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What I do unto myself

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An elderly gentleman was ranting at his gatekeeper for he did not hastily open the gate as the gentleman's car approached in the driveway. In a similar way, I watched a lady admonish her house help for not getting her a glass of water immediately, when she asked for one. I found, in both these reactions, similarity, and realised my appreciation of the situations was largely because I am no different.

On exploring within, I recognised that the anger or irritation demonstrated, came not from being upset with the other, but with self. The irritation was actually being directed at self and the recipient was only the cause or stimulus. When we cannot contain our temper, we direct it outwards. Similarly, when we express joy or happiness, both these feelings emerge from within and encourage us to see visible signs of it manifest outside, and this gives us, even if brief, a momentary feeling of contentment with the self.

What we do or demonstrate as an outward behaviour is truly what is being generated within, and only because this self-induced feeling needs expression we direct it outwards. Allied to this outward manifestation of our feelings, are also our misplaced expectations both of others and of ourselves. Expectations, while they are directed at someone outside, are actually a consequence of unmet needs in us, which again, when not addressed or not recognised within, tend to translate into behaviour we outwardly display. Thus, when expectations within us are unmet, we become reactive.

Therefore, it behoves each of us to examine within ourselves, recognise our feelings, appreciate them, and then respond from a position of self-compassion. In so doing, we will begin to appreciate ourselves and thus appreciate what is on the outside.

If we dislike ourselves, we will inevitably dislike others. By the same yardstick, if we love ourselves, in a manner that is not narcissistic or self-indulgent but truly appreciate the bounty within, we will without fail recognise these in others. The scriptures are not far from the truth when they say 'what you do to yourself is what you will do to others.'

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