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Those who Welcome Criticism Grow Stronger and Become Better

The power of criticism can hardly be overemphasized. It is a weapon of immense power and subtle effect. Criticism is invigorating for those who welcome it; it is enervating for those who detest it. Criticism gives us an opportunity for self-assessment, self-appraisal and self-evaluation. However much one can claim, no one is perfect in this world, but a true human being must try to get closer to perfectibility. This is not possible until and unless we get knowledge and awareness about our faults and foibles. It is the critic who facilitates this awareness for us. Democracy is supposed to be the best form of government primarily because it gives freedom to all to criticise the policies of the government. The opposition through its criticism of the government points out the lapses and pitfalls which may materialise if the government in power does not pay heed to its criticism. Authoritarian governments generally meet a tragic fate sooner or later, mainly because they do not brook criticism. Hitler and Mussolini met their tragic fate because in their scheme of things there was no room for criticism by the opposition. The democracies are, on the other hand, long-lasting. The reason is because they welcome criticism. It is rightly said that the critic is our best well-wisher. Criticism may be distinguished from calumny. Criticism flows from a neutral or noble heart, while calumny flows from a vicious and depraved heart. There is ill will, spite and jealousy behind calumny. But criticism, particularly constructive criticism, is a positive factor for our improvement, which we badly need. We must, therefore, remember that those who welcome criticism become stronger and better.

It is about an interesting event which took place in Russia before the 1917 A.D. Revolution. At that time Count Wilte was the Prime Minister there. Many people, both of the administration and the public, were dissatisfied with the way he worked and ran the government. Media was publishing much material against him. Right from the editors of different newspapers and magazines to their readers all were writing articles and comments.

Mr. Wilte got fed up with them and one day he sent for his press officer and asked him to prepare a list of those editors, correspondents and others, who had been writing the most bitter and biting criticism against him. The press officer did prepare the desired list and put it up before him. 'While doing so, the official said, Sir do you propose to punish these persons?' Mr. Wilte's reply was astonishing and most unexpected as well. "I would like to appoint that person as my advisor and conscience-keeper, whose comments against me and my ways of working would be the bitterest and attacking." And of course, he did likewise. Mr. Wilte made no secret, while expressing his idea that "he who made reasoned criticism of wrong things, is the true well-wisher, because he makes or goads one to leave the wrong path and adopt and proceed on the right one. We must pay heed to what our most fanatic and bitter opponent said, and try to understand and follow the useful things which he said. This would never let us go astray and adopt wrong ways and means."

Everyone of us is preprogrammed and develops idiosyncrasies, in accordance with the culture, family, society and religion we are born into and grow up with. Most of us are indifferent to the fact that we operate with little awareness. So we end up living in a self-made prison. Whenever anyone seems to draw us out of that prison, we react sharply feeling internally hurt as if the person was trying to break the prison wall to do us harm. But it is only the half-truth. Mostly those who point out our shortcomings, are our well-wishers, and they mean to make us aware of the occasion for betterment.