

## HOW PAIN LEADS TO KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

SUFFERING leads to perfection through successive stages of knowledge—not knowledge from books, but *knowledge of life*—and each step in knowledge means that some form of suffering has been transmuted and transcended. A particular kind of pain, experienced innumerable times, at last leads to a knowledge of the cause of that pain, and when the cause is discovered, removed, and not again entertained, the pain is for ever transcended.

This principle is applicable both to physical pain, which is caused by disease, and to mental suffering caused by wrong-thinking. When the cause of a disease is known, it can be avoided, and the disease and its pain can never attack us. The cause of certain forms of disease is known, and the prudent avoid the cause and so escape the disease. The causes of many bodily disorders, however, still await discovery, and until such discovery is effected, the disorders will continue.

In all forms of mental suffering, the cause can be more readily discovered, and when discovered, removed and avoided, because the mind comes more under our immediate control. We cannot eliminate the bodily sensation of pain. The pain caused by direct injury to the body is different from that caused by disease. Thus a perfect man—perfect both in mind and health—would feel pain from a cut or wound, just as a very imperfect man would; and it is necessary for the protection of his body that he should do so, but his bodily pain would be modified by *his attitude of mind towards it*. It would not cause him any

mental suffering and he would retain his happiness and peace of mind. The imperfect man would, however, become disturbed mentally—would be aroused to fear, or agitation, or anger—and so would add mental pain to physical, so that even the physical pain would appear greater.

Not one of the Great Teachers has taught men how to overcome bodily pain or annul the bodily sensation of pain. This is highly significant in view of the fact that certain schools of thought aim at this end. This studying and striving to render one's body insensible to pain is no new thing. It was taught and practised in the East thousands of years ago, and is known in India as *Hatha Yoga*, or physical Yoga. If accounts speak truly, there are still Yogis in India who can cut and wound their bodies, and not experience pain, and while this is an accomplishment of its kind, it is a bad one, and is no indication of spiritual advancement. Indeed this Hatha Yoga was condemned as Black Yoga, or False Yoga by the Great Teachers of India, who declared that it led to bodily disease and spiritual ignorance, and not to health and Truth. The practice taught by the spiritually enlightened was, and is, known as Raja Yoga, meaning kingly Yoga. This kingly or true Yoga consisted in purifying the heart, and gaining control of the mind, and the method is embodied in their precepts. The precepts of Jesus outline this practice with great clearness.

It is clear, then, that we should not strive to become insensible to physical pain; first, because it is unnatural; and second, because we should thereby deprive ourselves of the warning and protection to our body which such pain affords; but we should endeavour to heal the pain, when caused by injury; or find and remove the cause, when it is the result of disease.

Nor should we try to render ourselves insensible to mental pain by any process of *hardening*. Unnatural as this is, it can be done successfully up to a certain point, just as insensibility to physical pain can be accomplished in a degree, for as the latter ultimately leads to the wreckage of the body, so the former leads to mental disaster, leads one further and further away from Truth, until at last he has to begin all over again.

Nevertheless mental pain can be transcended, yet not by hardening the heart, but by *softening* it, by practising oneself in all thoughts and deeds that are good and kind and just, until at

last the cause of the mind's suffering is clearly seen and is removed and avoided.

Once the cause of any particular kind of mental pain is seen, its elimination from the mind becomes comparatively easy. The thought which originated the deed which produced the pain, is gradually reduced in strength, and in the frequency of its recurrence, until it at last disappears entirely from the mind and life. And with each mental pain thus transcended, there is a great advance in knowledge, and it is a divine knowledge which is accompanied with steadfastness, happiness, and power, lifting one above those fluctuations between happiness and misery in which the majority live.

Thus the wise man sees that everything is good, even the presence of pain, and he uses that pain to enable him to reach higher regions of knowledge. Regarding his pain as a sure indication that he has gone wrong somewhere, he searches for his mistake, and, having found it, he ever after avoids it.

So in the crucible of pain is the dross of ignorance burnt away from us. Thus are we purified in the fire of knowledge.—  
JAMES ALLEN, in *The Epoch*.