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Action And Relationship

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COLOMBO CEYLON 1ST RADIO TALK 28TH DECEMBER, 1949 `ACTION'

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, specially 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 blue prints 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. 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 till 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 saviour, 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 to 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 guide 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 will 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 colour 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 religious 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 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, non-virtue 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.

December 28, 1950

COLOMBO CEYLON 2ND RADIO TALK 22ND JANUARY, 1950 'RELATIONSHIP'

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, is there 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, 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 un-educated 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.

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.

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