

TRUE KNOWLEDGE

by

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

The Divine Life Society
Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India

Website: swami-krishnananda.org

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The most valuable thing in life is life itself, but mankind is likely to make the mistake of imagining that the value of life can be enhanced by accretions from outside. What we call life is a completeness by itself, and it does not stand in need of any attribute or adjective to make it complete. The fact that life is a mysterious wholeness and the idea that it needs additional requirements to make it more complete is an error that comes to high relief with a carefully conducted analysis of our own nature.

We do not stand in need of anything to make us complete. This is a truth that we usually forget. And as a matter of fact, nothing can make us complete by a mathematical addition of quantitative or magnitudinous operations. Any amount of addition of material possession or quantity of any kind cannot make us complete, because our existence is inseparable from the principle of life.

The life that we are living or leading is an inscrutable something which is identical with what we are. On ultimate analysis, we come to know that life is not a process of acting, doing or functioning, but something identical with our own essential being. Inasmuch as life and our existence seem to be inseparable, living a successful life would mean living in such a way as to be in consonance with the characteristics of

our own nature. There can be nothing more difficult in life than to live life itself. It is easier to achieve feats which will evoke public approbation than to merely live life, because of the fact that it is identical with our own self. To conduct oneself is more difficult than to conduct a huge army in the battlefield. We can order the march of a huge garrison in the field of battle, but we cannot order a proper movement of our own personalities in the field of life itself.

The reason behind this difficulty is that our activities, when they are directed to our own selves, become inseparable from our own selves. We are used to regarding life as something other than ourselves. We are accustomed to regarding the world as something different from ourselves, to clinch the whole matter. We are habituated to thinking that activity of life and our personal existence are two different things, so one can afford to be something inside, and another thing in public activity. What a pity!

It has been wrongly assumed by people, by almost everyone in the world, that activity, function, or an office in which one is working has nothing to do with one's own existence or being. This is the reason why we imagine that it is possible for us to behave in a particular way in outer life, inconsistent with what we are in our own inner life. Most people in the world are schizophrenics in the metaphysical sense because they have a double life. It is rare that we find a person who has a single life to live. Everyone has a twofold life—one public life, another private life. This is the malady of life. The greatest disease conceivable is what is called psychological schizophrenia—a split personality, as they call it in psychoanalysis. It is when a mind assumes two properties, two artificial individualities, and conducts itself in a twofold manner, as if it is two different things altogether; and this malady has managed to infect the lives of people by affecting the very function of the understanding itself.

The greatest endowment of the human being is rationality. We have no property more precious than the power of understanding, logical decision and the

ratiocinating capacity. But if the disease sits in that passage, then our thought itself would be diseased. This means to say that when the fundamental instrument of knowledge—which is the basic faculty of all human operations in life—gets affected by a disease, the existence of the disease itself cannot be detected. When a defect gets identified with the nature of our consciousness, it becomes part of ourselves; therefore, we cannot discover the existence of this defect. We cannot know where the mistake lies in our own nature because of the fact that this mistake has become a part of our existence and consciousness.

Observation of the existence and characteristic of this defect of our personality is impossible because it is not an object of our observation; it is our own selves. We are used to empirical observations, examination through a telescope or a microscope in a laboratory, of objects which are other than our own selves, and we have never been taught how we can observe our own selves through a novel type of telescope or microscope. How can anyone know what mistake is involved in one's own life when that mistake has become a part of one's own nature—when it has become inseparable from one's own skin? This is the crucial question of life and unless this problem is solved, no other problem in the world can be solved.

Problems are not outside in space and time. They are in the creator and the observer of the problem. As the old adage goes, beauty is in the beholder. In a similar manner, we can say the problem is in the person who has been observing the problem. The problem is in the very same person who is seeing the problem, and who complains that there is a problem. How can such a situation be rectified?

The beginning of knowledge is the awakening of oneself to the necessity of discovering this root cause of human illness and to turn the tables round, or to bring about what they call a Copernican revolution. People thought that the sun was moving around the earth before Copernicus declared that this is not the truth. The sun does not revolve

around the earth; the earth revolves around the sun. Now we have to bring about a sociological, political, psychological, philosophical and spiritual Copernican revolution. By this what is meant is that we come to a new type of discovery that problems are not around us, harassing us, ready to pounce upon us as completely external to us; they are inside us, and they are not separable from our own individual makeup or the structure of our own minds. The problems of life are as connected with our own mental makeup as the threads constituting a cloth are connected with the cloth itself. There are no threads but the cloth which they constitute, and there is no cloth but the threads of which it is made. The human mind, human experience, the human method of assessment of values, the human way of thinking as a whole is itself a problem, and there are no other problems in life.

Today is Vijaya Dasami, which is supposed to be the day on which we begin to learn things in the proper manner, in the right perspective—Vidya Rambha, as they call it—the commencement of true learning, true education, and the attempt at right knowledge of things. Real Vidya Rambha does not mean merely mugging up of books, chanting of scriptures or recitation of formulae given to us by ancestors, but a new effort at a true awakening into the realities of life.

We should not make a joke of life. The greatest error is to laugh at life, mock at it, imagine that it is nothing and that we can live on velvet under the impression that milk and honey are flowing everywhere around us. This erroneous assumption is a mistake which is fundamental in character.

Sufferings, difficulties and problems are the objectives towards which humanity is moving as a solution by various types of effort. As I mentioned, human life is identical with the type of activity towards the achievement of a particular kind of success which is not very clear to the mind of many people. People who are very busy throughout the day, either in private life or public life, really do not know why they are busy and for what they are working. We seem to be working under a gregarious instinct, and appear to be following the

psychology of sheep. If one sheep starts bleating, they all start bleating without knowing why. If one person starts shouting or proclaiming something in a loud voice through a newspaper or broadcasting station, it stirs the minds of people and they start talking about it and then pursue the course of action indicated by that new discovery or new proclamation.

The discovery of the aim of life is of primary importance before any other effort is made towards achievement of success in life. We cannot achieve success unless we know what success means. Is it success in life to live in bungalows, to be able to fly in jet planes every day with plenty of finance in one's pocket, to have enough to eat, drink and be merry throughout the day, to have a youthful personality and exuberant health of the physical body, or to have public approbation and announcements of one's greatness through the headlines of newspapers? What do we mean by success in life? Is this clear to anyone's mind? If this is not clear, what is it that we are working for? Well, there cannot be a greater travesty of affairs than the inability of the human mind to discover what is it that it is aiming at, and it is merely moving, blindfolded, groping in darkness in search of something of which it has absolutely no idea or notion.

Let us, therefore, pray to the Goddess of Learning, Mother Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati, and to the great trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, the supreme Narayana, the manifestations of the Absolute Supreme Being—that we seek nothing in life except illumination, as one of the two unfortunate persons mentioned in the Devi Mahatmya, about which you were hearing different things on different days. Samadhi Vaishya asked for knowledge rather than kingdom which was sought by his colleagues. We are ready to ask for a kingdom of pleasure rather than the poverty of knowledge. We imagine that knowledge is poverty, while kingdom is wealth. If this notion persists in our minds, mankind is doomed to be in the same position that it is today—in the condition that it has been since aeons.

We are under the impression that knowledge is information—a theoretical grasp of the techniques or methods by which we can calculate the movements of physical objects and empirical phenomena. This is not knowledge. Because of this wrong notion of knowledge, we are under the impression that knowledge is not worth anything. People do not want knowledge; they want only physical comfort, public status and social position. It is this for which people are struggling day and night, not for knowledge. Who wants knowledge in this world? Nobody. Why? Because knowledge is not worth anything. What does knowledge bring to us? It cannot bring our bread; it cannot feed our stomach. It will make us a beggar, perhaps. Who wants to be a beggar in this world? Everybody wants to be a king. And if knowledge reduces us to the state of a beggar, why should we go after knowledge? So Vidya is not of any value to us.

All our educational institutions today, including colleges and universities, are in this miserable plight of mistaking knowledge for a theoretical veneer of information about things which are regarded as existent, while knowledge itself is not existent. If existence is to be divested of knowledge, and vice versa, what is the outcome of it? We are told that existence is inseparable from knowledge. The highest philosophical discovery of our culture is that existence cannot be separated from knowledge. Sat and Chit are one. But our universities tell us today that Sat is different from Chit, so that the knowledge of a professor in a university is not in a position to feed his stomach because his existence is different from his knowledge. So with all the learning of a professor, he is a miserable man in his private life. Why? Because his knowledge is not identical with his existence in the practical world of social relationship and empirical desires.

Is it true that knowledge has no connection with life? This is what we have been landed into today. Students do not want to study anything; they have no liking for learning. They want to abolish examinations, abolish study in

institutions, and would prefer to have a university degree even if they have not appeared for the examinations. The reason is that they want to earn their bread somehow or other, and get on in life physically, materially, socially. All this has nothing to do with learning, nothing to do with knowledge. A person who has come out of the university with a degree, a certificate in his hand, knows nothing of life—nothing of others, nothing of himself also. And he does not want to know it because this knowledge is not of any worth in life.

Now, there cannot be any greater sorrow conceivable than this state of affairs. We are not grieved because we have no money in hand; we are grieved because God has perhaps cursed us with an ignorance which has put the cart before the horse and makes us mistake night for day, ignorance for knowledge, pain for pleasure, to put this along the lines of the definition of ignorance given by the great sage Patanjali.

What I tried to mention at this holy hour is that knowledge, or Vidya, is not information about something which is existing. That itself is existence, and this is why it is difficult to understand the principles of ultimate philosophy. It is also the reason why one cannot be truly spiritual. You may imagine yourself to be spiritual, but you cannot be really spiritual as long as you think that knowledge is of something, rather than itself something. What you call knowledge is not an awareness or information of something other than knowledge. If that had been the case, then knowledge is only an instrument, a tool for the achievement of something else which is the real value in life, while knowledge itself is not the value. If this is the case, our students are perfectly right in their present-day attitude. But this is the reason also why we are today, in the late twentieth century, insecure nationally and internationally, insecure in private and public life, and unhappy to the core, with sorrow eating into our vitals. All this is because we have lost the capacity to steer the course of life towards its true destination, because we have no idea of the destination itself. If the captain of the ship has no idea of where he is going, how can he steer it? We seem to be very

busy without knowing why we are busy. We seem to be very active without knowing the reason why we are active, and we are working hard without having the least idea as to why we are working hard.

The solution of this problem is knowledge. This is the grace of Saraswati. May this grace descend upon us all. May this grace divine descend upon all humanity and the whole of creation. This is our humble prayer today. God bless you all.