose its little identity by merging with the much larger expanse of a river, thereby enriching its existence vastly. Let us say there is a man who lives in a small village, where he leads an ordinary life. Then he decides to migrate to a large metropolis as he feels he is not living fully. Though by moving to the metropolis he loses his identity but he vastly gains in the scope of his profession and culture. It is this expansion of mind what Ghalib is referring to.

The second line says that when a human being suffers very much due to

something, the suffering elevates his fortitude to tolerate it. Great suffering challenges the human spirit, giving birth to a high threshold of forbearance in him.

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test

Forlorn Moments They May Seem: Reminiscences of my Mother Aruna Kaul



(This is an excerpt from my book on my mother, titled above, which has just been started by me)

Preface

Why does man go back in his life to elaborately remember something? It is because the evocation of some memories is blissful, even though they may be laced with pain. On the physical plane life is an incessant process of mind-body functioning, but on the mental plane it is a giant stage on which life is played out with great drama. Visiting one's past is the continuation of the theater of life.

My mother was a very social personality, in which her role in her life, together with the role she played in the society she lived in, were the alpha and omega of her existence. She was not a philosopher; her existence was prescribed to her; she did not have much freewill. Honor and duty were her religion and discipline and conformance her mantras.

My mother has been a source of love to me, both when she was alive and when she is no more. Pure and unconditional love is a unique human phenomenon, which uplifts human existence to among the rarest states. I continue to be in touch with her even after sixteen years of her demise.

The following brief story of her life is not her biography, but a set of reflections on the passage of her soul as it passed through time, one of the inexorable references of human life.

(This is an excerpt from the first chapter of my book on my mother, which has just been started by me)

My mother was born in a large Kashmiri Pandit family, Karihaloo's. The name was a nick name, meaning bent-neck, whose origin will be explained a little later. Basically, their name was Kaul, but in practice they were called Kaul Karihaloo's. There was a period in Kashmiri Pandit history when family nick names were quite prevalent. Most often they were based on the dark side of or the cruel jokes on the family.

Mother was born on November 19, 1920, the fourth child of Dama and Devmali Kaul Karihaloo. But her oldest sibling, a brother, passed away in a crib-death; perhaps, when he was one or two years old. So, she lived with an older brother, Kashi Nath; an older sister, Kamla; younger brothers, Radha Krishen and Makhan Lal; and the younger sister, Sarojni.

Karihaloo's, at the time mother was born, comprised of five brothers and their families. Together with perhaps some widows and poor relatives - keeping some of them under the family roof was almost customary those days among Pandits; and a retinue of servants, permanent and temporary; the whole ensemble must have been as high as thirty people. It must not have been easy to manage it.

Kashmiri Pandits were a very sociable people at that time in their history. Relationships with kith and kin were the basic fabric of existence. It was the field which delineated the charge of proper living: right relationships and right hierarchy of leadership. It was also the arena where you won and lost your image, the *raison d'être* of your existence.

The image of Karihaloo's and the life they lived that has emerged from the fond recollections of its members, who have long departed, is that of a rich life,

tapestried by the intensity of their relationships, the architecture of the family, the sheer joie de vivre they experienced that time. Love among the family members was the main axle of the engine of life.

koi ye kah de gulshan gulshan - Jigar Morarabadi. Translated

koī ye kah de gulshan gulshan

laakh balā.eñ ek nasheman

let someone proclaim from garden to garden

there are innumerable calamities but only one nest

qātil rahbar qātil rahzan

dil sā dost na dil sā dushman

expert guide killer highwayman

no friend like heart no enemy like heart

phuul khile haiñ gulshan gulshan

lekin apnā apnā dāman

flowers are blooming in gardens

but each flower has its own fate

ishq hai pyāre khel nahīñ hai

ishq hai kāre-shīsha-o-āhan

it is love dear game it is not

love is a work of glass and iron

ḵhair mizāj-e-husn kī yā-rab

tez bahut hai dil kī dhaḌkan

let the spirit of love bloom O God

very fast is the beat of heart

aa ki na jaane tujh bin kab se

ruuh hai lāsha jism hai madfan

come without you do not know since when

soul is dead body a grave

aaj na jaane raaz ye kyā hai

hijr kī raat aur itnī raushan

today do not know what the mystery is

it is night of separation but yet it is illuminated

umreñ bītīñ sadiyāñ guzrīñ

hai vahī ab tak ishq kā bachpan

lives have been spent centuries have passed

has remained the same till now love's childlike innocence

tujh sā hasīñ aur khūn-e-mohabbat

vahm hai shāyad surkhi-e-dāman

as beautiful as you and slayer of love

I have a fear it may turn out to be bloody

barq-e-havādis allāh allāh

jhuum rahī hai shākh-e-nasheman

lessening of calamities oh God oh God

dancing is the branch holding the nest

tū ne sulajh kar gesū-e-jānāñ

aur baḌhā dī shauq kī uljhan

by straightening the tresses of beloved

you have increased the tangles of my love

rahmat hogī tālib-e-isyāñ

rashk karegī pākī-e-dāman

it will be merciful for one demanding rebellion

jealous will be your purity of soul

dil ki mujassam ā.īna-sāmāñ

aur vo zālim ā.īna-dushman

heart's image is being a mirror

and that tyrant is the mirror of the enemy

baiThe ham har bazm meñ lekin

jhaaḌ ke uTThe apnā dāman

**sat in every gathering but
got up leaving what transpired**

hastī-e-shā.er allāh allāh
husn kī manzil ishq kā maskan

**life of a poet at mercy of God
destination of beauty is love's abode**

rañgīñ fitrat saada tabī.at
farsh-nashīñ aur arsh-nasheman

**colorful nature simple state
floor sitter and celestial**

kaam adhūrā aur āzādī
naam baḌe aur thoḌe darshan

**work incomplete but expecting independence
big reputation but low essence**

sham.a hai lekin dhuñdlī dhu.dlī

saayā hai lekin raushan raushan

candle yet dim light

shade but illuminating

kāñToñ kā bhī haq hai kuchh ākhir

kaun chhuḌā.e apnā dāman

even thorns have some rights

who is to save one's fate

chaltī phirtī chhāñv hai pyāre

kis kā sahrā kaisā gulshan

world is a transient moving shadow

whose desert which garden

Videos:

1. Begum Akhtar's rendering of the ghazal, but it is incomplete.
<https://youtu.be/gCpVLciXIJg>
2. Rageshri Das's rendering, also incomplete.

<https://youtu.be/SXc290fYlFs>

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How I Became a Writer?

When I was born, English was not my first language, Kashmiri was. English was the language of my motherland India's occupiers, the British, who ruled India for 200 years; so, it became the language of the education imparted in many schools and colleges in India.

The story of my love affair with English is more than straightforward. Let me begin:

I was born a very sensitive, shy, and introspective boy. As if they were not a liability enough to have as a young boy, I was sent by my parents to stay with my uncle and aunt for six years, from the age of 12 through 18, 400 miles away in Kashmir. My familial shield was replaced by a foreign one, magnifying my vulnerabilities. The loss of my natural environment of my parental and sibling's love for me had a lasting effect on my outlook on my life at that time. This period of six years, till I left for an engineering college far away, became the most difficult period of my life. In fact, I have called it my heartbreak number 1, out of a total of six, in my autobiography, *Inclinations and Reality*.

I had to develop a strategy to negotiate my survival. Out of my introspection came the idea that if I developed a communication skill, I could manage my ordeal. By my being able to communicate with my uncle's family and the much larger Kaul

clan, which existed in Kashmir, I thought I would be able to shield my vulnerabilities. And I hit it very well, as I became among the most popular boys in the clan. My uncles, aunts, and cousins became very fond of me. Relatives much older to me would confide their problems in me, as they thought I was very intelligent, and more valuable than that to them, I had a remarkable patience to listen to their tales of woe. This was also an entry for me to understand human nature, which became my life long quest.

Beyond managing my environment, I still felt a need to communicate deeply with someone. But my inherent shyness was still a block. One day I wrote a letter to one of my uncles living in another town of Kashmir, a communication that could have been better conducted on a phone. But as phones had yet not come to Kashmir for non-governmental use, I had no choice but to write a letter. A few weeks later when my uncle visited me, he gushed on my writing abilities. I did not know whether to take it as my inherent talent or a one-time success. But another letter to a cousin created a similar response. So, I thought I may have a talent for writing. A little later I wrote a three-page short story, *A Night to Remember*, my first writing, and sent it to my father. He thought it was well written, though lacked a plot. By now I realized I had some writing skills.

So, that is how I became a writer, to satisfy my need to communicate with others and myself. But that skill would still be primitive, if it would not be pregnant with substance. My introspective nature provided that mass in the form of my philosophical inquiry into the nature of human life. My writing became the vehicle of my existence, the instrument of the exploration of my consciousness.

But after discovering the connection between writing and my soul, what did I do about it. Nothing much, as I had yet not found a subject large enough to write a book on it. In other words, I had learnt to look into my soul and write about it, but my interests in the various subjects of human life had not yet evolved enough for me to write books on them. The best I could do at that time in my life was to write letters to my relatives and friends. It was only in 2010 that I was ready for a book long writing. It was my autobiography, *Inclinations and Reality*. Subsequently I wrote more books.

Many people have come to me throughout my life to learn how to write, especially the young people, as writing is among the most intense and uplifting self-involvement for them; after, perhaps, their self-love. Most of them had been

attracted to my writing because of my style. Understanding their passion well, the first thing I would tell them was that they should forget the style in writing, instead they should concentrate on the substance of writing first. Style would evolve later.

So, writing for me is the exploration and shaping of my consciousness.

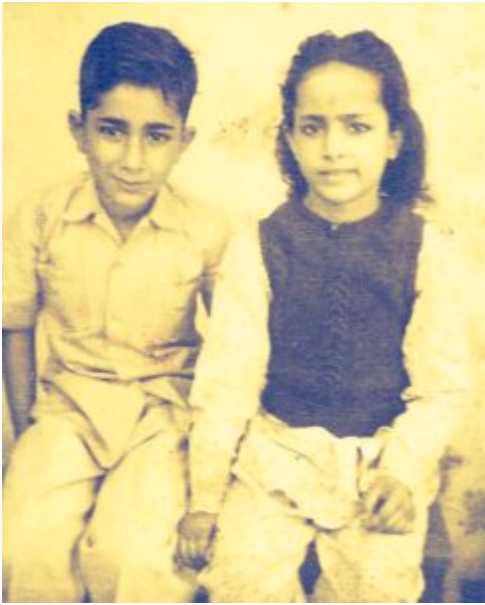
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Reminiscences of My Early Boyhood at Malikyar





I am said to have been born around five in the morning (not a convenient time for deliveries even in modern times) in a hospital, from where my mother and I were taken to my maternal grandfather's house, which contained a sprawling household of six brothers, their families, and a battalion of servants. I have always wanted to meet the doctor who helped my birth for some vague emotional reasons, but have not been able to do so. I guess my arrival triggered some joy and excitement in that household, as my mother was her father's favorite child and was a person well-liked by people due to her modesty, sensitivity, and beauty. I have been told that I was generally a tranquil baby, not given to too many sessions of weeping and bad moods. Added to these were my buxomness and good looks, making me an irresistibly cuddly baby to hug and hold in one's lap. As

I grew up, my arms and hands became plump, attracting some people to them as they appeared soft playthings. At about the age of two, I comfortably sat in the lap of my newly-married aunt (father's younger brother Papaji's wife), who was still a bride, thinking her to be my mother, as she wore glasses as my mother did. I do not have any recollection of my father from this period of my life, which may be due to a Kashmiri father's reluctance to handle a baby in those times, which would detract from his culturally required macho image. Although somewhat lessened with time, this inhibition to show love by a Kashmiri father to his offspring, stayed on throughout his life. No wonder almost all fathers looked stern to their children those times even after they became adults. This cultural deficit curtailed many familial relationships from their full bloom.

The first memory of my father that I have is when I was about three or four years old. He held me in a half-sleepy state in his arms and carried me from the family room to the bedroom, where he put me in bed. Besides the cultural inhibition of demonstrating love to one's child, there was another reason reinforcing this behavior. In a joint family, where parents, uncles, aunts, and their children, and grown-up sons, their wives, and their children lived together, one of the commandments of peaceful coexistence was not to display any more love to your child than you would display to other children in the family. No wonder many children reared up in the old Pandit families grew up to be diffident, socially inept, and generally confused. Kashmiris were very primitive in raising their children because of their preconceived notion that essentially children grew naturally by themselves.

Two years after my birth, my sister Lalita was born. She somehow made my father throw off some of his social reserve and show his love for her. At least I felt that my father was not that stern after all. Lalita mixed with people more readily than me. This quality stayed with her through her adult life and she became a very social person and highly popular. The two of us provided two contrasting personalities—one shy, reluctant to come out of his skin, and broodingly contemplating the scene in front of him; the other eager to participate in whatever event was taking place, very inclined to please people, and altogether practical minded. Unconsciously, I began bonding with her. As she was my only

sister, and at that time my only sibling, my love for her grew strong. We were separated for several years when in 1953 she and my mother returned to New Delhi to join my father when he found a new job, after having lost the earlier one. My father thought that it was better for my education to stay on in Kashmir. After that, in the late 50s, my father was posted abroad and the connection between Lalita and me remained in limbo for many years till we revived it in 1962 when I came to USA. After this we continued to enjoy a close relationship.

It is one of the supreme ironies of life that one does not get to select one's name. First a human being is brought to this world without being asked whether he would like to come here and then he is given a name, followed by the attachment of many other things to him, like culture, upbringing, education, etc., some of which the newcomer may have to fight to get rid of or modify for the most of his life. I was given the name Maharaj Krishen by my paternal grandmother, Kakni, perhaps in tune with the name Avtar Krishen she had given to her son. My name is the name of a popular Hindu God, Krishna. The first name Maharaj means king, which in my name is used as a title of Krishna. So, I am King Krishna! Certainly, I have not lived up to his religious beliefs and work, nor have I been as romantic as he is mythologized to have been. Living with such an awe-inspiring name became burdensome pretty soon and I had no choice but to ignore it and use it only mechanically, bereft of its solemnity and message. Later on, while living in the US, my colleagues at work abridged my first name to Raj. For the sake of the style of brevity of modern times, I had already dropped my middle name Krishen. As per Kashmiri Pandit customs, I was also given a name by my *matamal* (mother's maiden family). It was Bansi Lal, which is another name for Lord Krishna. They also gave me a pet name, Baby. I was told that it came from an Englishwoman who visited my maternal grandfather's family and called me so after seeing me. I had a lot of difficulty in coping with this name, as my friends teased me on still being a baby, even after I had left that age a long time back. It was only after my tenth year that the traces of that name disappeared, the causes of which I still do not know.

At the time of my birth, our family had, apart from my grandfather and grandmother, their one married son, two unmarried sons, two unmarried

daughters, a caretaker, and perhaps one or two relatives, who were in difficult circumstances and were living with us at the benevolence of my grandfather. My grandfather was the senior-most Kashmiri in the state police department. All officers above him were Englishmen. He was tall and fair, mild-mannered, and given to a low profile due to his shyness and humility. He was fair and compassionate. Our meetings took place when I was only a few months old, as he passed away shortly after my birth, at the age of 54. Many people, both within and out of our family, attributed my grandfather's death to a bad omen I brought to him with my birth. I did not have any recollection of him, having seen him when I was too young to hold any memories. Because of this, my recurring childhood dream, in which I would go to his room to see him, often snapped abruptly. From what was told to me by our family members, my grandfather and other members of the household spent a few traumatic hours just before his death.

The story runs that his physician, a renowned Kashmiri physician, Dr Gaush Lal Kaul, while treating him for some illness had allowed him to eat heavily-spiced meat only at my grandfather's strong request. However, he forbade him from drinking water with the meal or even after that. I am highly skeptical that such a treatment would be used in modern medicine. Anyway, my grandfather had his dinner which included *rogan josh* and *gadda nadir*—both Kashmiri delicacies and highly spiced. It is quite rare that during or after partaking a highly-spiced Kashmiri meal one would not take some water to dilute the effect of the spices. My grandfather, I am sure, after exercising some self-control, could not help but ask for water to relieve him of the discomfort caused by the heavy dose of spices which included chili powder in generous amounts. People around him braced themselves and continued to refuse to comply with his request. Though they understood his discomfort and did not appreciate the idea of refusing his demand, they restrained themselves only to help his illness. As the ordeal continued, my grandfather's wails for water were loud enough to awaken the entire Kaul Compound, in which many of our relatives were sleeping peacefully. Though they all knew that the grandfather could not be given water, its denial to an ill and very thirsty man, pierced their hearts. My grandfather passed away soon after this event.

My grandfather's untimely death at the age of 54 shook his household, where he was the only wage earner. Having been a government employee, though at a good level, running a joint family and dying at an early age, it was not surprising that he did not leave much money behind. Under these extreme conditions, wrapped with urgency, my father quickly accepted the first job he was able to get. He became a court sub-inspector, a position within the police department, which required legal expertise, which was met with his MALLB education. It was not a true police officer's position. Incidentally, he did not have the physical wherewithal to look a police officer, although he certainly could have done the job. But it was not a job of his choice in its content, status and remuneration. My oldest uncle Papaji also acted as another pair of shoulders supporting the family's economic and social burdens at this time of crisis.

Our family was economically middle class, socially respectable, and quite modern in outlook and style compared to the common Kashmiri Pandit family. The fact that we were not traditional Kashmiri Pandits was held against us by our peers. Although my grandfather was somewhat receptive to some notions of modernity, he was steeped enough in the Pandit tradition to be able to extricate himself from it. It was left to my father and my elder uncle to cross the line to modernity. The brothers shared a parallel outlook toward most of the things, as the age difference between them was only three years. Our family unconsciously carried a sense of superiority over most of the others but they made sure that their propitious decency was never diminished in the social intercourse. The charges of arrogance levied by others on us were right only to the extent of its existence on a superficial level. Beneath the social skin Kauls meant well but sometimes came across as insensitive and indifferent due to the lack of proper inhibitions and fine tuning of public relations. Like other Kashmiris, my family attached high value to wealth, job position, and smartness. The veneer of intellectuality on my family was brushed in by my father and elder uncle. Both were highly intelligent, well read, forward-looking and highly opinionated. They fervently attacked corruption and social, cultural, and religious hypocrisies. Many of the family's pre-dinner and post-dinner conversations revolved around these topics and other recent events.

By the time I was four or five, and still not sent to school, the teacher who was

already coaching my younger uncle (four years elder to me) was asked to teach me also. The day the teacher was supposed to give me the first lesson I was smitten with fear, resulting in my prolonged crying. Grown-ups around me were at a loss to understand what bothered me so much to make my cry so intensely and for so long. True to my nature, I did not share with my caretakers and sympathizers what roiled me. What I now think happened to me then was that I perceived that I was going into a long slavery. This fear stemmed from the fact that in those times a teacher could yell and spank, or use other methods to correct a pupil's behavior to make him suitable to receive education. However, after the first class, I was not as petrified as before. This arrangement with the teacher lasted for a few years till I was eight years old. I had already started feeling a bit lonely. The joint family was not a good place for a sensitive boy like me to live in. I needed attention of my parents but that was stifled by the joint family environment. There was a chink of solace in my life when I used to spend time in my maternal grandfather's home. Here was a family which had lesser inhibitions in displaying warmth and caring than my family was comfortable with, in spite of it also being a joint family. Furthermore, by virtue of my mother being the favorite child of her father, my maternal grandfather's love was automatically transferred to me. He completely doted on me. But the irony was that the visits to my maternal grandfather's home did not exceed more than seven to eight a year. My father was very serious about not letting my education getting pinched by my absence from home.

One day, my maternal grandfather, Baaji (Karihaloo), came to our home to meet us. After spending an hour or two, he started to leave. As he got up, he grabbed my hand and said that he was going to take me to his home for a few days. On hearing this idea from Baaji, my father at once sternly objected to it. Baaji was taken aback by this reaction and demanded to know the reason behind it. My father cited the harmful effect it would have on my education. Baaji pleaded that at my education level, an absence for a few days would not amount to any significant loss. At this point, as if by reflex, Baaji grabbed my left arm and started to drag me toward the door. But my father, already one step ahead in getting fired up by the situation, responded by grabbing my right arm and pulling me toward him. I was scared by this imbroglio between the two strong personalities, one driven by emotion and other by principle. I was especially

scared of my father's aroused temper, of which I already had a few but strong experiences. I wanted to go with Baiji but was afraid to tell that to my father. For several minutes, which seemed like eternity to me, the two grown-up men continued to pull me in opposite directions, as if I was the rope in a tug-of-war, all the while arguing intensely about the merits of my missing tuitions for a few days.

Baaji was an over-stout man with a large-diameter waist. He used to wear a long buttoned-down jacket called *achkan* (a long Nehru style jacket), accompanied by a turban and walking cane. The image of him juxtaposed with a younger man and a child in a physical tussle was at once awkward, as well as comic. Finally, my father prevailed, not in the least due to the fact that Baiji was deferential to him, as a father-in-law would be to his son-in-law in the Indian milieu. The duel ended, sending Baaji dejectedly toward the house exit alone and I broke free from the tussle and went to my room to restore my tousled emotions. Later in my life, this insignificant event became a haunting image of my adult life. I used it as a living image of conflict, when two ideas playing on me were antipodal. On one hand, I was idealistic and sensitive, while on the other, I was compelled to respect reality and the ways of the world. I cared for people but was repelled by some who considered themselves even more significant than the nature that gives us life.

By the age of eight, I was trusted enough by the grown-ups and they confided in me the problems they faced with other members of the Kaul clan. Many times, both the conflicting members and groups would unburden their problems with each other to me. They felt that I was a good, comforting kid, whose sympathy toward them would relieve them of some discomfort they had incurred in an inter-member or inter-group imbroglio. This experience on an impressionable boy like me induced me to think on human relationships and beyond that to the nature of human life itself—an odyssey that I am still not through with. While I was generally liked by people, I felt close only to a few. This attitude, I believe, was triggered by my apprehension of being hurt in a close relationship. While I had a tremendous need to be loved, but my propensity to love was inhibited.

Our family was a big star in the Kaul clan galaxy, whose members lived adjacently

or contiguously in a cluster of about nine families in six houses, forming the hub I call Kaul Compound, at Malikyar, Srinagar—the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir. The families were united by many common personality attributes beside the last name. As a clan they exhibited self-confidence, pride, self-consciousness, outspokenness, and a more moderate religious intensity than an average Kashmiri Pandit's. The social atmosphere within the Kaul clan was generally warm and friendly. Members were willing to help each other. For the outside world they kept up the image of clan unity and were genuinely proud of it. The clan was also renowned for its sense of humor. Reciting real or made-up comic stories about its members and outsiders was a very popular way to have fun. We had a renowned in-house comic, Budhkak, whose talents in the field were of professional level. The atmosphere of hilarity and light-mindedness was not very common among Kashmiri Pandits, as they were generally of serious disposition and were socially stiff. In fact, there was an ambition among many Kauls to be the top joke makers. That is why many of the married Kaul girls would often feel compelled to return to their original homes, as soon as it was appropriate, to partake of its delectable joviality. But the joke-making sometimes landed many Kauls into trouble with the outside world, as many people felt they were insulted or were looked down upon. At times, the jokes backfired in sensitive in-law relationships. But because the clan members believed that the jokes were made with a good heart, solely to amuse others and themselves, they did not take the adverse reactions seriously.

The cockiness combined with the backfired jokes lent the Kauls an image of arrogance. Much as they tried over years to shed off this image, it has not shown any tangible diminution. The image has more or less endured, even with the clan diffusion over the world. Also, their moderate religious intensity and superficial adherence to some social mores created an image of their not belonging to the mainstream Kashmiri Pandit culture. That image was prized by my father and uncle, who zealously led the family in that direction. The influence of the brothers was consciously or unconsciously felt by the entire clan. Their faith in modernism over many aspects of traditional Kashmiri Pandit culture was strong and totally unpretentious. Be it as good as it may, in their overzealousness to follow the modern Western thinking in many aspects of life, they colored their perceptions of the many stellar items of the old Kashmiri Pandit culture and softened their

umbilical connections with their roots. Over time, my uncle became a matured and renowned debunker of Kashmir Pandit culture and ethos.

Being well-liked by people generally was a good antidote for my evolving loneliness. I seemed like a lost soul bereft of any anchor in sight. Though many people liked me, they thought me morose and melancholic. Women seemed to like me more than men did, in parallel with my similar inclination toward them. I found them more caring and I felt that I was gaining more confidence in responding to their kind of emotions as time went by. My father was the person I feared the most. It came first from the cultural influence of the day when fathers had to be serious and stern so as to shroud themselves with an aura of authority, which satisfied their egos and also helped them in guiding their offspring's lives. Furthermore, my father was shy and inept to handle children. My mother showered more care on me, but being scared of the joint family environment, she was inhibited to go all the way. So, I grew up like a large number of other kids in the community—a faceless and diffident personality. It was only much later in my life that I was able to jettison this baggage. My shyness hung on me even through college years. Only with the birth of my sister, two years after mine, did my father begin to slowly lose his shyness and inhibitions, and express love to his children publicly.

Our family left Kashmir in late 1948. The air trip to New Delhi was historic, as it was momentous for our family. It was historic because air travel in India was still in its infancy and an air trip from Srinagar to New Delhi was usually taken only by the high government officials and businessmen to accomplish some time-sensitive and important work. Also, it was quite expensive. Since my father had been living alone for about a year in New Delhi, he wanted his family to join him immediately. So, he did not want to take any chances with road blockages and breaches due to the icy winter we were in. But ironically the air journey we settled on was delayed by several weeks due to extreme weather conditions which are quite common in Kashmir during winter.

I remember the glitter of Safdarjung Airport at New Delhi hitting me right on

when we landed there. Everything looked big and shining compared to the Srinagar Airport. My father's fatigue due to the long wait that day at the airport seemed to disappear on seeing us. We were his answered prayers, the sweet companions in his future journey in life. New Delhi was a sprawling metropolis of a newly-independent nation. It seemed to be brimming with the excitement of setting up an indigenous government after some 1000 years of foreign rule and awash with pride for their country, for what it has been and what it could be. We seemed to have left our grey existences behind us and felt braced for a new beginning, spawning a new iridescent hope for a better life.

When I went to school for the first time, it was a totally new experience for me. It was a private school called Bal Bharti School, located in Ajmal Khan area. Based on the level of my home tutoring in Kashmir, I was placed in the fifth grade. I adjusted to the school rapidly and seemed to have no problems at all. Because of the good extra-curricular programs in the school, my shyness had a good chance of wearing off. Academically, I did well. I was promoted from the fifth grade to the seventh grade, without having to sit in the sixth grade. I was particularly strong in Mathematics and English. One day, in the seventh-grade English class, the teacher drilled us through some difficult word spellings. One of the words was 'dysentery'. When the teacher went over the word listing the second time to see how much we had retained, I was the only one who remembered the spelling of that word. All eyes in the classroom were locked on my face. The teacher repeated the list a few more times, aiming at a hundred per cent retention. Every time I would be the only student remembering the spelling of dysentery. Now, I became very conscious of it because of what the word meant. The next time when the teacher asked the spelling of that word again from our class, I chose to keep quiet. The teacher and all the students looked at me aghast, failing to understand how could I suddenly forget the spelling of the word that seemed to have sunk deep into my brain. But I stoically maintained that I had forgotten its spelling.

The first stirrings of my romantic life erupted when I was in the seventh grade. There was a bouncy, charming, tall Sikh girl in my class. Her smooth demeanor and magnetic smile were irresistible to me. She liked me and was inclined to be my friend but it was clear that I had to take the traditional 'male initiative' to

usher in the romantic friendship between us. Our romance remained a hedge romance (a popular Indian English phrase in vogue at that time describing the typical romantic relationship between college-age boys and girls, where physical intimacy was a taboo). The apex of our romance would occur at the school quitting time, when we walked together. But my romance with her died a natural death when I returned to Srinagar in 1952. The possibility of what might have blossomed between us remains an uncharted dream. The most ironic aspect of this relationship was that the girl in question was called Mohini, the same name that the lady I married many years later had. That marriage lasted for forty-five years, tragically ending in 2014.

Two significant things happened in the Delhi phase of my life. On 2 June 1949, my mother gave birth to my brother Babu at Tis Hazari Hospital. He caught the attention of our father at an emotional level which the latter had never displayed toward his two elder children. This was good for my father's morale as he finally had something to identify with, something to look forward to. Two years later, on 27 August 1951, my youngest brother Kaka was born. The two of them could not have been more different. Their personalities chased each other like a day chases night but never getting together. Babu was aggressive, ambitious, socially active, and extroverted; Kaka was shy, mild, ambitious, socially aloof, and introverted. Babu knew what he wanted in life and focused on it early on. He did not have much aptitude for very hard work and did not go very deep in issues. Like our father, he embraced practical knowledge and left the subjects of philosophy, psychology, and science to others. Kaka was hard working and kept his feelings to himself. No one knew what hurt him, what excited him, or even what he was up to. He was a walking secret. But his innate goodness was writ large on his face and people liked him instantly. Indian culture favored his personality over Babu's, but my father lionized Babu because he possessed aggressiveness, which my father had come to believe was a necessary ingredient for successful living, and which he himself had to make an effort to have at times. Arrival of the new members in the family altered a significant thing in it. Lalita and I used to call our father and mother *Babuji* and *Bhabhi* and now they became Daddy and Mummy. I did not like the change but had no choice but to follow it.

(These boyhood reminiscences will be followed by Reminiscences of Adolescence in Kashmir)

Note: the above essay has been adapted from my book Inclinations and Reality.

Suffern, New York, March 8,2021

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KOA Presidential Elections 2020

Dear KOA Biradari,

In 1977 I attended, what is considered now the first meeting of an organization that later was called Kashmir Overseas Association, at Surinder and Mohini Nath's residence in Washington D.C. There were about eight people in attendance. After the talk about the advantages of having an organization of KP's in U.S., it was resolved unanimously that we should go ahead with the practical steps to a launch it. It was only in 1983 that a full-fledged organization, called Kashmiri Overseas Organization, with legal registration, was set in motion. I guess the not-for-profit status, IRS 501(c)(3), was obtained by then. Rest is history as they say.

So, KOA is approximately forty years old, and has at this time a membership of 800 families. If we assume each family to comprise of four members, then we have about 3,200 members. But based on KOA Directory and other sources it is estimated that there are 1,500 KP families in U.S. That is, 700 families are not KOA members. The reason for that most likely for most of them is the payment of membership fees. Though the annual membership for a family for a year only costs \$50, and for senior members only \$25. Most of the KP's in U.S. are well off, holding professional jobs, placed in the upper middle class. I believe KOA has to reach these families and explain to them the benefits of a KOA membership, especially the participation in the cultural traditions of our community and the chance to be counted in the ongoing crusade over the forced KP diaspora.

But whatever the state of the membership of KOA and its financial health, it is the organization that helps us focus on our roots, civilization, ethos, and future. It is a precious citadel we all have built, brick by brick, over the last forty years. We want to not only keep it secure but also expand it and make it even better than what it is now. It is our inspiration, strength, and future.

During Shakunji's presidency (2017-20), which is just coming to an end, tremendous progress was made in wooing KP youth into KOA through many programs her administration launched. The present KP leadership, inside and outside KOA, comprises of many KP's who came to U.S. in 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's. So, they must be in their 60's, 70's, and 80's. Obviously, the future KOA leadership has to come from much younger segment of the community. KOAY, the KOA youth program has 800 followers in the country, two national directors, and ten zonal representatives. We have to continue to prepare our youth for the leadership roles that they sooner or later have to play.

Shakunji's administration also digitalized almost all of KOA operations. This was a lot of excellent work done, initiated substantially by her predecessor Sunilji Fotedar. Look at the KOA website, you cannot help but feel impressed. She also maintained good relationships with the different segments of the community, both here as well as in India. She also rose to the occasion during the 2019 A370 & 35

A revocations, which provoked Muslim community here. This was a tricky work for her as KOA is a not-for-profit organization. Most of the KOA operations ran smoothly under her tenure. The community should thank her for the excellent work she did. But the rub is that she cannot serve another term, as the KOA constitution forbids it. The two-term limit instituted during Mr. Suresh Raina's presidency is a talent-breaker. Which means that if a president has proven that he was talented in serving as a KOA president, and is keen to go for more terms, why should we stop him from doing that, as long as he is elected after every two years. There have been times in KOA's history when we have had shortage of people suitable for KOA presidency. This article must be removed from the KOA constitution.

Like many not-for-profit organizations, KOA gets short of revenues at times. We have to follow one of the well-known remedies for this problem: go to the wealthy KOA members for donations. Number of KP's in U.S. are doing well financially. KOA is well-organized and talented but unable to launch more desirable projects for want of funds.

The survival of KOA for the next decades depends on these three factors:

1. It should be able to attract the KP youth, as the older generation leaves the scene.
2. It should be able to keep its personality intact by holding on to KP civilization and ethos. Because that is our identity, and without that we cannot survive as a group, especially in a foreign country.
3. To address (2) indicated above, KOA has to keep its social, cultural, and religious programs going at full speed. So, it should be adequately funded. The present revenue generating systems have to be modified, if we want to survive.

This brings us now to the subject of who should we vote for the next president. We have two candidates running for the election. What should be the criteria for selecting one of them as the next president of KOA.

As I have indicated earlier our next president should be someone who is young, in about his or her 40's to 50's, at the most. The reason for that is the energy he or she will have to expend to perform as a KOA president, besides taking care of his or her regular job. But also due to his or her younger age he or she will connect better with the KP youth. As the older KP leaders, inside and outside KOA, are retiring, and as KP youth population will eventually topple over the older KP population in KOA, there is a solid rationale in selecting a younger person as the next KOA president, compared to what we have been selecting in the past.

Ashishji Raina, from Chicago, is not only in the right age range, but also his personality is in sync with the role he would have to play as a KOA president. He is intensely drawn to our KP civilization and ethos. I was very surprised to see this aspect of his personality, as generally younger KP's are not that much drawn to them. Furthermore, he has high ambitions in expanding KOA by bringing in many of the estimated 700 KP families stated above who are not currently KOA members. He believes correctly that many of the KOA zones need chapter presidents or additional chapter presidents to run the full gamut of our cultural celebrations. He believes we can set up Whatsapp groups within zones for more effective communications. He, being an IT professional, thinks we can use computer technology to more effectively organize our work and programs. His other qualities are humility and unpretentiousness. Look at the excellent work he has done so far as a KOA volunteer and chapter president in KOA, Chicago area. Also, look at his vision of the future KOA:

1. <https://ashishrainaforkoapresident.com/pages/about-me>
2. <https://ashishrainaforkoapresident.com/pages/programs>

After going over the above links you will see that Ashishji is the person we would like to invest our hopes in for the future of KOA.

Maharaj Kaul, November 2, 2020; Rev. Nov. 3

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Reflections on Human Happiness

Life Comes with No meaning at its Birth

It is correct that human life does not come with a meaning at its birth, but it is endowed with a strong biological force to live right from that point on till its end.

This strong will to physically survive forms the basis of the mental existence of most of the human beings. If we did not have that force within us, many humans would end their lives due to their painful struggle with the extreme economic, social, cultural, and political forces opposing their existences. So, life does come with a *raison d'être* for its existence.

Happiness is A Human Creation

The other meanings we give to our existences are purely human creations, nothing to do with the universe. But they can be significant to humans. Let us say a man wants to devote his life to the upliftment of the downtrodden. It is perfectly meaningful. The existential state of man is such that while he is born without a purpose, but he can pick up one from the rich oeuvre of human culture.

If he does not pick any, then most likely he will lead a frustrated and unfulfilled life. Therein lies the drama of human existence. So, the art of a meaningful existence is to pick one of the purposes that best suits one's abilities and personality. If you do not pick any you will still survive, but with a lot of struggle and woes. For a common man, even devoting his life to his family is meaningful. Many artists, scientists, and humanists devote their lives to a purpose higher than their lives. That is being absolutely creative. Einstein emphasized creativity in pursuit of existence. Otherwise, you may end up being a neurotic, alcoholic, or a bum. But since many people are incapable of being creative, and do not have a philosophical disposition, they end up being religious, to save their life from insanity and ruin. So, happiness is achievable if one is creative and philosophical.

It is the ultimate irony of human life that though it comes with no meaning at birth, but man is compelled to give it some in order to live an organized, healthy, and a calm life.

Suffern, New York, October 26, 2020

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In Search of Happiness

A human being is born mostly as a physical system, which later on evolves into a physical and mental system. Together two of them propel human life, under the

guidance of the latter. The need for happiness only arises when the combined system is unable to fend off general unhappiness and peace of mind. Left to himself man would be peaceful as long as physical needs were taken care of. But the great problem is that he is not left to himself. He lives in a world, which comprises of society, culture, economy, politics, and other things. So, man's life is complex, and because of that his happiness may become difficult to achieve. Much can be written on the guidelines to achieve if not happiness, at least peacefulness, as we have a lot of experience from the past. Following are my salient points to achieve a reasonable level of peacefulness:

1.Goals:

A person has to have goals in life, even when he is old. An idle mind is a terrible drag to peacefulness, it can even create a harmful mental state. Examples of goals are improving on the knowledge of a subject one has greatly cherished, acquiring knowledge of new subjects, writing one's memoir, joining a humanitarian group, traveling to a place known for its beauty or history, etc. There are a huge number of good goals that cultivate peacefulness. The chosen fields must appeal to your heart and mind.

2.Ideas:

Look at human beliefs and activities as ideas. Then choose the ideas that are close to your heart. This is significant, as according to popular philosophies on how to be happy, you pick up what is close to your heart. But I am introducing the idea that man's work should be appealing as an idea also, besides it being close to his heart. Living entirely to satisfy your heart may not survive very long, as a heart at times can be fickle. Ideas are the building blocks of human mind, so they are enduring.

3.Member of The Human Community:

Consider yourself to be a member of the human race, not of this group or that group only. This affiliation puts you at a higher level of existence. You will be happier feeling part of the mankind.

4.Do Not Be Afraid of Death:

A human being's life is finite, sooner or later he has to return the gift of his life to God or nature, depending upon whom he believes is the life-giver.

5. Belief in God or Science:

If you are fifty or above your belief in God or science would have already been established. You may even believe in a hybrid system where religion and science coexist. Let it remain so. Do not embark on a new search now.

6. Love of Nature:

Even if you are religious you should cultivate a love of nature. Our bodies are all nature. Feeling closeness with nature will enhance the quality of your life.

7. Love of Mankind:

You should love mankind, even if you hate some of its individuals. This gives you a

feeling that you are not alone but belong to a big group. Feel a brotherhood with mankind. Have some heroes, they will inspire you. Their stories will enrich your life, as they are a living example of greatness that some of us have achieved.

The above ideas form the large-scale architecture of human happiness, but for every man there may be some special things which are uncompromisable for his happiness.

Man has not basically been designed to be happy or sad, but to live with his environment peacefully. But when this environment is disturbed, unhappiness is born.

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What is the purpose of human life?

One thing we sure know is that human life as it comes from nature is not exactly the same for everyone. Though there are commonalities, but each life falls into a few personality types. But that is given. Beyond that each life has room for growth. That is the area where we can pin down our values. Environment may play an important role in our growth. Religion, culture, education, economics, and politics are environments. If we control them, we can control the personality to some good extent, but beyond that there is still an area of personality that may not be easy to control.

The question what is the purpose of human life is not a viable one, as the basic set up of man, physical and mental, do not lead to it. Only extraordinary personalities may have purposes in their lives, for the rest it is a continuous struggle between what is

available to them from the world they live in, and what they want to have.



Some Reflections on Coronavirus

1. The Lesson from Coronavirus:

How a sub-microscopic entity such as coronavirus is tormenting mankind tells us that we are essentially a creature of nature, though we possess the entity of mind. But human mind only gives us ideas, it does not make us live biologically. So, human existence comprises of a biological system essentially and a human mind to guide it. Let's discard our ego and live in harmony with nature. Let's work for peace, brotherhood, and search for beauty.

2 Coronavirus and New Understanding of Life:

People ask how do they find new wisdom, new vision, or new direction to break off from an ongoing calamity, insufferable suffering. One would say go to the thinkers, poets, and sages. But, sometimes even they are unable to mitigate the ordeal we are in. Then at the end of the long night of travail arises an intuition, a reflex, an inclination that becomes a new paradigm in human wisdom. So, in human life not every brilliant idea can be thought of, some things can only come from experience. Coronavirus is a transcending experience for mankind. Out of it will come a new understanding on how to live life for some of us.