A Book of Concern

~ Dedicated to those suffering

~ Author's Note ~

A few years ago I wrote a book or, given its modest size, a *booklet* which I somewhat pathetically named “A Book of Concern”. In its original form, it had been written in a language other than English and, when translated, didn't differ much from the original text in terms of structure, topics covered, etc. Well, the English edition might have got some awkward phrasings and other linguistic vices, a discrepancy only natural when writing not in the mother tongue. As English persists to be my second language, the new edition isn't warranted from having some inadequacies as seen by native English speakers either. That is to say, if they happen to be reading these lines and intend to thumb down to the very last page, let them be patient and condescending with me.

On another note, there will be no bibliography of sorts, and all references and citations, except for the names of their authors or literary sources, would hardly bear any other traces of relevant information to help track them down. For one thing, in the age of Internet that wouldn't be too laborious a task on the part of the

reader. Yet, the main reason for this deliberate neglect – this is not an academic write but, rather, an intimate monologue, an attempt to communicate something of great importance and is to be treated as such. The reader is invited to mostly rely on his or her common sense and 'gut feeling' than any outward signs of legitimacy that proper formatting would suggest. In this regard, the new version of the book is no different from the older.

Technicalities aside, as some four years passed by, I decided to revise and expand the book for it to include something that hadn't been well articulated or was purposefully left out in what has now become the older version. I am mostly keen to elaborate on what I personally see as *the way* out of seemingly inevitable life's woes, something I mention passingly and rather sheepishly there. This time, I will be 'going bold' as circumstances seem to be more pushing. What I mean by all this will be mostly laid out in the last chapter, in a dessert sort of way. Should the reader be now tempted to jump straight to that part, most likely he or she won't be able to appreciate it without having digested 'the main course' first. Besides, some changes are going to be made throughout the text. Reworked, it would be worth a look in its entirety.

“A Book of Concern”, essentially, was and is an attempt to provide a common foundation and reference point for various spiritual and philosophical traditions in general and individual spiritual development in particular. At the heart of the book lie my personal inner experiences, insights, familiarity with religious, philosophical, and psychological thought, observations, comparisons, and reflections that have been going on for years. For one thing, these must have translated into some sort of validity. In a way, I am embarking on an ambitious mission of a peacemaker wielding, at the same time, a sword – that of discrimination – which would hardly be pleasing to some. Whether I am blessed as it is made clear with regards to peacemaking in the Bible, this I know not.

If the reader hasn't been put off with all my intimations and pretense thus far, let our journey across pages continue.

2020

~ *Foreword* ~

"You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts"
Khalil Gibran

If I pay heed to the illustrious Gibran, it would seem I am not at peace with my thoughts as I am going to be filling page after page. In all sincerity, he is right, my mind is somewhat disturbed. The question is, why to go on and bother others if everyone has already gotten enough on *their* plates, sometimes, over the brim? Perhaps, the reader would be curious to know that, despite all my worries, deep down I am strangely at peace. This would be a part of the answer. Borrowing from another poet, I am going to be talking about "good and evil, fierce hatred, and sacred love" – matters worth of a talk! Though I have a knack for poetry as the reader might have surmised, I will be breaking down these sublime or otherwise matters into smaller particles, looking at them 'through the microscope', finding some patterns and regularities, and doing all that in a far from poetic way. By and large, it is going to be a *prosy* read. There is a valid reason behind that though. They say:

devil is in the details. By yanking him out and bringing to the daylight – often, at the expense of poetic embellishments – it may be possible to banish the accuser. As his grip is that of iron, this is, basically, my foremost concern.

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In a branch of Sufism, 'the undercurrent' of Islam, the gravest sin is to be offended. It may be puzzling to those used to more conventional formulas, such as “Thou shalt not kill”, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”, etc. The Sufi commandment does show a different approach. Many would say: God is truth. They would go on to supply: God cannot be mocked. Piecing these together: truth cannot be mocked. In the same vein, *those standing on truth* cannot be mocked either. In this light, offending someone would be nothing but testing his or her spiritual grounds. Finally, staying calm despite being offended suggests being on close terms with truth. Putting it in a more 'secular' way: the dog barks, yet the caravan goes on.

At the same time, calm is by no means at odds with 'oscillations'. For one thing, the sea waves go well with the serenity of its depths. In keeping with the subject, having blasphemy outlawed may agree with God's general insensitivity to the mockery. Should it cause His wrath indeed, it is the transgressor who would get into trouble

whilst nothing would send ripples to God's 'kernel'. This would signify His innermost peace.

Coming down to the human level and now speaking of peace versus oscillations in most general terms, any need, want, craving, or interest – in bulk, these can be referred to as *drive* – would upset some balance or normal course of events. Satisfying a drive would reclaim the peace and may become a step towards a deeper serenity. In turn, this would allow a more sublime and higher drive to come into play. Losing peace and reclaiming it, becoming more peaceful or falling short of one's peacefulness, by and large, outlines the dynamics of human life.

Higher up again, if the absolute peace, or God, or truth are just all the same and held as the ultimate goal, the most sublime drive would be satisfied with knowing truth or partaking of Divine peace. This particular one seems to be marked with joy. For instance, a Hindu way of describing the God's nature is “sat-chit-ananda”, that is, existence-attention-bliss. At the same time, feeling happiness or satisfying a drive at a lower level seem to be only possible through

the interplay of antipodes – essentially, masculine and feminine principles.

The transition from imitations of towards *genuine* peace comprises what is known as “the middle way” or “the straight way”, or simply “Way”. Along this Way, the antipodes are meant to turn into companions and, ultimately, become very intimately interwoven. Under different names in various traditions and schools of thought, these to-be-companions are known as “yan” and “yin”, “rajas” and “tamas”, “sun” and “moon”, etc. Bearing a close semblance to Way is “Tao” or “Sattva guna”, or “Great Doing”. Having selected “sun” and “moon” together with “Way” from the names at hand, I will be using them from now onwards.

For convenience's sake, one may visualize a pivot, that is, Way, encircled with two spirals – those of sun and moon – gradually accelerating and capering towards the top (a sort of inverted Rod of Asclepius). A more three-dimensional image of that would be a benched, conic structure, something similar to a minaret or a Buddhist stupa. One way or another, a deviation of either spiral would cause the entire structure to oscillate, down to collapse, this

way more resembling a pendulum. In other words, the companionship may turn into a negative interdependence.

Speaking of qualities of these 'celestial bodies' in more abstract terms, light, order, heat, hardness, lightness, detachment lie mostly within sun's domain. Those are set off or balanced with darkness, chaos, cold, softness, heaviness, 'viscosity' coming from moon. With regards to their more concrete manifestations in the human psyche, sun would show as reactivity, dynamism, ambitiousness, consciousness, discrimination, comprehension, transcendence. Faces of moon would reflect passivity, desireness, inspirability, emotionality, intuitiveness, memory, subconsciousness.

It is plausible to say that various 'beams' of sun build up one's individuality or 'ego' with moon matching them up with some tangible, palpable, feelable counterparts or, as it is the case with subconsciousness, something latent that is yet to be manifested. This pairing of sun and moon would make up one's composite dynamic *Self* (the capitalization is to emphasize its composite nature, not a higher status). Not only does the dynamism part of *Self* suggest different physical, emotional, and mental states that one

would most likely go through on a daily, if not on an hourly basis. Over the long run, it is either rising or descending along 'the pivot' of Way – normally, there appears to be no third scenario – this way claiming different states of happiness and peacefulness. Some individuals, it seems, happen to catch the upward momentum and align themselves with truth, or God, up to the point of becoming barely shakeable in their peace and joy. Among other things, that would make them much less sensitive to an offence.

In light of all above, it should have now become clearer why some adherents of Sufism would say: the greatest sin is to be offended.

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In my goings back and forth, up and down, I appear to be describing things in a roller-coaster fashion, so the reader's journey through the first chapter may have been a bit tumultuous. Over the long run, it will be more like unfolding of a spiral, that is, talking about same things, yet each time from a somewhat broader and deeper perspective (haven't I promised to be using ' the microscope'?). If the overall dynamics of *Self* has been shown more or less clearly – I shall be certainly getting back at it, more than once – its composite parts are to be looked at with more 'magnification'. For that end, I am going to differentiate across numerous selves in their complex makeup.

Without further ado, self-preservation instinct would be the basic and, perhaps, the basest of them. The sense of vulnerability and fear coming from moon are matched here with the solar 'fight or flight' reaction. *Animal self*.

It would be loosely followed by the instinct of reproduction. Masculine and feminine or, in other words, active solar and more passive lunar types of sexuality would make up *gender self*. On this

level, the lunar sensuality is also coupled with the solar purpose of procreation.

Submissiveness in its most general sense comes to be the next face of moon, with its object and counterpart being the authoritative sun. *Servant/master self* .

Inspiration is moon's gift higher up. Sun would 'flash' it out into well defined forms, meanings, and doings. *Creator self.*

Next comes the lunar drive for accumulation and possession with sun representing it symbolically, whether it be through wealth, societal status, or power, as well as acting it out. *Owner self.*

Love, yet a more subtle 'moonlight', shines from higher above. In the first place, it radiates towards the immediate family including parents, siblings, later – spouse and children. Its matching solar aspect would be recognizing one's place, role, and duties in the family circle. In sum, love and its close satellite compassion together with roles and responsibilities comprise *family self.*

In *social self,* the loved ones come to be outside of the immediate family circle: maternal, fatherly, filial or fraternal

sentiments project onto people not related through blood. To put it differently, sun illuminates new horizons eliciting a more sublime sense of belonging and love from moon. The subtlest form of *social self* would be *universal self* free from any grosser or temporal attachments.

By and large, different parts of *Self* have been shown hierarchically, in terms of sublimity of sunlight and moonlight as it were, rather than chronologically. It is the duty of *contemplating self* to be looking after lower ones as, up to a point, it transcends them all. The weight of all sensations, feelings, and memories coming from moon along with ideas and principles made aware through sun would make up its footholds. Basically, *contemplating self* decides what to inhibit and what to approve of in *Self*.

Thus far, Way hasn't been specifically mentioned whereas, ideally, it runs like a thread through all the pairings of the companions. It is owing to Way that sun should go along with moon without major distortions and deviations. Basically, that means *the harmony between the inside and outside,* with some sort of peace being an inherent part of it. In this harmony, for instance, *animal*

self wouldn't become too frightened or take to defensive measures without a real, proportionate danger. Or, *gender self* would be bound with marriage traditionally understood as a union between man and woman as well as *auspicious* forms of sexuality that major world religions have a more or less shared agreement on. That is to say, an essential part of peace as coming from Way is *auspiciousness*, an important aspect to heed with.

Now, should the lower selves are duly regimented and shaped by Way, their upward progression may eventually culminate in *Divine self*, the last one in the makeup. If I am competent enough to be commenting this level, the most sublime and wholesome awareness appears to be reached there, with actions being performed in and coming from the profound peacefulness. In this light, the biblical image of the lion lying down with the lamb may actually stand for the complete sublimation and unification of sun and moon. The Koran depicts the paradise in somewhat different terms, yet a major word being uttered there, according to the scripture, is “peace”. Bhagavat Gita talks about the state of yoga, that is, the union with God, as “action in inaction”. If inaction is understood as the ultimate peace, it is well in line with the other two holy texts. And

all three would agree with the Sufi commandment highlighted at the very beginning.

I would rather go down to the lower harmonies – that would be only honest of me – so to show Way's apparent workings in more detail.

As mentioned before, sun features transcendence, that is, the urge to go beyond certain conditions or limitations. Moon is much more reserved in this regard, down to passivity and inertia. What Way would seem to try to do is communicate the sense of proportion to the companions. That, in turn, would help keep their natural tendencies in check and maintain the upward momentum.

Animal and *gender selves* have been already shown in this light.

In moving higher up, *servant/master self* would achieve harmony, hence a peace, as long as moon obeys the commandment "You shall not make for yourself an idol". Sun, in its turn, would be informed of humility to be able to admit and accept one's higher authority.

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