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Second Radio Talk in Colombo

From the series:

Action And Relationship

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Relationship is action, is it not? Action has meaning only in relationship; without understanding relationship, action on any level will only breed conflict. The understanding of relationship is infinitely more important than the search for any plan of action. The ideology, the pattern for action, prevents action. Action based on ideology hinders the understanding of relationship between man and man. Ideology may be of the right or of the left, religious or secular, but it is invariably destructive of relationship. The understanding of relationship is true action. Without understanding relationship, strife and antagonism, war and confusion are inevitable.

Relationship means contact, communion. There cannot be communion where people are divided by ideas. A belief may gather a group of people around itself. Such a group will inevitably breed opposition and so form another group with a different belief.

Ideals postpone direct relationship with the problem. It is only when there is direct relationship with the problem, that there is action. But, unfortunately, all of us approach the problem with conclusions, with explanations, which we call ideals. They are the means of postponing action. Idea is thought verbalized. Without the word, the symbol, the image, thought is not. Thought is response of memory, of experience, which are the conditioning influences. These influences are not only of the past but of the past in conjunction with the present. So, the past is always shadowing the present. Idea is the response of the past to the present and so, shadowing the present. Idea is the response of the past to the present and so, idea is always limited, however extensive it may be. So, idea must always separate people.

The world is always close to catastrophe. But it seems to be closer now. Seeing this approaching catastrophe, most of us take shelter in idea. We think that this catastrophe, this crisis, can be solved by an ideology. Ideology is always an impediment to direct relationship, which prevents action. We want peace only as an idea, but not as an actuality. We want peace on the verbal level, which is only on the thinking

level, though we proudly call it the intellectual level. But the word peace is not peace. Peace can only be when the confusion which you and another make ceases. We are attached to the world of ideas, and not to peace. We search for new social and political patterns, and not for peace; we are concerned with the reconciliation of effects, and not in putting aside the cause of war. This search will bring only answers conditioned by the past. This conditioning is what we call knowledge, experience; and the new changing facts are translated, interpreted, according to this knowledge. So, there is conflict between what is and the experience that has been. The past, which is knowledge, must ever be in conflict with the fact, which is ever in the present. So, this will not solve the problem but will perpetuate the conditions which have created the problem. We come to the problem with ideas about it, with conclusions and answers according to our prejudices. We interpose between ourselves and the problem the screen of ideology. Naturally the answer to the problem is according to the ideology, which only creates another problem without resolving that with which we began.

Relationship is our problem, and not the idea about relationship, not at any one particular level, but at all the levels of our existence. This is the only problem we have. To understand relationship, we must come to it with freedom from all ideology, from all prejudice - not merely from the prejudice of the uneducated, but also from the prejudice of knowledge. There is no such thing as understanding of the problem from past experience. Each problem is new. There is no such thing as an old problem. When we approach a problem, which is always new, with an idea, which is invariably the outcome of the past, our response is also of the past, which prevents understanding the problem.

The search for an answer to the problem only intensifies it. The answer is not away from it but only in the problem itself. We must see the problem afresh, and not through the screen of the past. The inadequacy of response to challenge creates the problem. This inadequacy has to be understood, and not the challenge. We are eager to see the new, and we cannot see it, as the image of the past prevents the clear perception of it. We respond to challenge only as Sinhalese or Tamilians, as Buddhists or as of the left or of the right; this invariably produces further conflict. So, what is important is not seeing the new but the removal of the old. When the response is adequate to the challenge, then only is there no conflict, no problem. This has to be seen in our daily life, and not in the issues of newspapers.

Relationship is the challenge of everyday life. If you and I and another do not know how to meet each other, we are creating conditions that breed war. So, the world problem is your problem. You are not different from the world. The world is you. What you are, the world is. You can save the world, which is yourself, only in understanding the relationship of your daily life, and not through belief, called religion, of the left or of the right, or through any reform, however extensive. The hope is not in the expert, in the ideology, or in the new leader, but it lies in you.

You might ask how you, living an ordinary life in a limited circle, could affect the present world crisis. I do not think you will be able to. The present struggle is the outcome of the past which you and another have created. Until you and another radically alter the present relationship, you will only contribute to further misery. This is not oversimplification. If you go into it fully, you will see how your relationship with another, when extended, brings about world conflict and antagonism.

The world is you. Without the transformation of the individual, which is you, there can be no radical revolution in the world. The revolution in social order without the individual transformation will only lead to further conflict and disaster. For, society is the relationship of you and me and another. Without radical revolution in this relationship, all effort to bring peace is only a reformation, however revolutionary, which is retrogression.

Relationship based on mutual need brings only conflict. However interdependent we are on each other, we are using each other for a purpose, for an end. With an end in view, relationship is not. You may use me and

I may use you. In this usage, we lose contact. A society based on mutual usage is the foundation of violence. When we use another, we have only the picture of the end to be gained. The end, the gain, prevents relationship, communion. In the usage of another, however gratifying and comforting it may be, there is always fear. To avoid this fear, we must possess. From this possession there arises envy, suspicion, and constant conflict. Such a relationship can never bring about happiness.

A society whose structure is based on mere need, whether physiological or psychological, must breed conflict, confusion, and misery. Society is the projection of yourself in relation with another, in which the need and the use are predominant. When you use another for your need, physically or psychologically, in actuality there is no relationship at all; you really have no contact with the other, no communion with the other. How can you have communion with the other when the other is used as a piece of furniture for your convenience and comfort? So, it is essential to understand the significance of relationship in daily life.

We do not understand relationship; the total process of our being, our thought, our activity, makes for isolation - which prevents relationship. The ambitious, the crafty, the believer, can have no relationship with another. He can only use another, which makes for confusion and enmity. This confusion and enmity exist in our present social structure; they will exist also in any reformed society as long as there is no fundamental revolution in our attitude towards another human being. As long as we use another as a means towards an end, however noble, there will be inevitably violence and disorder.

Conflict is an indication of not being related; conflict will never bring about the understanding of any problem, whether personal and so of the world. It is imperative that we understand our relationship in our daily life. You might ask, "How will this affect the organization of a new social order?" Society is the relationship of you and me and another. If you and I bring about fundamental revolution in ourselves, not based on mutual need - either physical or psychological - then has not our relationship to the other undergone a fundamental transformation? Our difficulty is that we have a picture of what the new organized society should be, and we try to fit ourselves into that pattern. The pattern is obviously fictitious. But what is real is that which we are actually. In the understanding of what you are, which is seen clearly in the mirror of daily relationship, to follow the pattern only brings about further conflict and confusion.

The present social disorder and misery must work itself out. But you and I and another can and must see the truth of relationship and so start a new action which is not based on mutual need and gratification. Mere reformation of the present structure of society without altering fundamentally our relationship is retrogression. A revolution which maintains the usage of man towards an end, however promising, is productive of further wars and untold sorrow. The end is always the projection of our own conditioning. However promising and Utopian it might be, the end can only be a means of further confusion and pain. What is important in all this is not the new patterns, the new superficial changes, but the understanding of the total process of man, which is yourself.

In the process of understanding yourself, not in isolation but in relationship, you will find that there is a deep, lasting transformation in which the usage of another as a means for your own psychological gratification has come to an end. What is important is not how to act, what pattern to follow, or which ideology is the best, but the understanding of your relationship with another. This understanding is the only revolution, and not the revolution based on idea. Any revolution based on an ideology maintains man as a means only.

As the inner always overcomes the outer, without understanding the total psychological process, which is yourself, there is no basis for thinking at all. Any thought which produces a pattern of action will only lead to further ignorance and confusion.

There is only one fundamental revolution. This revolution is not of idea, it is not based on any pattern of action. This revolution comes into being when the need for using another ceases. This transformation is not

an abstraction, a thing to be wished for, but an actuality which can be experienced as we begin to understand the way of our relationship. This fundamental revolution may be called love - it is the only creative factor in bringing about transformation in ourselves and so in society.