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THE FLAME OF LIFE

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The Basic Challenge

The awareness of "some thing beyond" dawned upon me at the age of five. The traditional concept of a personal God had become a living reality. So the search started at that early age. By the time I was twelve years old I had read the biographies and life-stories of nearly all the leading Indian saints. Ramkrishna, Paramhansa, Vivekananda and Ram Tirtha had captured my mind. At the age of fifteen the Personal God was replaced by "Soul Force". Those were the days of intense intoxication and I used to move about, without the slightest regard for what was going on around me.

NO STATIC TRUTH

While at University I studied Logic, Ethics, Psychology and Metaphysics. That widened my horizons. I came to learn that Hinduism and the Hindu concept of Atma were not the only attempts at fathoming the depth of Life. Plato and Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel and Immanuel Kant took me into a romantic new world. Sufism thrilled me. Life of Jesus Christ nearly possessed me. General study of Buddhism was sufficient to make me see very clearly that there were no absolute categories in Reality and that it was not necessary to postulate a fixed and static truth as the foundation for meditation.

Then came the journey to the United States of America. My short stay in the States and England made me aware of the impact of scientific and technological advance on the human mind. It inspired me to apply a new scientific approach to the total

human life. I returned home and wiped out all the ideas and ideals regarding spiritual life. The urge to attain liberation or Moksha in the traditional sense of the term melted away.

IN BHOODAN MOVEMENT

By that time Vinoba had launched the Bhoodan Movement. Its undaunting faith in Man's innate goodness and its nature of a romantic adventure to bring about a radical change in the very structure of human society as well as a radical revolution in the very substance of the human mind attracted me toward that movement. I worked in it for eight long years. The Movement made me visit practically every State of India. I crossed the country up and down addressing public meetings, organizing training camps for workers, collecting land donations and distributing land to the landless labourers. It was quite an experience to face the Living India.

The work introduced me to different systems of political thought. In those days I mentally travelled with the pioneer socialists in Europe and United Kingdom and was fascinated by their intense desire to bring about a qualitative change in human mind and to change the total evaluation of human life. I went to Yugoslavia and spent six weeks there. I could feel that the qualitative change had not materialised and the old values were still lingering—though in disguise. My second visit abroad took me from Yugoslavia to Italy, Switzerland, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom. Those six months brought the realization to me that the human mind was still in bondage. Nationalism, racialism, and such other exclusive loyalties had estranged man from man.

THE NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

I awakened into the consciousness that one must get over the outmoded divisive concepts of Nationalism, National Sovereignty, which were only euphemistic names for racial ego, ideological ego. And I also realized that one must get the better of the Mind itself which was a creation of different conditionings. I was fortunate enough to get into contact with J. Krishnamurti. He helped me to sharpen my reason and refine my sensitivity. He helped me to see that Humanity was facing a terrible challenge. The challenge consisted in jumping out of the conscious and the unconscious mind. Either the human being jumps out of all the layers of the mind, wipes out everything ruthlessly and pushes back the frontiers of consciousness on all sides or he blunders headlong towards the precipice of total destruction.

In the light of that realization my interest in creating a non-violent society faded away. I felt very deeply that no human problem could be tackled on the canvas of one country. That would deprive me of the right perspective and would drag me into a fragmentary approach. Every problem was, thus, essentially a World Problem. Only that mind which had ceased to belong anywhere, could understand the full implications of the world-problem. The mind which was entirely free could fearlessly proceed to think afresh about human life.

EGO TORN TO PIECES

It is not easy to analyse the state of mind which this staggering consciousness had created. That consciousness played havoc with my inner life. With the dropping away of conceptual thinking all the cherished

those so-called different aspects of life. It induces us to visualise different solutions, on different levels, at different times, for imaginary different problems. It tempts us to imagine an antagonism between the individual and the social good and then to try to reconcile them. It allures us to imagine a tension between the national and the international good and then obliges us to reconcile them with each other.

SOCIETY IS A MYTH

Therefore, I say that it is absolutely and argently necessary to realise that the challenge is indivisible. The problem is neither organic nor complex. Like life, it is one and indivisible.

Why do we then divide it? Because we regard society as an entity. We think that society exists; that it is reality. This myth plays all the mischief. We have invented this myth to satisfy our craving for security and to gratify our collective ego. We create this illusion to gratify our will to power; our will to acquire and to possess. In truth there is no society. Society is unreal. Relationships are real. Relationships are real because we live in relationships. Life expresses itself through relationships. Relationships are purely and simply human.

If we come thus far, we find the challenge resolved into the simple question—Can I behave in such a way that my relationship with every human being will breathe love and friendship? Can it be free from suspicion, anger, jealousy and hate? Can every relationship be spontaneous? Can it be free of morality? In other words, can human relationships be free of all preconceived norms and standards?

It is very obvious that as long as human relationships are motivated by exclusive loyalties and regulated by predetermined sets of rigid norms, they

cannot be spontaneous. Every one will try to relate his words and actions—nay—even his thoughts and emotions to the prevailing standards of morality, religion, spirituality and all the rest of it. The invisible screens of concepts and symbols will always prevent two human beings from looking fully into each other's heart. The screen will always prevent human beings from meeting each other face to face. How can we understand one another unless we are "free" to do so? How can we love one another unless we remove the shackles of traditional concepts and symbols? How can friendship and spontaneous co-operation blossom forth unless we dare to move freely, unless we dare to throw away all the "oughts" and "ought-nots"?

UNCONDITIONAL FREEDOM

Thus we find that the challenge is to free the mind completely and unconditionally. It is no use asking: "What will happen when we free our mind? How will the free mind act and react? How will freedom of mind solve various problems?"

Firstly, the very challenge consists in freeing the mind. There is no other problem. Secondly, the free mind acts. It does not react. Thirdly, the mind in bondage is simply unable to visualize the state of the world in which all men are free; in which all are related of their own free will; in which all relationships are spontaneous; in which action with motive has no place.

Man has got to create such a new mind. Either he fearlessly marches ahead or he extinguishes himself. He cannot wait for someone else to solve his problems. Life is never stagnant.

The challenge of creating a new mind, therefore, is the challenge of moving with life.

symbols and ideals were thrown to winds. The ego was torn to pieces. Nothing can describe the pangs and agony experienced in those days. The pitiful condition of the mind which turned to every refuge visionary and imaginary, defies description.

Soon after my return from abroad I became seriously ill and had to spend eight months practically in bed. That illness gave me sufficient leisure to go deep into myself. The same illness compelled me to go abroad again in 1961. This was my third visit to the man in the West.

THE COMPULSIVE URGE

I saw that he was completely disillusioned, that he was haunted by the fear of a World-war, that he was frightened by the apprehension of complete annihilation. I saw that the United Nations was becoming less and less effective as an agency for resolving international conflicts and tensions. The co-existence of the communist and the non-communist blocks had changed the complexion of both of them.

Moreover, I found that some of the most eminent psychologists in the West were dissatisfied with the knowledge they had obtained about the human mind. That the collective unconscious is indestructible and that the residue of racial unconscious cannot be unravelled completely, did not satisfy any more. Yet it must be admitted that the psychologists of the West were foremost in realizing that psychological transformation is the basic challenge of today.

Thus I arrived at the turning point. Thus did I feel obliged to respond to the terrible challenge. The compulsive urge to respond led me to the study of the nature of the challenge and its implications in every aspect of life.

The Challenge is Indivisible

The twentieth century has made every responsible and sensitive person aware of the fact that a fundamental revolution is urgently needed. Physicists and philosophers raise alike the cry of human transformation. Communists and non-communists talk of qualitative change in almost identical terms. Religious preachers all over the world, belonging to every denomination under the sun, shout from the house tops that the human mind, as it is, is unequal to the problems with which humanity is confronted today. All efforts to meet the challenge are proving futile. Politicians and economists, teachers and preachers, reformers and revolutionists are entangled in a vicious circle. They ask one another—why are we rushing towards the blind alley and why are we trying to lay all the blame at one another's door?

FRAGMENTATION IS POISON

It seems to me that we are not aware of the nature of the challenge. We do not realise that the basic challenge is indivisible. We split it up into individual and social problems. We divide it into different compartments. Sometimes those compartments are regarded as water-tight-compartments. Sometimes we concede that they overlap one another. We say that the economic problem is different from the political. We label some problems as national and yet others as international. We are generous at times and concede that some problems are essentially world problems.

To divide human problems into such categories is to sow the seeds of misery and confusion. Fragmentation of the challenge is the breeding ground for all conflict and contradiction. It leads us to the logical conclusion of having various sets of laws governing

THE CALL OF LOVE

Awaken! Arise!

Oh! ye indolent ones —

Awaken! Awaken!

From the deep slumber of ignorance.

Yonder hails the Beloved

And yonder rings so clear

The long awaited call of Love.

Come, says he, Oh! come

My darling ones —

Come and rest your tired souls

In the gentle arms of Love.

Come, says he, Oh! come

My lost ones —

Come gently

Across the valley of words —

Jump swiftly

Across the stream of thoughts —

Let me show you — please — let me

The land of eternal Love.

Come! says he, Oh! come —

My silly ones —

Don't play with knowledge —

Nor play with the mischievous mind.

Let me take you — please let me

To the land of timeless Love.

Come! says he, Oh! come —

My impudent ones —

Don't indulge in the smoke of religion —

Nor indulge in the illusion of spirit —

Let me take you — please — let me

To the land of mindless Love.

Thus speaks Love time and again

To the alert and listening souls.

Once it whispered softly unto me —

And I did think of you.

Awaken! say I —

Before the call fades away —

Arise! say I —

Before the Beloved passes away.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

I have drunk deep
at the fountain of Life —
I am no more thirsty.

I have tasted enough
the nectar of Life —
I am no more hungry.

Time has whispered softly
the song of the timeless —
I am no more weary.

Life has unfolded gently
the mystery of death.
I am no more scary.

Love has kindled up
every corner of the earth
I am no more lonely.

Love has brightened up
every hearth and home
I am no more lonely.

DEATH

Death is the kiss of life.
Death not of the body —
but of the mind.

The mind that creates its own bondage.
The mind that invents its own freedom.
That mind quietly vanishes away —
when there is silence within and without you.

That mind peacefully drops away
when there is love within and without you.

That mind gracefully melts away
when passion burns bright within and without you.

In the cold embrace of that death
is the warm kiss of life.

In the soft ashes of that death
is the sweet perfume of life.

THE FLAME OF FREEDOM

I searched for Freedom —
in temples and churches,
God was there a prisoner —
in man made cages.

I searched for Freedom —
in theology and philosophy,
Thought was there frozen.
Life was there frozen.

I searched for Freedom —
in revolution of every manner,
Mass was there worshipped.
Man was there murdered.

Thus my search failed —
but I had succeeded,
I had learnt through the wanderings
every effort was in vain.

I had learnt through the failures,
every search was in vain.
I turned at last inwards —
to rest and relax.

And lo! the Flame of Freedom
was there ablaze.
Burning bright on —
the torch of Love.

SILENCE IS SHY

Silence is very shy.
She hides herself far away —
in the depth of human heart.
Thought cannot reach her.
Emotion cannot touch her.
Silence is very shy.
She eludes devilish time.
She evades cunning memory.
She is beyond human search.
She is beyond imagination.
Silence is very shy.
She will never open up —
if you demand it of her.
She will never blossom out —
if you command it of her.
Yes — Silence is very shy.
She smiles on those who love her;
She speaks to those who wait on her.
Silence is very shy.
She is eloquent —
when mind speaks not.
She is yours —
when you are not.
Yes — Silence is very shy.

BEYOND ALL FRONTIERS

Will you come with me
 across all the frontiers
to a brave new world
 which knows not frontiers?

Will you break with me
 heavy doors of our prisons
which are built in the name of security
which are guarded by the myth of society?

Will you shatter with me
 ancient walls of morality
which want to shape our minds
which crave to cripple our lives?

Will you burn with me
 all scriptures and authority
which stifle human reason
which throttle holy passion?

Will you jump with me
 into dark deep unknown
where time flutters not
 nor space envelop us?

Will you open with me
 invisible gates of free world
where mind limits not
 nor memory binds us?

Will you come with me
 to the land of eternity
which lies beyond all frontiers
 which lies beyond life and death?

PASSION

Passion is the plant,
 that grows without roots
Passion is the flame,
 that burns without smoke.

Passion is the sun,
 without shine and shadow
Passion is the day,
 without night and morrow.

Passion is the love
 beyond lover and his loving
Passion is the ecstasy,
 beyond mind and its thinking.

Passion is passion,
 no words can paint it
Passion is passion,
 no symbol can shape it.

Passion is life —
 and life is passion
if we but see the beauty
 that death doth bring us.

THE ANCIENT TREE

Time is the ancient tree
with its roots deep in space.
Time is the ancient tree
with its branches in the future.
Time is the ancient tree
with its cool shade of memory.

Mind is a monkey ever restless
jumping and hovering through time.
It jumps from thought to thought
it clings languidly to memory.
The mind loves to play with time
the mind loves to dance in space.

Unless we cut the roots of time
the mind will never be quiet.
Unless the mind is still and quiet
thinking shall never come to an end.