

QUESTIONS ON SUPPRESSION

Lakshmi Devi (Gertrude A. Wolff)
Bulletin of the Assembly of Man, No. 16
Spring 1963

Q.: Religion teaches us to suppress negative thought and action, or emotions. How is this compatible with modern psychology which warns us not to bottle up emotions, but to express ourselves for the good of our health and general well-being?

A.: They are not compatible. Neither view is quite correct. We have learned through experience that it is not wise to give way to every emotion, as certain psychology suggests. We only begin self-mastery, so necessary to growth, when we begin to discipline our emotions, and until we learn that discipline we are but irresponsible children.

However, neither is suppression the answer. To push something back into the unconscious is to see it erupt later with violent explosive force, and in this respect Christianity has failed. Wars among Christian nations have proved to be as cruel and violent as ancient ones; greed and lust prevail as ever. This is as true of highly cultured nations as with primitive, as we saw among the Nazis.

Two avenues of technique may be applied, the first of which is admittedly difficult. That is to recognize and isolate the "Witness," that Higher Self which is able to look down on the little personality with detachment and see it for what it is, directing and correcting it. Such ability may come only with many years of concentration and practice, however. For the time being, while we work to recognize the Witness within ourselves, we can seek not to suppress, but to transform, negative thought, emotion or action. We can turn hatred to love through trying to understand the object of our hatred. And it may help in understanding to know that we are all learning that none is perfect here. If we could know the danger of harboring negative thought we would certainly seek to transform it. Dwelling on dark thoughts only serves to develop them further. The more time and energy we put on these thoughts, the less we have for the constructive life; hence we can only deteriorate, in proportion to our general line of thought and the time and energy expended on it.