

# LUXURY

(Diary Leaves)

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## I

The book *The Fiery World* indicates :

“It has been ordained that luxury should leave humanity. Not without reason have people made of this a special conception. It cannot be replaced by anything else. Luxury is neither beauty, nor spirituality, nor perfecting, nor construction, nor bliss, nor mercy; not one benevolent conception can be substituted for it. Luxury is the destruction of means and possibilities. Luxury is decay, because every up-building without rhythm will be but decomposition. One may sufficiently notice, that earthly luxury is already shaken. But one must find co-ordinated co-operation in order to heal the infection of luxury. Selfhood will try to affirm that luxury is a deserved abundance. They will also say that luxury is regal. But this is slander. Luxury was the sign of downfall and obscuration of spirit. The shackles of luxury are the most terrible also for the Subtle World. There one needs progress and continuous perfecting of thought. The exposition of encumbrances will not lead to the next gates.”

Were these words said for some hoary antiquity? Or are they needed to-day in the same measure as then? It is very deplorable if commands against the ignorance of luxury are needed also to-day. But be this as it may, who will dare to deny that luxury precisely now must be eradicated? How often has the world been told that luxury is a sign of extremely bad taste! How

often were examples of the fall of Babylon, Rome and many other empires pointed out, when instead of beauty, education and enlightenment humanity became obsessed by vulgar luxury!

Let us not forget how Chingiz-Khan, wishing to avoid the possibility of the spreading of luxury amidst his warriors, carried out in front of the whole people most instructive demonstrations. He told some of his closest friends to dress themselves in the finest Chinese silk robes and went with them through thorny bushes, dry tamarisk and other sharp prickly plants. When they arrived at the meeting-place of the people, their silk robes were naturally torn to pieces. And the leader pointed out to his people the uselessness of luxurious dresses. He also showed with the help of his friends, how luxurious food only causes illness, thus teaching them to return to milk and a simple healthy diet.

Such examples of endeavours to turn the consciousness of the people to a beautiful, sound living one may quote in plenty, from all ages. But it appears that even now a sound foundation has not been realized, and the machine, revolting against the weak human common sense, overpowers the wise distribution of forces. Just at present it is especially necessary without fearing derision and mockery, to remind again about healthy beauty and goal-fitted living. Some countries already announce premia for handicrafts and home industry, and this is not a retreat from

civilization. In this way wise leaders try again to attract attention to the necessity of high quality of workmanship and to applying one's leisure time for skilful self-perfectioning.

Even recently vulgar luxury was ascribed only to the ignorant *nouveaux riches*. Of course these new-comers to the golden calf, often complete ignoramuses, are easy prey to the dark whisperings of luxury. But let us not close our eyes that far beyond the circle of *nouveaux riches* there grows the desire for easy earnings and for vulgar forms of the luxurious perversion of life.

The book *Fiery World* wisely reminds that precisely egoistical ignoramuses will always defend luxury and the same book far-sightedly points out that there are many signs that luxury in the world has already been shaken. This means that one must very attentively watch that the next step of existence be really surrounded by truly noble creations. But this necessary condition of life must be watched not by some official inspectors, but by the population itself, in order to create as soon as possible a conscious understanding of the harmony of daily life.

## II

Luxury in objects must leave humanity also for that reason, that this abhorrent conception treacherously involves people into spiritual luxury, which is still more harmful, and infectious. In self-centeredness people become careless towards the workers in the field of education. The excesses of luxury have created similar hideous excesses of enticement for outer physical strength, all sorts of races and competitions and admiration of muscular force. One abnormality always leads to another. The growth of the material side of life calls forth a doubtless downfall in spirituality in all countries and in

all creeds. More than that, every striving towards spirituality and sublime problems of "be-ness" is considered inadmissible in the daily life of materially "civilized" society.

It is true, some nations, and amongst them mainly India, keep to ethical methods of thought, but even amongst these nations there are already just complaints that the young generation loses the understanding of high foundations of life. From other countries there come the most deplorable news about the growth of militant atheism and about unhealthy idolatry before crass materialism. The real workers of spiritual education are pushed back into the back rows. People are not ashamed to state that at present there is no time altogether to speak about living ethics. And one may add many examples of similar horrors. Of course, also from ancient history we know that Confucius, the Just One, was prosecuted by unwise rulers. And Plato was sold as slave. We know also that Aristides, who was given the by-name the Righteous, was expelled by his co-citizens from his native town. Such records sometimes seem like slander upon humanity. It is too difficult to imagine that Aristides the Righteous, could have been so maltreated by bestial ignoramuses, who dared to commit such a strikingly harmful step for the state, as the expulsion of their best citizen. But during the latest excavations in the Acropolis of Athens,—what a shame—there were found ceramic tablets which represented votes against Aristides. How terrible is it to witness the actual tablet with the inscription "for the expulsion of Aristides!" This corresponds to the most awful vandalism, when absurdly and as a shame for the whole of humanity were destroyed irreplaceable treasures of great beauty!

When we read about the destruction of the most remarkable libraries, when we see lists of already non-existent creations of art, will not even the most shameless heart shudder? Some Herostrats of antiquity and their followers of our days proudly announce that they want to destroy museums and temples. We see such insane statements in print. But not one of these Herostrats will realize that he follows the commandments of most ignorant luxury. If luxury is the destruction of means and possibilities, if it is decay, then every barbaric destruction of great creations will be already luxury, a vile luxury. Herostrat, when burning great monuments, of course did not understand the high meaning of creativeness. In the same way the servitor of luxury, surrounding himself by hideously pompous, guilted encumbrances, is like the same Herostrat in regard to noble true art. If we think of new forms of life, if we want the happiness of our near ones, then is it not our duty to replace ugliness by lofty noble forms of living, be this in the material or spiritual respect?

### III

With great difficulty people begin to understand such axioms that friendliness opens the gates to co-operation. But when we have to fight in the days of Armageddon, against selfhood and rudeness, this may be achieved only by consonance of co-operation. In this incessant and joyful co-operation we shall cognize that the best people so beautifully understood the meaning of beauty in the whole complex of life. The great Teacher Swami Vivekananda tells us :

“Don’t you see I am above all a poet?”  
 “That man cannot be truly religious, who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandeur of art.” “Non-appreciation of art is crass ignorance.”

Rabindranath Tagore finishes his book *What is Art* with such words : “In Art the person in us is sending its answer to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts.”

The *Fiery World* ordains : “One should avoid prejudice as in great things so also in small. Many possibilities were interrupted because of preconceived thinking. Precisely the fiery energy is very sensitive to prejudice, but knowing such a property of energy one can counteract it by suggestion,” and “a benevolent thought is the basis of a good action. Thought is luminous before action, therefore let us count the camps of good according to the lights of thought.”

These reminders about the harm of prejudice and about the bliss of light-bringing good thought are so needed now, when the battle takes place with all dark phantoms, with ignorant luxury and with vile treason. The refined heart will permit to distinguish where is the border line between the noble searching for beauty and where is self-devouring wild luxury, which decomposed even powerful empires.

Let the Banner of Peace as a symbol of realization and construction of Beauty remind and warn where begins the dark kingdom of spiritual cannibalism.

Verily luxury must depart from humanity.