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SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL LESSONS FROM THE STORY

It is only when some nitrogen – Sattva – is released in a person that he can receive help through the triad N–O–C, or in other words only when he has a little love can the love of God reach him. How does it happen in the story?

1. The shoemaker hurried on leaving the shrine behind him – when suddenly his conscience smote him and he stopped in the road. ‘What are you doing, Simon?’ said he to himself. ‘The man may be dying with want and you slip past afraid’... So he turned back and went up to the man... who seemed to wake up and turning his head, he opened his eyes and looked into Simon’s face. That one look was enough to make Simon fond of the man.
2. Angry words rose to Matrena’s lips, but she looked at the stranger and was silent... and Simon said: ‘Matrena, have you no love of God?’ Matrena heard these words and as she looked at the stranger suddenly her heart softened to him. She came back from the door and got out the supper... ‘Eat if you want to,’ she said... Matrena sat at the corner of the table, looking at the stranger and was touched and began to feel fond of him. And at once the stranger’s face lit up... he raised his eyes and smiled at her.

In one case Simon was roused by his own conscience, in the other Matrena was stirred by Simon’s words to her – two preparatory triads are hidden here, one beginning with passive, the other with the active force. This preparation made possible the passage of vibrations between Michael and the two of them.

We see the beginnings of the opposing triad in the beautiful descriptions of the identification and the imagination, and above all the negative emotions of Simon and Matrena and the rich man who ordered the boots.

- a) Simon: ‘If *I* meddle *I* shall surely get into trouble ... Shall *I* go back to him or shall *I* go on? If *I* go near him something dreadful may happen... Or if not, he’d still be a burden on one’s hands. What could *I* do with a naked man? *I* couldn’t give him *my* last clothes. Heaven only help *me* to get away.’
- b) Matrena: ‘She talked nineteen to the dozen and dragged in things that had happened ten years before... At last she flew at Simon and seized him by the sleeve. ‘Give me *my* jacket’; Matrena seized the jacket and it burst its seams... She wanted to work off her anger, but she also wanted to know what sort of a man the stranger was.’ etc., etc.
- c) Rich Gentleman: ‘Remember whom you are to make the boots for. You must make *me* boots that will last for a year’; and to Michael; ‘What are you grinning at you fool? You had better look to it that the boots are ready in time.’

In Michael’s description we see what all this looked like to him:

‘For the first time... I saw the mortal face of a man and his face seemed terrible to me and I turned from it. When the man saw me he frowned and became still more terrible and passed me by on the other side. I despaired; but suddenly I heard him coming back. I looked up and did not recognise the same man; before I had seen death in his face; but now he was alive and I recognised in him the presence of God.’

“The woman was still more terrible than the man had been; the spirit of death came from her mouth; I could not breathe for the stench of death that spread around her. She wished to drive me out into the cold, and I knew that if she did so she would die. Suddenly her husband spoke to her of God and the woman changed at once. She had become alive and in her too I saw God. ... Then I remembered the first lesson God had set me: “Learn what dwells in man”.

We see that fear is increased tenfold by imagination; we see how in the state of identification nothing exists but one's small self and how impervious one is! ‘In the state of identification a man does not see and he does not hear’. Finally we see that without imagination and identification, 99 per cent of our negative emotions would cease to exist!

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