

On the Watch-Tower

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Attachment and Freedom

In the Theosophical Society, we talk about the great qualities needed to live a spiritual life. We hope in this way to make these qualities a part of our daily living. Generally we fail to do so. Therefore, we have to be careful that speculation does not take the place of realization. Further, real freedom is difficult to analyse or make into a subject of conversation. It has to be realized through daily living, by watchfulness, experimentation and reflection of a serious nature, at many intervals.

There are some people who believe that Krishnaji spoke about what was absolutely new, of matters that have never been spoken about earlier. I am not one of them. It is true that to many people what he said was new, but I think that much of what he spoke came from the fresh spring of his own understanding, his own state of knowing. Whoever speaks from what he himself has experienced is clear, and is always saying what appears new. His words have extraordinary force, but this does not mean that nobody has ever spoken of these things before.

The Eastern world has been deeply concerned with this question of freedom. Hindus, Buddhists, Jainas, and others who do not belong to any of these categories,

recognize the fact that freedom is not merely freedom from something outside; they do not waste much time on how to get or retain external freedom. Real freedom does not merely come from outside. It is part of our inner nature, and will emerge sooner or later. Modern man often seems to identify freedom with money to buy things, with travel, and being able to do what he wants in the particular environment in which he happens to be interested. In fact, modern man is obsessed with shedding any constraints that may affect him, and thereby he thinks he is free. But freedom refers to timeless being and cannot be easily obtained.

There is a famous statement in one of the Upanishad-s saying that both bondage and freedom are within the mind. The mind creates the fetters and then imagines that the problem is outside. If it realizes that this is not true, that it is creating the problems itself, then it can begin to understand and to free itself.

We compartmentalize when we believe that problems come from outside. This is one of the reasons why we have created suffering and promote attitudes of callousness, utilitarian attitudes, and have a society where we would like to experience the impossible, such as the calmness

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of being free of violence, aggression and so forth.

This century is perhaps noteworthy because everything is considered from the point of view of utility — animals, trees, people are all looked at as things which can give us satisfaction or something useful. If they do not, we deal with them with utmost indifference or cruelty. Our relationship with people generally involves gaining something emotionally, morally, or in terms of security. We attach ourselves to persons from whom we can derive something, gain a better position in life, emotional satisfaction, and so forth.

We are willing to take whatever we want at any cost, particularly those lives which are non-human. So we tear up plants and put them somewhere else, according to our fancy; we clip and shape them in so-called gardens as if they have no right to grow naturally. We teach millions of children in schools to cut up animals and various creatures and develop indifference to what they may feel, as long as we are satisfied with the result. Utilitarianism and callousness are cultivated and become part of our lives.

Indirectly the Buddha spoke about this. He said that thirst (*trshnā*) is the desire to get things — security, satisfaction, new experience, etc., all of which are productive of sorrow. He did not speak about love, but about the causes for the absence of love.

Krishnaji's approach was similar; he advised us to negate, to find out what gives rise to bondage. Can we find out what is not love? Perhaps it is sentimentality or

attachment to particular people because of emotional connections. The whole world believes that love is this connection and that attaching oneself to some people is a form of self-expression. But we have to notice that when there is attachment, sentimental relationship, or self-promotion through another, it can become anger, cruelty, frustration, etc. This is the reason why so-called love turns into animosity and hatred. What is normally called love is very complicated. It is more like turmoil.

Love — Real and Unreal?

The exact synonym of the word 'love' has not been used much in India or the East. It is difficult to believe that they never thought or spoke about it. Very often certain schools of thought in the East have had as their central focus self-surrender rather than love. This is not equated with a physical or mental image and sitting in front of it making offerings. The words have to be taken more literally, in which case, it means letting go of the self. When it is not a construct of the mind, there is both freedom and love.

The two subjects have been treated in Buddhist countries where *karunā* (usually translated as compassion), and intelligence cannot exist apart. If there is no compassion, the intelligence is merely ordinary intelligence or cleverness. If there is no intelligence, the feeling is more open emotionally or sentimentally, but is not real love. Real love has intelligence as an aspect of itself. In one of her lectures,

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Annie Besant says that love is a form of knowing. When there is love there is the possibility of knowing what the intellect cannot know.

The Buddha pointed out that thoughts of love pollute the mind, while love itself cleanses and purifies. Krishnaji also spoke about this: 'The sense of time and space, of separation, of sorrow, is born of the process of thought.' It is only when thought ceases that there can be love.

So thinking about love or about somebody one is attached to is not love. Love has little to do with thinking about someone who is preferred over others. There are millions of people suffering. We might ignore them and be completely callous, and concentrate on one or two people and say that that person must not suffer, and must have everything good. Is this really love? Can one be indifferent to the world and life as a whole, and love at the same time?

We spoke about utilitarianism. Can we live in utilitarianism, that is greed, and love at the same time? So we have to ask ourselves if this is really love, in order to look purely without condemnation. Let the mind become 'free of the known' in order to know love. Looking purely is difficult, without wanting to enjoy possessions of any kind. Possession, actual or mental, is an obstruction. But if we look carefully then perhaps we see that what we imagined as love is only the self clinging to something and trying to get satisfaction.

Of course the great test is when death comes and there is the feeling that

everything has been lost. Madame Blavatsky says: When there is real love there is no sense of separation at all. Perhaps, the sense of separation is wanting to possess, appreciation, etc. These are indications that we are insecure. Some people seem important and others not.

Is there love when there is division? Love and freedom go together because both are related to the process of thought. Desire is thought. To experience something at the moment is not desire. We may eat something and feel it is sweet and nice. If we look at a beautiful thing and cannot feel the beauty of it, something is wrong. But thought remembers the sweetness as well as the beauty and projects it into the future and says, 'I will have it again'. This is desire.

One of the remarkable things that Krishnaji has pointed out is that the process of thought moving from here to there is time. When there is the sensation of something pleasant the mind holds on to the sensation; otherwise, it turns away from it. In Indian thought, freedom is freedom from names; that means labelling, categorizing, etc. The memory is connected with names and forms, from time and space. All this produces conflict. When there is not this inward freedom, conflict cannot be avoided. So perhaps, the important work we have to do is understanding. Trying to understand involves examination of all the subtle forms of compulsion which are acting from within. Perhaps we can say that it means looking objectively, honestly, clearly, in order to discover.

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It is often not easy to decide what to do, but it is necessary; to do one's duty here and now and attempt at the same time to have a living concept of where one is going.

There are many things which have to be put right in the world, not from a worldly point of view, but from the higher viewpoint. The position of women, for instance, is not at all what it should be. In the countries where they are supposed to be free, they are actually prisoners of a system or an idea. They are imagined to be free because they can do more or less what they want. But what they want is to rise socially. A few reach to important positions and some are free physically.

But are they free inwardly? Often they are merely following an existing pattern. Others live what they consider to be a free life and therefore become sexually caught. This happens when women are supposed to be pleasant and beautiful, so that men can enjoy them. Many women in western countries are caught in this and other pointless ideas so what the real purpose

of human life is, is not known.

In a vast part of the world, women are held subordinate, often almost as slaves. In various Muslim households, the women are confined to their houses and act only as the men decide. There is no belief in freedom for them. Poverty often imposes a narrow life on people, including children. Children are sold for paltry sums of money or put into some ordained pattern in the household. All these and similar situations should not exist in the so-called modern world, but this kind of view and condition is found to a surprisingly large extent.

We have only some glimpses into what actually exists and could be remedied by right ideas. But in many societies, the people believe, not in right ideas, but in following a tradition which suits them. So they have no real freedom to think and act. These are matters of which every Theosophist should be aware, and in his own way to whatever extent possible to try to remedy them. Do we simply think as everybody does, or do we have the courage to do what is right is an important question. ✧

He who binds to himself a joy
Doth the winged life destroy;
He who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

William Blake