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First Public Talk in Madras

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There are many issues we have to talk over together, many problems that confront us daily. And to talk things over together, certain things are obviously necessary. First, you and the speaker must be in right communication with each other, because unless there is a right relationship established through communication with each other, no problem can be rationally, sanely talked over together. So it is necessary that you as well as the speaker should be working together, thinking out the issues together. You are not merely listening to what is being said, but you are actually taking a share, partaking, in what is being discussed - which means that each of us must work together, intensely, at the same level, and at the same time. And that is the only way we can establish any kind of communication with each other.

I do not know if you have not noticed that in all relationships when both are intensely aware of the issue, when both feel vitally, strongly, at the same time, there is a communication taking place which is really a communion which goes beyond the word. But first one has to understand the word and not try to go beyond the word. It seems to me also necessary to listen so that we, both of us, are hearing not only the word but the content of the word, the meaning of the word, the significance of the word. Because we can translate one word differently while the speaker intends that that word should be used in a particular way, or gives it a different meaning.

So the one that hears must also be aware of the interpretation given to the word, the prejudice with which he approaches a sentence, the meaning of that sentence. And also he must be naturally aware of how he reacts to what is being said. All that demands a great deal of work on your part because these talks would be utterly empty, without much meaning, if you merely listened to the speaker, agreeing or disagreeing, and then you went home with certain concepts which you can formulate for yourself, agreeing or disagreeing with them. So there is the task that lies for each one of us: it is not that the speaker does all the work and you merely listen.

And I think it is very important to understand this because we are concerned, are we not, with bringing about a radical revolution in all our relationships between man and man. Relationship is the very essence of all existence, not only outwardly but, much more, inwardly. And a radical mutation has to take place within the structure of relationship of the society in which we live - the relationship between people, between families, and so on. All life is relationship, and until we understand clearly the problem of relationship in our life, at whatever level we may try to live, fully or fragmentarily, we will always be in a state of conflict, confusion, and misery.

So what we are going to talk over together throughout these talks is how to bring about a radical mutation in our relationship economically, socially, politically, and all the rest of it, and also in our relationship with ourselves, in the relationships which we have created as an image, according to which we function. Unless there is a change in the image that each one of us has about oneself, about the society, about the various values that we have given to life, unless we look at all these problems with clarity, mere outward change brought about by communism, by socialism, by war, or by great inventions will have very little meaning. Because in ourselves the image of ourselves will persist, and according to that image we live. Unless in that image there is a mutation, unless that image is completely shattered, we cannot possibly have right relationship and therefore a way of life totally different from that which we are living now.

And to investigate into all these problems, we must realize also that you are not being persuaded to anything - a concept or a formula. Propaganda is a most dreadful thing because it is trying to influence you to think along a particular way, and we are not doing that here. What we are trying to do is to understand total existence, the totality of life, not one fragment of it. So there is no question, right from the beginning, of any authority, of any desire on your part or on the part of the speaker to be persuaded to think differently, or to discard the old and accept the new. For when you see something very clearly, which is the intention of these gatherings - to see things very clearly - that very act of seeing is action.

To see is to act. And if one does not see very clearly, naturally all action becomes confused. And we go to somebody else to tell us what to do because we cannot see for ourselves what to do, clearly, precisely, all the time, all the days of our life; we resort to another to help us to see clearly. Nobody can help another to see clearly: that must be established between the speaker and yourself. Therefore your responsibility in listening becomes very significant because you have to find out - not the method - if it is possible to change radically so that we live a totally different kind of. life.

So we are going to talk over together like two friends discussing a problem, neither one trying to persuade the other to accept or to discard. And to talk over together, both must listen: and that is going to be our difficulty.

Listening is one of the most difficult things to do. We never listen. We are listening to our own thoughts, to our own ideas, to our own concepts, to the ways of how we should or should not behave. We are concerned with our own occupations, with our own problems, with our own sorrows, and we have our own answers and explanations; or we have the explanations and the sayings of another whom we respect or whom we are afraid of - which is the same thing.

The act of listening is really one of the most difficult things to do, like the act of seeing. To see something very clearly demands your complete attention - to see a tree outlined against the sunset, to see every branch of it clearly, to see the beauty of it, to feel the intensity of the light against the leaf, the shape of the branch, the shape of the trunk, to see the totality and the feeling of the beauty of the totality of that tree. To see, one must be extraordinarily alert, attentive. But if your mind is occupied, you will not be able to see that tree in all its excellence; or if your mind is interpreting, giving its biological name to it, your mind is then distracted. Therefore you are not seeing very clearly. Similarly you will not be able to hear, listen very clearly, if your mind is not deeply interested, is not taking part in what is being said - completely, not

partially. And you cannot give your total attention if you say, "I agree with this and I do not agree with that," or if you compare what is being said with what already you know, or if you translate what you hear in terms of your particular experience, your own particular knowledge, or your own particular culture.

So a man who listens has to be completely aware of what is being said, and he cannot be attentive if he is merely hearing the word and opposing it, or if he is asserting his own particular opinion. We are not discussing opinions - that is dialecticism, that has no value at all. What we are doing right through the talks is to face facts, not your fact or the speaker's fact. There are only facts - not your favorite fact or my favorite fact, to be translated according to your fancy. We are going to deal completely with facts, actually with what is, and from there move, from there go profoundly. But if you do not see the fact as fact, then we cannot proceed further together.

So having made that introductory talk, let us proceed with what we are supposed to talk over together. We said that there must be in ourselves and in our relationships a great change because we cannot as human beings lead the lives that we are living - in battle with ourselves. The society is you, and you are the society. The psychological structure of society has been created by each human being, and in that psychological frame each human being is caught. And until the human being breaks that psychological structure within himself, completely and totally, he is incapable of living peacefully with a great sense of reality.

So we are concerned with bringing about this mutation in ourselves as human beings - not isolated but in relationship to each other, which is society - because we must have peace. Peace and freedom are absolutely essential because nothing can grow, function fully, completely, except in peace, and there can be no peace without freedom. We have lived for many millions of years in conflict, not only inwardly but outwardly. There have been during the last five thousand five hundred years, fourteen thousand wars and more - two and a half wars every year during the recorded history of man - and we have accepted that way of living; we have accepted war as the way of life. And nothing can function or blossom in hate, in confusion, in conflict. And as human beings we have to find a different way of living - to live in this world without inward conflict. Then that inward sense of peace expresses itself in action in society.

So one has to find out for oneself whether one, as a human being living in relationship with the world, can find that peace - not an imaginary, mythical, mystical, fanciful peace - whether one can live without any kind of conflict within oneself, and whether it is possible to be totally free - not imaginarily free, not free in some mystical world, but actually be free inwardly, which will express itself outwardly in all our relationships. These two are the main issues.

We have to find out whether man - that is, you and I - can live in this world functioning differently, without any conflict at all, and therefore can bring about a social structure which is not based on violence. This country has preached nonviolence for thirty or forty years and more, and you all accepted the ideal of nonviolence and repeated the word. For many thousands of years you have been told not to kill, and overnight all that is gone - it is a fact, it is not my opinion - and strangely there have been no individuals who have said, "I will not kill," and faced the consequences. All this - that is, to live verbally, to accept ideals so easily and discard them so easily - indicates a mind that is not serious at all, a very flippant mind, not a grave mind that is concerned with world issues.

One of the major issues in the world is war, not who attacks whom or who defends, and so on. And as long as you have sovereign states, separate nationalities, separate governments with their armies, frontiers, nationalism, there must be war. Wars are inevitable as long as man is living within the frontiers of an ideology. As long as man is living within the frontiers of nationalism, or within religious frontiers, or within the frontiers of dogma - Christian or Hindu or Buddhist or Muslim dogma - there must be wars. Because these dogmas, these nationalities, these religions divide man. And you listen to what is being said, and naturally you will say, "What can I do as a human being when my country and my government call on me

to fight?" and inevitably you will fight. That is part of this social, economic, political structure. But you do not solve any problem that way. As I said, there have been, for the last five thousand years and more, every year two and a half wars. So we must find a different way of living - not in heaven but on earth - a different way of behavior, a different value. And you cannot find it unless you understand this problem of peace, which is also the problem of freedom.

So our first demand is whether it is possible for each of us in all our relationships - at home, in the office, in every way of our life - to put an end to conflict. This does not mean that we retire into isolation, become a monk, or withdraw into some isolated corner of our own imagination and fancy; but it means living in this world to understand conflict. Because, as long as there is conflict of any kind, naturally our minds, our hearts, our brains cannot function to their highest capacity. They can only function fully when there is no friction, when there is clarity. And there is clarity only when the mind that is the totality - which is the physical organism, the brain cells, and the total thing which is called the mind - is in a state of nonconflict, when it functions without any friction; only then is it possible to have peace.

And to understand that state, we must understand the everyday conflict which mounts up, the everyday battle within ourselves and with our neighbors, the conflict in the office, the conflict within the family, the conflict between man and man, the conflict between man and woman, and the psychological structure of this conflict - the 'me' of the conflict. Understanding, like seeing and listening, is again one of the most difficult things. When you say, "I understand something," you really mean, do you not, not only that you have completely grasped the whole significance of what is being said, but also that that very understanding is the action itself - it is not that you understand and then act, but understanding is action. And you cannot understand if you are merely intellectually, verbally comprehending what is being said; if you merely listen intellectually - that is, verbally - surely that is not understanding. Or if you merely feel emotionally, sentimentally, surely that also is not understanding. You understand only when your total being comprehends - that is, when you do not look at anything fragmentarily, either intellectually or emotionally, but totally.

So understanding the nature of conflict demands not the understanding of your particular conflict as an individual but the understanding of the total conflict as a human being - the total conflict, which includes nationalism, class difference, ambition, greed, envy, the desire for position, prestige, the whole sense of power, domination, fear, guilt, anxiety, in which is involved death, meditation - the whole of life. And to understand the whole of life, one must see, listen, not fragmentarily, but look at the vast map of life. One of our difficulties is, is it not, that we function fragmentarily, we function in sections, in one part - you are an engineer, an artist, a scientist, a businessman, a lawyer, a physicist, and so on - divided, fragmentary. And each fragment is in battle with the other fragment, despising it or feeling superior.

So the question then is how to look at the totality of life nonfragmentarily? Have I made myself clear? When we look at the totality of life - not as a Hindu, a Muslim, a communist, a socialist, a Catholic, a professor, or a religious man - when we see this extraordinary movement of life in which everything is included - death, sorrow, misery, confusion, the utter lack of love, and the image of pleasure that we have bred through centuries for ourselves, which dictates our values, our activities - when we see this vast thing comprehensively, totally, then our response to that totality will be entirely different. And it is this response, when we see totally the whole movement of life, that is going to bring about a revolution in ourselves. And this revolution is absolutely necessary. Human beings cannot go on as they have been, butchering each other, hating each other, dividing each other into countries, into all the petty, narrow, individualistic activities, because in that way lies more misery, more confusion, and more sorrow.

So is it possible to see the totality of life? - which is like a river moving endlessly, restless, stormy, with great beauty, moving because it has a great volume of water behind it. Can we see this life so totally? Because it is only when we see something totally that we understand it, and we cannot see it totally,

completely, if there is self-centered activity which guides, shapes our action and our thoughts. It is the self-centered image which identifies itself with the family, with the nation, with ideological conclusions, with parties - political or religious. It is this center which asserts that it is seeking God, truth, and all the rest of it, and which prevents the comprehension of the whole of life. And to understand this center, actually what it is, needs a mind that is not cluttered up with concepts, conclusions. I must know actually, not theoretically, what I am. What I think, what I feel, my ambitions, greeds, envies, the desire for success, prominence, position, prestige, my greeds, my sorrows - all that is what I am. I may think that I am God, I may think I am something else; but it is still part of thought, part of the image which projects itself through thought. So unless you understand this thing, not according to Shankara, Buddha, or anybody, unless you actually see what you are everyday - the way you talk, the way you feel, the way you react, not only consciously but unconsciously - unless you lay the foundation there, how can you go very far? However far you may go, it will only be imagination, a fantasy, a deception, and you will be a hypocrite.

You have to lay this foundation - which is to understand what you are. And you can understand what you are only by watching yourself, not trying to correct it, not trying to shape it, not trying to say this is right or this is wrong, but by seeing what is actually taking place - which does not mean you become more self-centered. On the contrary, you become self-centered if you are merely correcting what you see, translating what you see according to your likes and dislikes. But if you merely observe, there is no intensification of the center.

And to see this totality of life needs great affection. You know, we have grown so callous, and you can see why. In an overpopulated country - a country that is poor, both inwardly and outwardly, a country that has lived on ideas and not actuality, a country that has worshiped the past, with authority rooted in the past - naturally the people are indifferent to what is actually going on. If you observe yourselves, you will see how little affection you have - affection being care. Affection means the sense of beauty, not external adornment only. But the sense of beauty can come about only when there is great gentleness, great consideration, care, which is the very essence of affection. And when that is dry, our hearts are dry, and we fill it with words, with ideas, with quotations, with what has been said; and when we are aware of this confusion, we try to resurrect the past, we worship tradition, we go back. Because we do not know how to solve the present existence with all its confusion, we say, "Let us go back, let us revert to the past, let us live according to some dead thing." That is why, when you are confronted with the present, you escape into the past or into some ideology or utopia, and your heart being empty, you fill it with words, images, formulas, and slogans. You observe yourself, and you will know all this.

So to bring about naturally, freely, this total mutation in the mind itself demands grave attention serious attention. And we do not want to attend because we are afraid of what may happen if we really thought about the actual, daily facts of our life. Because we are really afraid to examine; we would rather live blindly, suffocated, miserable, unhappy, trivial; and therefore our lives become empty and meaningless. And life being meaningless, we try to invent significance in life. Life has no significance. Life is meant to be lived, and in that very living one begins to discover the reality, the truth, the beauty of life. To discover the truth, the beauty of life, you must understand the total movement of it. And to understand the total movement of it, you have to end all this fragmentary thinking and way of life; you have to cease to be a Hindu, not only in name, but inwardly; you have to cease to be a Muslim or a Buddhist or a Catholic, with all the dogmas, because these things are dividing people, dividing your own minds, your own hearts.

And strangely, you will listen to all this, you will listen merely for an hour, and you will go home and repeat the pattern. You will repeat the pattern endlessly, and this pattern is based essentially on pleasure.

And so you have to examine your own life voluntarily, not because government influences you or somebody tells you. You have voluntarily to examine it, not condemn it, not say this is right or this is wrong, but look. And when you do look in that way, you will find that you look with eyes which are full of affection - not

with condemnation, not with judgment, but with care. You look at yourself with care, and therefore you look at yourself with immense affection. And it is only when there is great affection and love that you see the total existence of life.