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## Tolerance



Visualize a tree with lots of fruits hanging from its branches. When I throw a stone at it, what does it do? It bends its branches low and offers its sweet fruit to me. I enjoy eating the fruit, which gives me inner satisfaction. What happens as a result? My respect for the tree increases.

This is a beautiful image of the power of tolerance and I have lots to learn from it. It shows me that if I want to imbibe the characteristics of the tree, I must become full of the fruits of the spiritual attainments from the Supreme Soul. When I am filled internally with fruits like joy, love, wisdom, beauty and peace through spiritual knowledge and meditation; even when the stones of difficult circumstances come my way I'll still be able to respond positively and creatively, with courage and humility. If I'm empty, the stones will injure me, and I'll react with anger or fear or ego or some other negative emotion.

Also, although many stones have injured me in the past, I must remove any hurt in my heart, which may have developed as a result of injuries experienced from them, when I did not have the Supreme Soul with me. These will prevent me from sharing the unlimited fruit made possible by the company of the Supreme.

Real tolerance means tolerating with pleasure and not with stress. It does not just mean putting up with a difficult situation, and at the same time counting how many times I have had to tolerate it. Tolerance means that no matter what stones come my way, I realize completely that those throwing them are souls not full of attainments, and so my duty is to continue to share my internal attainments with them. For most people today, if someone insults them, they'll immediately become angry or upset in return, so the situation not only remains unresolved but infact becomes more complicated. Those who are virtuous may be able to remain content and smile for a while, responding with patience, but repeated insults and repeated efforts by the other person to bring them down will tire them until the point come where their tolerance levels are crossed and they will react.

If, however, through my power of spirituality and meditation, I am receiving immense amount of strength from the Supreme Being, my heart will remain open and I won't count how many times the other person has harmed or insulted me. This may sound extremely difficult and may look like an impossible thing to do. Meditation, however, makes the impossible possible. Meditation gives me an experience of a very deep, personal relationship with the Supreme and helps me keep the Supreme as my constant companion, which gives me such power. It's immensely useful for anyone then to move towards that goal.

True tolerance is made possible by openness and acceptance. It doesn't mean clenching my teeth and carrying on, come what may. Suppression of my feelings can cause me internal, physical as well as

emotional damage, and end in an outburst which can damage others too.

*Real tolerance is a state in which, firstly, I have to go inside and check how I can contribute positively to a difficult situation. If the difficult situation requires me to mould my own behavior, I have to be open about that and respond accordingly.*

*Secondly, real tolerance requires understanding and humility in the self and sympathy towards others: realizing that at the deepest level, everyone's original qualities are love, peace and happiness and everyone wishes to experience these qualities and live with them and that when we behave badly towards one another, it's because we are suffering from a loss of these qualities, a loss which is temporary. That doesn't mean I have to invite another person to continue to insult me, or deliberately expose myself to negative situations. But if I happen to be in a situation where there is continuous insult or assault, understanding will contribute to my power to tolerate and accept it or walk away from it in peace.*

*Thirdly, real tolerance is that state of contentment, which comes only through the relationship with the Supreme, in which there is no impact from the assaults, other than to cause a response inside me of wanting to give, like the fruit tree (explained earlier). Forgiveness is the healing balm for an intolerant nature. When we move very far away from God, our tolerance level reduces. The nature we express becomes that of wanting, taking, needing, rather than our original nature, which is of giving and forgiving.*

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