

Human Regeneration

by N. Sri Ram,

Everything that is good, enlightening, that is calculated to alleviate another's trouble and inspire him with courage, every improvement of social, political and other conditions is part of evolution. But we must discover what is most worth doing by us, what we should especially aim at, because the needs of humanity are so very various.

The Masters of Wisdom, who aid evolution, although They are interested in all changes that make for human progress, are especially concerned with the spiritual regeneration of mankind, which is of fundamental importance. Because, when that takes place, all else follows. The forces that are brought into play in the regeneration will themselves have their effect on the external conditions. But if the changes are merely external, after a time they may all be lost or undone. There have been various golden ages in the history of mankind, epochs when life was tranquil, when people were happy and kind and good; but all of them have vanished, and we have come into this strife, the present confusion and misery.

We can see, therefore, that merely to produce an outer change is not enough. It is like teaching good manners. There has to be a change in man fundamentally. This is precisely what Krishnamurti speaks of and aims at, a certain fundamental change as a consequence of which all the necessary changes in organization and behavior will come about automatically and with the greatest possible ease. When you see for yourself what is the truth, you will act in accordance with that truth. You do not then need any direction, except that truth. What the Masters want, in addition to anything useful that we may be doing or may be able to do, is this regeneration, beginning with ourselves. The possibility of such regeneration, even the predestination of it, is perhaps the most inspiring truth of Theosophy.

In the regions where there is a change of seasons, such as Europe, a tree of the deciduous type grows old each autumn and sheds its leaves. It looks as though it is dead in winter, but then it is reborn in spring with fresh foliage and flowers. This is a phenomenon that repeats itself. Now the same thing happens with regard to every human being; for we die and are reborn as physical and psychic entities, and with each death the collection of previous memories belonging to the past life completely falls away, and we come back fresh and pure with a new nature. But we are unable to retain this nature; we do not remain clean or fresh or tender as we were when we were born. Very quickly we are overlaid with impressions, we become distorted and coloured in various ways and cease to be what we were in the innocence and charm of our childhood.

Though the past is dead, the tendencies of the past come to life again; they are so deeprooted that they do not die for a very long time; they remain buried in the soil of our nature. Even when everything on the surface has died, they persist and grow again. They become active as soon as there are conditions favourable to their activity. You may see a child that is most charming, with beautiful possibilities, but after a few years somehow all that charm is gone. Look at the same individual grown into a man or woman, or later still when the meridian has been reached and passed. He or she is so hard and set, the beauty of the early years a mere memory, perhaps dissipated, with the phenomenon of decay writ large on the person. But if the environment is favourable, the undesirable tendencies may remain latent, even for a whole lifetime. This is understandable from our own experience of people. A person may have certain inward cravings or propensities, but without opportunities for these to be indulged

they seem non-existent. In the absence of temptation many of us can surely be virtuous. The tendencies rest like mud at the bottom of a river. The water flows over the mud, it is clean and usable, but when there is a gale, flood or some other disturbance, it becomes muddy at once, charged with all the impurities that till then had lain quiet on the river bed.

In our modern life, where everything is being stirred up to a degree, there is no lack of opportunity for any latent tendency to be awakened. The merest breath of an influence seems enough sometimes to start it into action, just as a faint odour of liquor is sufficient to revive the craving of a drunkard. In these days because of so much movement, so much taking place, that affects people in different ways, so many thoughts, activities and distractions, the influences are very much more mixed than they were ever before. Therefore deterioration sets in all the more quickly; the charm, freshness and innocence which could last longer under more natural conditions tend soon to wear away.

But there comes a time in the long series of lives - it does not come by itself, because the human intelligence and will are involved in the process - when the soul is able to rid itself completely of the effects of the past, it sheds its accumulation once for all and stands out in its own pure nature.

It may be asked: what about the capacities that have been developed? The capacities remain because they belong not to the outer nature but to the soul. The mere accumulation of experience is not an unmixed blessing. When people say that they must have experience, is the experience they seek itself a good thing? The seeking of experience can mean dissipation, it generally hardens an individual, and produces complexities. But in the very process of accumulating experience, of making money, for instance, certain capacities are developed. We learn how to deal with the differences of the material world with a mind which becomes gradually rapier-like and all-round in its movements. These capacities, in themselves, belong to the pure nature of the soul.

If we think of the soul as pure being, active with a pure consciousness, what eclipses its nature, supresses it, is the distortion which that consciousness undergoes. There is some distortion in each one of us but we become so accustomed to it that we are not conscious that it exists. We think we are natural when we are unnatural; we even believe in being artificial. It is this distorted consciousness, which assumes a certain shape, acts in a certain specific way, in each case, which we call our minds.

It is only by attaining a knowledge of whatever distortions exist, whatever illusions, that we can become free of them. Then the consciousness regains its natural state because of an extraordinary elasticity innate in its nature. It then attains an expertness and ease, of which we do not have any idea at present.

Reverting to the analogy of a plant, the spiritual man is a plant which has freshly sprung from its root, but without any deteriorating elements. Everything of the outer nature except the developed capacities has fallen away. He is a new man reborn in spirit. He is a plant whose whole nature is now irradiated with the essence of its incorruptible roots. The roots of our being are always undecaying. They are in that deepest spiritual part of ourselves which is untouched by the experience that we undergo on the superficial side of ourselves. But if we think of the mind or the consciousness which springs from those roots, that can be both spiritual and material.

The mind

The mind has a dual nature. In Samskrit the mind which deals with the differences of matter

(and is affected by them) is termed Manas. It is that mind which thinks in terms of differences and establishes the relations of thought. But the mind which knows the unity and experiences it, is termed Buddhi. These are two terms kept separate in Samskrit philosophy. There is a part of Manas which is one with Buddhi and that is the more spiritual part, as distinguished from its material complement. They are essentially one, but separate in manifestation and even opposed to each other when the latter is under the dominance of sensations of matter and the desires which those sensations breed through memory. It is really desire in every form which causes our troubles. If I desire something and am bent on getting it, and someone hinders me, I flare up into resentment. From desire anger is born, as says the Bhagavad Gita. It is the desire for position or power or enjoyment of any sort which makes us egotistic and indifferent to others. Absorbed in its pursuit we have no attention or consideration to give to anybody or anything else.

It is only when a particular weakness shows itself in an exaggerated form that we generally realize its true nature. So long as it is of small magnitude and does not show itself forcibly, we excuse ourselves by saying it is a trifle, a common failing, it is human to be so. We do not treat poison as poison until it becomes dangerous. It is the influence of our wishes and hopes on our way of looking at things which is the cause of so many illusions, because if you desire something very much, you become willing to accept the conditions for its satisfaction.

Fundamentally the trouble lies in our attachment to the experiences we have had in the past. When this attachment becomes active we call it desire, but even when it is not active the attachment remains. If I have been addicted to drink, and even if at the present moment I do not have feel the craving, the craving is still there. It will raise its head very soon, because there is a period of activation which has to alternate with a period of rest due to bodily changes. This has to be deeply understood and realized. The understanding which is needed is not just a mental understanding, which is superficial. Such an understanding does not change the will because it is full of mental reservations. When we realize a truth for ourselves completely and freely, the truth then frees us from the errors and superstitions which flourish in its absence. We are not any one of us as free as we imagine ourselves to be; we think we are free when we have a kind of superficial outward freedom. But from the inner standpoint we have only freedom to loose our freedom, which we do quickly.

When there is freedom at last for Manas, which is the intelligence that deals with the differences of matter, it becomes united with Buddhi in which resides a knowledge of the unity, and which is its true counterpart. The higher spiritual nature which belongs to Buddhi manifests itself then in the field of Manas and it is for the latter a rebirth out of matter into Spirit. This is a change of vast significance, which has to take place in every individual. The mind, having freed itself completely from the influences to which it was previously subject, attains a state in which it is unaffected by the changing conditions of matter. It is unaffected, yet at the same time extraordinarily quick in its perceptions and movements. It does not lose its sensitiveness, on the other hand it becomes a thousand times more impressionable than before. It is alive to every change, feels every impact, is able to give itself completely to each phenomenon of life that arises. Normally when we do something, listen to music, for instance, we do not listen with the whole of our capacity, making ourselves completely empty and negative, so as to drink in every note and perceive the significance of that note in the relationship of notes. We meet life, almost every phenomenon of life, with only a little portion fo ourselves. If we imagine an individual as a sphere of being, which is both capacity and sensibility, it is just a segment of it with which we meet the world in which we live and move.

But when the consciousness becomes free from the fixed images with which it is clogged, from the fixed patterns of its thought and feeling, it becomes completely elastic, then it is able at each moment of time to give itself totally to the experience of that moment. It is mobile and responsive in every way; yet along with this mobility and responsiveness, it is able to remain unaffected by fluctuations of external conditions, by 'heat and cold, honour and dishonour, success and failure,' to use the language of the Bhagavad Gita. These things just come and go, like ripples on a sheet of water. The consciousness merely reflects the changes, registers them, understands them, and they pass. It is sensitive and tranquil at the same time, a beautiful state to be in. It would not be correct to think that because a Yogi is sensitive he must be easily disturbed; because he is open, he must be affected by every influence. He is open, but not disturbed. His consciousness is like an ocean of sensitive calm, which enfolds everything, but mixes with nothing.

the alphabet of spiritual living

What we are learning is merely the alphabet of spiritual living. We must learn, for instance, to be conscious of how we are living. Then there comes a time when the moment we think something, say something or form a judgement based on our personal reactions contrary to the whole purpose of our life as we understand it, we are aware that the wrong note has been struck. The state at which we should aim is an awareness of all that we are doing; which does not mean we should become highly self-conscious, absorbed in our own thoughts and feelings. For that would also become a hindrance. But the moment the wrong note is struck there must be a feeling that that note does not belong to the music of our being. That would be really the perfection of self-knowledge.

But we have to begin somewhere, we cannot immediately reach that perfection. I do not think that any one of us can do it, unless of course he has already prepared himself. Therefore we make a certain beginning with discipline in daily life, including some meditation, study and so on. When there is self-awareness, we do not imagine that we do anything more than just begin a new kind of life. But to know the path along which we should go and be humble is a great thing. A fundamental contradiction in ourselves is between the self and the ideal with which it seeks to clothe itself. We have to become aware of the contradiction.

When we really understand the problem, how complete is the nature of the change that is required, we cease to be impatient. It does not matter how long it takes, we know the direction and we should follow it; there will be many problems and we can tackle them. Our impatience really born out of ambition; it is a condition of feverishness, which arises because we want to 'get there', instead of understanding the problems that we should deal with. The attitude that we should adopt is that of taking things as they are and doing the best with them, dealing with the situation in the outside world and the situation in ourselves. We should do what we can each moment and pass on quietly to the next.

Even short of the fundamental change that has to be brought about, there can be a regenerated humanity, in the sense of a humanity redeemed by its better nature. There is good and there is evil in all of us, and as mentioned already, under favourable conditions the better nature will prevail. Mankind can be helped to see what is right and what is true; that is part of our work. It may be that we cannot yet do all that it might be possible for us to do some day but then we can help our fellowmen to the extent of our capacity. We can do this through the teachings of Theosophy and by our own example. If we begin in a small way we will find that we are able to do more and more. That is an extraordinary thing to find out and discover for oneself. You begin to give of our affection to those

around you, you will find there is more affection to give; you begin serving in some way, you will find that there are ways in which you can serve better. There is an infinity in each one of us out of which to give and we have to discover that infinity for ourselves by the giving, and there is not other way. If you sit in a chair and say, now I am going to discover the infinity within myself, you will never discover it. It is only by making the current flow that more can be made to flow.

It was said by one of the Great Ones: Forget yourself only to remember the good of other people. We cannot have better advice than that. But how to forget ourselves? All of us are so preoccupied with ourselves, with what we want, what we aim at, the position which we should hold, the estimation which other people should have of ourselves, what we may lose, so many things, so many thoughts and interests, centered in what we call 'ourselves'. If we can forget ourselves, we will find that our progress will become easy, it will take place swiftly and naturally, because it then becomes a process of unfoldment from within. Then we will be able to realize the truth of the saying in Light on the Path, 'Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously,' but open to all that is good and true and beautiful. We can have the most perfect assurance as to our goal and progress. Why should we be concerned with our progress? It takes place by itself. Our only concern is with how we should live and what we should do now.

Concentrate on anything in life except yourself and your wants, on Truth, on the Masters, on the help to be given, on understanding those about you, you will find that what you concentrate on, without bringing yourself into it, acquires a certain deep significance. It is the obsession with oneself which is the greatest impediment. The whole problem of the spiritual life consists in this abolition of self, in living our life without thinking too much of ourselves, in doing what we can to help others.