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First Radio Talk in Colombo

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Action And Relationship

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The problems that confront each one of us, and so the world, cannot be solved by politicians or by specialists. These problems are not the result of superficial causes and cannot be so considered. No problem, especially a human problem, can be solved at any one particular level. Our problems are complex; they can be solved only as a total process of man's response to life. The experts may give blueprints for planned action, and it is not the planned actions that are going to save us but the understanding of the total process of man, which is yourself. The experts can only deal with problems on a single level, and so increase our conflicts and confusion.

It is disastrous to consider our complex human problem on a single particular level and allow the specialists to dominate our lives. Our life is a complex process which requires deep understanding of ourselves as thought and feeling. Without understanding ourselves, no problem, however superficial or however complex, can be understood. Without understanding ourselves, our relationship must inevitably lead to conflict and confusion. Without understanding ourselves, there can be no new social order. A revolution without self-knowledge is merely a modified continuation of the present state.

Self-knowledge is not a thing to be bought in books, nor is it the outcome of a long painful practice and discipline, but it is awareness, from moment to moment, of every thought and feeling as it arises in relationship. Relationship is not on an abstract ideological level but an actuality - the relationship with property, with people, and with ideas. Relationship implies existence, and as nothing can live in isolation, to be is to be related. Our conflict is in relationship, at all the levels of our existence, and the understanding of this relationship, completely and extensively, is the only real problem that each one has. This problem cannot be postponed nor be evaded. The avoidance of it only creates further conflict and misery. The escape from it only brings about thoughtlessness which is exploited by the crafty and the ambitious.

Religion then is not belief, nor dogma, but the understanding of truth that is to be discovered in relationship,

from moment to moment. Religion that is belief and dogma is only an escape from the reality of relationship. The man who seeks God, or what you will, through belief which he calls religion, only creates opposition, bringing about separation, which is disintegration. Any form of ideology, whether of the right or of the left, of this particular religion or of that, sets man against man - which is what is happening in the world.

The replacement of one ideology by another is not the solution to our problems. The problem is not which is the better ideology but the understanding of ourselves as a total process. You might say that the understanding of ourselves takes infinite time, and in the meanwhile the world is going to pieces. You think that if you have a planned action according to an ideology, then there is a possibility of bringing about, soon, a transformation in the world. If we look a little more closely into this, we will see that ideas do not bring people together at all. An idea may help to form a group, but that group is against another with a different idea, and so on, until ideas become more important than action. Ideologies, beliefs, organized religions separate people.

Humanity cannot be integrated by an idea, however noble and extensive that idea may be. For idea is merely a conditioned response, and a conditioned response, in meeting the challenge of life, must be inadequate, bringing with it conflict and confusion. Religion that is based on idea cannot bring man together. Religion as the experience of some authority may bind a few people together, but it will breed inevitably antagonism; the experience of another is not true, however great the experiencer may be. Truth can never be the product of self-projected authority. The experience of a guru, of a teacher, of a saint, of a savior, is not the truth which you have to discover. The truth of another is not truth. You may repeat the verbal expression of truth to another, but that becomes a lie in the process of repetition.

The experience of another is not valid in understanding reality. But, the organized religions throughout the world are based on the experience of another and, therefore, are not liberating man but only binding him to a particular pattern which sets man against man. Each one of us has to start anew, afresh, for what we are, the world is. The world is not different from you and me. This little world of our problems, extended, becomes the world and the problems of the world.

We despair of our understanding in relation to the vast problems of the world. We do not see that it is not a problem of mass action but of the awakening of the individual to the world in which he lives, and of resolve the problems of his world, however limited. The mass is an abstraction which is exploited by the politician, by one who has an ideology. The mass is actually you and I and another. When you and I and another are hypnotized by a word, then we become the mass, which is still an abstraction, for the word is an abstraction. The mass action is an illusion. This action is really the idea about an action of the few, which we accept in our confusion and despair. Out of our confusion and despair, we choose our guides, whether political or religious; and they must inevitably, because of our choice, be also in confusion and despair. They may put on an air of certainty and all-knowingness, but actually, as they are the guides of the confused, they must be equally confused, or they would not be the guides. In the world, where the leader (guide) and the led (guided) are confused, to follow the pattern or an ideology, knowingly or unknowingly, is to breed further conflict and misery.

The individual then is important, not his idea or whom he follows, his country or his belief. You are important, not to what ideology or nation you belong, to what color and creed; the ideology is only a projection of our own conditioning. These conditionings may, at one level, be useful as knowledge; but at another level, at the deeper levels of existence, they become extremely harmful and destructive. As these are your own projections - the religions and the ideologies, the nationalism and the patterns - any action based on them must be the activity of the dog chasing its tail. For all ideals are homemade. They are the result of your own projection, and they do not reveal truth.

It is only when each one of us realizes the present structure of existence, the structure of self-projected ideals and conclusions, then only is there a possibility of freeing ourselves and looking at the problem anew. The crisis, the impending disasters, cannot be dissolved by another set of self-projected ideologies, but only when you, as an individual, realize the truth of this and so begin to understand the total process of your thought and feeling. The individual is important only in this sense, and not in the isolated, ruthless response to the problem.

After all, the problem throughout the world is the inadequate response to the new, changing challenge of life. This inadequacy creates conflict that brings about the problem. Until the response is adequate, we must have a multiplicity of problems. The adequacy does not demand a new conditioning but the freedom from all conditioning. That is, as long as you are a Buddhist, a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, or belonging to the left or to the right, you cannot respond adequately to the problems which are your own creation and so of the world. It is not the strengthening of the conditioning, religious or social, that is going to bring peace to you and to the world.

The world is your problem, and to comprehend it, you must understand yourself. This understanding of yourself is not a matter of time. You exist only in relationship; otherwise, you are not. Your relationship is the problem - your relationship to property, to people, and to ideas or to beliefs. This relationship is now friction, conflict; and so long as you do not understand your relationship, do what you will, hypnotize yourself by any ideology or dogma, there can be no rest for you. This understanding of yourself is action in relationship. You discover yourself as you are directly in relationship. Relationship is the mirror in which you can see yourself as you are. You cannot see yourself as you are in this mirror if you approach it with a conclusion and an explanation, or with condemnation, or with justification.

The very perception of what you are, as you are, in the moment of action of relationship, brings a freedom from what is. Only in freedom can there be discovery. A conditioned mind cannot discover truth. Freedom is not an abstraction but it comes into being with virtue. For, the very nature of virtue is to bring liberation from the causes of confusion. After all, nonvirtue is disorder, conflict. But virtue is freedom, the clarity of perception that understanding brings. You cannot become virtuous. The becoming is the illusion of greed or acquisitiveness. Virtue is the immediate perception of what is. So, self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom, and it is wisdom that will resolve your problems and so the problems of the world.