

## FROM THE FRIENDLY PHILOSOPHER

An enquirer once asked, “What place have mercy and forgiveness in Theosophy, and are they consistent with Karma?” To this, Mr Judge replied:

“Mercy and forgiveness should have the highest place in that branch of Theosophy which treats of ethics as applied to our conduct. And were it not for the perfect mercifulness of Karma – which is merciful because it is just – we ought long ago to have been wiped out of existence. The very fact that the oppressor, the unjust, the wicked, live out their lives is proof of mercy in the great heart of Nature. They are thus given chance after chance to retrieve their errors and climb, if even on the ladder of pain, to the height of perfection. It is true that Karma is just, because it exacts payment to the last farthing, but on the other hand it is eternally merciful, since it unerringly pays out its compensations. Nor is the shielding from necessary pain true mercy, but is indeed the opposite, for sometimes it is only through pain that the soul acquires the precise knowledge and strength it requires. In my view, mercy and justice go hand in hand when Karma issues its decrees, because that law is accurate, faithful, powerful, and not subject to the weakness, the failure in judgment, the ignorance that always accompany the workings of the ordinary human judgment and action.”

On another occasion, in “Forum Answers,” Mr Judge stated that “The law of Karma should not be regarded as a law of retaliation, because retaliation again infers the action of a being and not the working of law. Karma is the working out of effect from cause, as well as the creation of cause from which an effect must follow. Hence Karma is completely merciful, because justice and mercy in their highest aspect are one. The exact result must follow the cause, and from every act will flow many effects, both good and bad.”

Someone admirably remarked to us one day, “If I had the ability I would reprieve all those who have wronged or hurt me in any way from having to experience all the suffering and unpleasant effects which may result from their actions against me. I don’t want anyone to suffer, not even those who have caused *me* to suffer. So is it not the case that even I am more merciful and compassionate than the Law of Karma?”

In one sense, yes, since this attitude shows a true heartfelt compassion which is nothing less than divine. But three important things have to be borne in mind:

**#1.** If it was to ever happen that a cause could be set in motion *without* ever having its corresponding, correlative effect coming back to the point of origin – i.e. the cause-maker – then the whole Universe would immediately cease to be, since its very continuity and existence depends on this ever-acting Law of perfect balance and adjustment. If this could be overthrown in even one small case, everything would be instantaneously thrown into chaos.

**#2.** Karma, as is constantly reiterated, is a *Law* and has no resemblance or similarity to any type of being, entity, or personality, nor is it produced or invented by any Being or God. “KARMA is an Absolute and Eternal law in the World of manifestation; and as there can only be one Absolute, as One eternal and ever present Cause, believers in Karma cannot be regarded as Atheists or materialists – still less as fatalists: for Karma is one with the Unknowable, of which it

is an aspect in its effects in the phenomenal world. ... The ONE LIFE is closely related to *the one* law which governs the World of Being – KARMA. ... To say to those ignorant of the real significance, characteristics and awful importance of this eternal and immutable law, that no theological definition of a personal deity can give an idea of this impersonal, yet ever present and active Principle, is to speak in vain.” (H.P. Blavatsky, “The Secret Doctrine” Vol. 2 p. 305-306, Vol. 1 p. 634) There is no Being behind Karma but Karma is behind all beings.

**#3.** We are not in a position, with our finite perception of things, to be able to judge or know what is best for the inner evolution or “soul evolution” of others. If we had the power, and exercised it, of relieving others from having to face and experience their possibly painful and unpleasant Karma, we would be unwittingly robbing them of an important opportunity to learn, develop, and progress. Everything in life can be used and applied in this direction and everything in life *is* Karma, for nothing can ever happen outside of the Law of Karma, meaning that in reality there is actually no injustice but that all is exactly as we ourselves have made it to be.

We learn far more from and in our experiences of pain and suffering than we do from our experiences of pleasure and happiness. Our most valuable and enduring lessons are often learned as a result of deep suffering. Of course, this is not a popular concept today but it is the truth and has always been recognised as such in any spiritual philosophy worthy of the name.

“Misery, sorrow and suffering have a mission. It is usually only the misery we bring upon ourselves that makes us stop doing wrong, to look around and ask and see what is right. It is by our mistakes we learn to see the difference between right and wrong, and in seeing that difference is the whole story of progress. *We have to be able to tell the difference.* It is only through “the opposites” – the perception of them and the employment of them – that any being can grow at all. There has always to be duality in nature. All human beings are One in spirit, dual in expression. Always there is the actor and something to act upon. Always there are the two – *Purusha*, the spirit, and *Prakriti*, matter – not two separate things, but two *aspects* of one and the same thing. No perception is possible unless we have that duality. We have to experience darkness first in order to see light, and so with the opposites of pleasure and pain. Without pain we could not understand pleasure; without pleasure we could not understand pain. What lies behind all advance in intelligence, from the lowest to the highest, is *perception* gained by that which acts from that which is acted upon.”

– Robert Crosbie, “The Cause of Sorrow” (“The Friendly Philosopher” p. 245)

So, is Karma merciful and compassionate