

THE AIMS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE – PART 1 OF 3

by

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We have been asked to express our ideas on today's theme, The Aims of Human Existence. It would appear that an impertinent world of mankind is seeking a pertinent answer to its questions when it asks for means of security and safety from imminent dangers that can threaten its existence from various corners of the world. Mankind seems to be asking for a gain for which it has not worked and does not intend to strive; yet it is not fully conscious of a gulf that seems to be there between what is sought, and the direction in which mankind is moving. We seem to be placing ourselves in a world of quandary.

Is there anything existent that you see with your eyes? We see only movements of things and a decomposition of bodies – a transformation of the structure of things – so that there is visible before our eyes a continuous incessant restless movement rather than a being or an existence of anything. To conceive of an aim of existence there should be a pith of reality, a kernel of significance beneath and behind the vicissitudes of transformation, movement, and the restlessness of life.

The principle of existence cannot be seen with our eyes. What we see, what is tangible to our senses, is a process which is the historical movement of nature, which again includes everything that mankind's values are. What we are, what anything is, is a part of nature; and the purposes of nature are also our purposes. We cannot have an aim which is different from the aim of nature, because we are constituents of a vast setup called natural phenomenon.

We too are phenomena because we are born, we grow, we decay, and by a process of decomposition we seem to be annihilated totally. We do not hear of the being of anyone who has been physically decomposed and wiped out of existence. Where is being, and where is existence? Anything can be reduced to its ultimate constituents, which appear to demonstrate a character within themselves which is far from anything that can be designated as being. It is not for nothing that a genius like Buddha proclaimed that the world is a procession and not a being. It is transiency and not existence. It is death rather than life. This was a strange picture painted before us by stalwarts who experimented with these techniques of investigating phenomena and found nothing at their base.

The struggle for a meaning behind life, a search for values which are permanent in their nature, is no doubt ingrained in our being, which is essentially becoming. We have no idea in our minds to be annihilated at any time, though it appears that nothing can stand this ultimate requirement of utter transformation to the point of non-existence. What we see with our eyes does not seem to be capable of giving an answer to what our heart seeks. Our perception is sensory; and our arguments, which are intellectual, do not seem to collaborate with the demands of a point within our own selves which refuses to be reduced to a point of becoming or transiency, because the recognition of the transiency of things itself is an answer to the question of whether there is anything called existence at all. Transiency does not recognize transiency, a procession does not know there is a procession, and death cannot explain life. Thus it is

that it appears to us. There is a point significant in our own lives which is qualitatively different from the quantitative expanse of the life that is perceptible as phenomenon before our eyes; and our dread of the world's movements these days is a direct consequence of our identification of being with becoming.

The core of our existence has got somehow or other mixed up with the vicissitudes of perceptible phenomena; and as a lion can become a sheep by living in the midst of sheep, the principle that seeks an answer to the question of the aims of existence, getting identified with a process which cannot give this answer, is finding itself in a helpless position. And while we weep contemplating our woes, not finding an answer to the problems raised by life in its totality, we yet seek an answer to the problems.

We, therefore, seem to be living in a world which speaks in two languages. A world of phenomena, the life that we live as bodies, as individuals, as men and women, as human beings, as things, as stuff, as visible objects - all these, beyond which we are not able to see anything or recognize anything, appear to comprehend the whole of existence. No one on earth can ever imagine that there can be anything outside or beyond this vast conglomeration of nature which describes itself as a drama of tumult and tempestuous movement in a direction which is not visible to anyone's eyes. Thus, we are lifted up by a cyclone which we call life, a hurricane that is driving us in a direction we know not what. Thus it is that we have lost our moorings and the very ground under our feet is shaking. It is being cut by the very forces of nature.

In this predicament, no sense can be there in asking a question what the aim of existence is - because there is no existence. There seems to be only the parading of the drama of non-existence. We are living non-existence, rather than existence; and in this enactment of life which is nothing but a series of pictures of the poses of non-existence, existence cannot be discovered. It is just not there. But we are not able to reconcile ourselves in spite of this unfortunate and

hopeless state of affairs into which we have been thrown by causes unknown; and there is a voice speaking from within us from a realm which refuses to get identified with the picture of this drama of life we call phenomena, we call bodily existence, we call anything that we can regard as worthwhile in life. Nothing we regard as valuable or worthwhile in life can escape the clutches of these tempestuous movements of nature which is aiming at the destruction of everything; and it has no pity on anyone.

How is it that we are placed in this circumstance? Without knowing how we have landed ourselves in this hopeless predicament of a complete subjection to forces which have taken possession of us, we cannot know what the aim of human existence is.

So, like a diagnosis of a medical case, we may have to conduct an incisive analysis of this utterly hopeless state of affairs in which every one of us finds himself or herself, and perhaps we may have to be doctors of our own selves. Because of the peculiar enigmatic fact that we are subjects as well as objects, we are patients and physicians at the same time. Our malady is of such a nature that no other physician looking at us from outside can investigate into our problems. Our problems are inseparable from an apparent being of ours which is asking this question as to what the aim of human existence is.

A peculiar sort of existence appears to be affirming its own values in the midst of this din and bustle and the noise which nature is creating in this drama of her activities; and the noise and the clamour of nature is so bursting and breaking our ears that we have found it impossible to listen to the voice that speaks, in a different language altogether, saying that nature is not an explanation of herself. Life is unable to explain itself. Nature, if she has to be identified with this dance of the Kali which is before our eyes, is not an explanation of herself. Kali can be explained only by Siva, and not by herself. She dances and dances to the utter destruction and annihilation of all things. But why should

there be annihilation? Who asked her to dance? Why should there be this movement of nature? Why should there be anything at all in the way in which it is moving or conducting itself? Why anything should be there at all is the final question before us. Why should we be existing here? "Why should there be existence itself?" is the final question. There cannot be another question beyond that. Every question drives itself forward to the nature of existence. And why should we exist? Why should we not not-exist? Why are we afraid of annihilation?

We were told by some of our speakers of the dread that is before us from the future world, the possibility of the utter annihilation of even the particles of sand. But who injects this fear into our bodies? The dread itself cannot be the answer to this question. The source of fear cannot be equated with the complexion of the sources of fear. We fear death because we are immortal. That is the final answer. It is the great proof of the immortality of what we essentially are. The fear of death demonstrates the immortality of the soul of things. Otherwise, we will not fear death. If death is our nature we cannot be afraid of death, because nature cannot be afraid of its own self. Death is not our nature; therefore, something else which has wrongly got identified with this peculiar phenomenon of destruction is shuddering at the bottom of itself under the impression that it is perhaps going to be annihilated by the processes of nature's movements.

A question arises again of a peculiar nature within us: that which is not subject to destruction cannot fear death, and that which is death itself also cannot fear death. Who is afraid of death, then? Not the immortal soul, because we have already said it is immortal, and nothing that is in nature, because it is nothing but destruction. Here is a peculiar inexplicable, indescribable something which can be called only 'something' and not by any other designation. There is a mix-up of things that has taken place.

It is not true that the fear of death has arisen from the bottom of our immortal being, because it is a misnomer to

say the immortal is afraid of death. It is also not true that this fear has arisen from our bodies, because the bodies are subject to destruction. They have to be annihilated into powder, into the final constituents of what nature is made of. So from where has this fear arisen? Can you answer this question?

Now, questions lead to further questions and we are not anywhere near the final answer, evidently. The incapacity of the resources of man to find an answer to the problems of life is the fear in us, fear in anybody; and what can be a greater fear than this? We have a great question before us, and we are unable to receive an answer. Not I, not you, not anyone in the world can give an answer to this question that the whole of the world has raised before itself, a large question of the nature of existence: Why should anything be what it is? Why should there be a tree, why should there be a mountain, why should there be a man, why should there be a river? Why should there be anything as it is? We cannot answer these questions unless we are in a position to transfer ourselves into the position of a circumstance or a situation which is not involved in this procession of phenomena - due to the workings of which, these questions have arisen.

The question cannot answer itself. The answer has to come from a source which is other than the source of the question or the nature of the question. If we are involved in the circumstances which have raised the question, we cannot answer the question. As I have been telling you oftentimes, a justice in the court cannot pass a judgment if he is one of the clients himself. We are the clients, and yet we want an answer from a judicial source - which is an utter impossibility under the existing circumstances. Mankind does not see any aim before itself. Which of you can say that you have an aim before you? We seem to be drifting from day to day like a leaf that is moving the way the wind blows, without knowing where. Only the wind knows where it is going; the leaf cannot know. And we are the leaves and not the wind that directs us. The wind is the purpose of nature, which is hidden from our view somehow or other suddenly

by the tactics which nature is employing purposely - to deceive us, perhaps. Why she wants to deceive us, we do not know. She has a plan for us. Anyhow, we are not prepared to be deceived always. She can deceive everybody for some time and some people always, but not everybody always.

So we are now somehow awakened to a peculiar uncomfortable situation where we cannot rest in the place where we are. That's why these questions have arisen, which are the agenda of this conference. Why should there be a question at all, or a pose as to the nature of the aim of human existence? Is there an aim at all? Let us put this question. Before considering the answer - the nature of the reply to the question as to the aims of human existence - may we find a few minutes to think over this other aspect of it: Is there an aim at all, or is there no aim? Who told you there is an aim? Which idea tells you? Who put this notion into your head that there is an aim? Did you read it in a book? Is it because somebody told you that there is an aim, or do you have some reason behind you to conclude that there is an aim? If you have a reason behind you to conclude that there is an aim, do you perceive that aim? Do you pursue it also in your life?

Our daily activities will show that there does not seem to be much relevance between the seeking of an answer to this question and the nature of our daily movements in life. We do not consciously do anything, it appears. We are driven by impulses. We are forced under certain circumstances to act in a particular manner; and if this is true, we cannot say that we have an aim before us. The aim is merely to be subjected to the mandate of that power which compels us to move in a particular direction. Well, this cannot be called an aim. This is slavery.

So we do not seem to be able to perceive any aim in our life by opening our eyes, or listening to any sound through our ears, or from any sensory operation. And intellectually, rationally, we do not seem to be much better off because our reason or intellect is only a tool to confirm what the senses

are saying; and if the judge is there only to confirm what the evidence is reporting, his presence is uncalled for.

Today our intellects are not superior, qualitative judges of the reports of the senses. They are only quantitative sieves which sift the evidences coming through the senses and give us qualitatively the same thing that the senses are giving. The judgment of the reason of man is not qualitatively superior in any way to the quality seen in the reports received through the senses. But a judgment is supposed to be qualitatively superior to the quantitative nature of the evidences or the reports received from the other sources. Unfortunately, it is not so - though it ought to be so.

Philosophers have stumbled upon this difficulty and have gone to the extent of finding out if there is any qualitative superiority in our reason, in our intellects, in our rationality, beyond what the senses give us as a quantity of information. We have failed utterly. We have found nothing; we see nothing. But there is a peculiar feature in our reason, or rationality; and our question that is refusing to be ignored finally, whatever be the difficulty in answering it. The process of human history is nothing but the insistence of this question to receive an answer and the failure of humanity to provide an answer. If humanity had provided an answer to this insistent question, the world would have vanished altogether by this time. But no one has been able to provide an answer to this question, and the question refuses to be ignored. It is persisting in wanting an answer. So there is a tug of war going on in the form of human history or natural history - namely, the conflict between an insistence for an answer to the question, and the inability of the world to answer it.

These sessions, The Divine Life Conference or whatever you may call it, are not leisure hours where you can listen to tales and stories from old men. Evidently, some serious questions in your minds have driven you here from different corners of the world, and I am sure you are seeking answers to these questions. You will not be able to receive these

answers by merely moving about on the surface and hunting for gurus, reading books, and jumping from place to place. Nothing of the kind will be a solution. You will find that you are not yet ready to receive this answer. This is the reason why you are not able to find it, though the answer is pouring itself forth on your heads like a flood in the form of the meaning that is hidden behind the vicissitudes of nature. The transiency of things carries within it a meaning that is beyond the transiency of things. The ugly sight of nature's activities secretly enshrines a beauty which can be visualized by an eye which is also your endowment, together with the physical eyes or fleshy eyes that you have, but which you have thrown aside and on which you have thrown dust and rubbish on account of a persistent habit of listening to the clamorous pressures of human society which has its own rules and regulations, falsely carrying the insignia of an answer to these questions.

And, we have religions before us. Religions tell us that they have an answer to these questions, but they have failed to give an answer. They have become mockeries. They have become only showpieces. They remain only as placards in conferences. Religions have become a part and parcel of this phenomenon of transiency. They have themselves got drowned in the flood, and instead of finding an answer, we have to give an answer to the question of why they drowned themselves at all. So pitiable is the state of affairs of man, of anything in this world.

It is difficult within a few minutes to go into even a minor detail of this major problem – to unlock the mysteries before you or inject a vision of intuition into your heads - inasmuch as it involves various factors which have to be considered and aspects which have to be solved. You have to spare a lot of time for going deep into this mystery without getting prejudiced or having a premeditated conception in your head, or being under the notion that you are already on the right path and that every other person is a fool. All these ideas may have to be shed. You may have to be Reborn, with

a capital 'r', if you are to receive an answer to this tremendous question of what the aim of human existence is.

In an introductory remark to this main subject, I have used all the time, and I feel it is worthwhile. I postpone this theme for another day when it will be possible to continue the subject. Then we may be in a position to receive a brighter light in the midst of this tremendous darkness of oblivion and confusion which we call the world, which we call humanity, which we call anything worthwhile in this world. I conclude with these words, and I hope to see you again another day for the same purpose.