

"THE PRISONER"

Gitanjali No. 31)

Intent of this Poem.

- ✓ *We are prisoners to ourselves.*
- ✓ *Who imprisoned us?*
- ✓ *Who forge our inner chains?*
- ✓ *How to break free from them?*

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"THE PRISONER"

Prisoner, tell me: who was it that bound you?

It was I, my Master!, said the prisoner.

I thought I could outdo everybody in the world in wealth and power,
And I amassed in my own treasure house the money due to my king!

When sleep overcame me I lay upon the bed that was for my Lord,
And on waking up, I found I was a prisoner in my own treasure house!

Prisoner, tell me who was it that wrought this unbreakable chain?

It was I, said the prisoner, who forged this chain very carefully,
I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive leaving me
in freedom, undisturbed!

Thus, night and day, I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes.
When at last the work was done, and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found
that it held me in its grip."

(Gitanjali No. 31)

Time for Introspection

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1. Are we really free? Are we prisoners? In what sense? ?
2. Prisoners to whom or to what? How?
3. When did we become prisoners?
4. Where is our prison?
5. In the poem, what is the meaning of "sleep overcoming us"?
What sort of sleep is this? How does it overcome us?
6. What is the meaning of "being prisoners in our own treasure house"?
7. What do the chains stand for in the poem
8. Who has forged our chains? How? When?
9. What can we do to break loose from our chains and escape the prison of our "treasure house"? .

Thoughts for Reflection

- We are possessed by what we possess
- We are enslaved by the people we "love".

- Addictions of any type are chains
- Passions blind us..
- Negative feelings blind us. - Resentments, rancor, hate
revengefulness.
- Human respect and public opinion enmesh us.
- Competitiveness, trying to keep up with the Joneses keeps us in
a rut.

INNER FREEDOM

(A. Goodier, s.j.)

- o live long or to die soon.
- To be Rich or to be Poor
- To be clever or to be dull,
- To be handsome or to be deformed,
- To be strong or to be weakling,
- To be attractive or to be drab,
- To be striking or to be plain.
- To be learned or to be Ignorant
- To be educated or to be common,
- To be in health or to suffer,
- To be active or to be idle,
- To be used or to be set aside,
- To be loved or to be ignored.
- To be Successful or to Fail
- To be honored or to be despised,
- To be rewarded or to be passed over,
- To be known or to be unknown,
- To have friends or to have none,

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**On neither can I set my Heart
In both I can equally serve God
Each is a gift of God,
And as such has equal value.**

Liberation

(A. Goodier, s.j.)

To be slave of nothing,
To be the slave not even of myself,
To be able to make myself obey,
To make myself say “no”,
To make myself say “yes”.

To have a noble end in view,
To make myself live for it,
To be able to use all things for that end,

A life of sacrifice,
a life of endeavor

To be rid of useless burdens,

To shoulder m own burdens
To shoulder the burdens of my fellow-men,
Understanding all,
In sympathy with all.

To look at all things evenly,

Shunning none too much,
For there is good in all,
Desiring none too much,
For in all “too much” is evil

To live thus nobly,

To be obeyed by myself,
This is freedom,
The freedom of the children of God,
The freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.