

THE SIMPLICITY OF LIBERATION

by

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I can only say what I am in the habit of thinking always, and what else can be said? My usual trend of thinking every day, under every condition practically, is all that I can endeavor to express; how I think, and what is my habitual way of thinking. Whatever be the outer mode that one's life may take, it has a background and a support of thought and idealism. This is what determines the nature of a person, and speaks for itself without necessarily being expressed in words or language.

Our lives do not consist of actions or functions or performances, celebrations, etc., but they consist of certain adjustments. So, it can be safely said that whatever we do in our lives, individually or otherwise, is a sort of adjustment, which looks like an activity, an action, an enterprise, a project, and so on and so forth. There is nothing in life except this simple fact – whatever the life that one may try to live, the simple things that everyone does, and anyone does at any time, is a kind of adjustment of oneself to certain conditions which call for certain adjustments. That is all what life actually is, as it at least appears to our practical experience.

But what is this adjustment? If this is to be understood, and if it can be understood, then it becomes an intelligent

guide and a safe lightpost on the path which we are treading by way of these adjustments. Otherwise, the adjustments become compulsive, thrust upon us, and that adjustment which we make compulsorily out of conditions is what we call hardship, difficulty, problems, suffering, etc. But if this adjustment, which otherwise goes by the name of a pressure and a difficulty, can be made part and parcel of our intelligence, understanding and conscious conduct and behavior, then it becomes what the ancient masters called Yoga.

What you call difficulty or hardship in life, problem and sorrow, is itself Yoga, when it is understood. Yoga, when it is not understood, is a problem and a trouble and a suffering in life. And a suffering in life when understood is the practice of Yoga. It was a great Buddhist scholar, whom we know today as Nagarjuna, the great predecessor of even Acharya Shankara in dialectics and polemics, who declared as the quintessence of his tremendous work that “where there is Samsara there is Moksha, where there is Moksha there is Samsara.” What you call bondage is itself freedom, and what you call freedom is itself bondage.

So you need not escape from bondage to achieve freedom; you have only to understand what bondage is, and you are at once free. So it is not movement from bondage to freedom, from Samsara to Moksha, from the world to God. It is an awakening, a word which you have heard so many times, repeated so many times, and thought to be understood by so many people, but never really understood.

There is nothing that we have to do in this world; we have only to understand, and nothing else. It is not a transformation that is called for, not an evolution, nor a revolution. It is pure awakening – the rising of the sun of knowledge. Nothing happens to the world when you are free. The world is the same. Nothing happens even to you. But a tremendous transformation takes place in a different way altogether – in a four dimensional pattern as our modern

scientists would put it – instead of a three dimensional existence, you enter into a four dimensional eternity.

This so-called three dimensional time-space life of ours itself gets illumined with the new light of the four dimensional consciousness. In the language of the Mandukya Upanisad, it is a rising of the experiencing individual from the three states to the fourth state, called Turiya – from the three dimensions of waking, dream and deep sleep you go to the fourth dimension of Turiya.

You do not go, you do not move; nothing happens. What happens to you when you wake up from sleep? You have not gone to a different place, you have not become a different person, but a tremendous change has taken place in you. It is as if you have been transported to a different realm altogether, and a new reality, the nature of which is well known to everyone; the contrast between the reality of dream and deep sleep and the reality of waking.

But what of this contrast? Not withstanding this breathtaking difference between the realities of dream, deep sleep and waking, it is the same thing that looks in two different ways. The thing that appeared as dream, that same thing appears now as waking. You have changed the angle of your vision, the standpoint of perception and experience.

This is a hard job for the human understanding to achieve. Because of the difficulty in absorbing this technique of understanding human life, religions have not succeeded, philosophies have not succeeded, enthusiasts in the social field have not succeeded; history has repeated itself in the same pattern for ages and ages. All the efforts of man seemed to be a failure in the end on account of a little small tiny defect in his way of thinking. But a great question arises before oneself – “Yes, we have appreciated the situation – is there a way out?” Even Master Shankara could not give an answer to this question – “What is the way out?” When the way is visible to your mental eye, that is the only way out. You do not know how it comes.

A question is posed by the great expounder of Vedanta Philosophy, Acharya Shankara in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras: how does knowledge arise in a person? Does it come from books, does it come from teachers, does it come by the kicks and blows that you receive in life, does it come from God, by a mandate of His Will, or a fiat of His Grace? You cannot say that knowledge comes through your effort, because your efforts are conditioned by the knowledge that you have already in you. So you cannot put forth an effort which is superior to the knowledge that you already have. How can there be an effort which transcends itself for the purpose of a higher knowledge? So it is difficult to say that effort is the cause of knowledge. Nor is it true that it is mere sufferings and buffets that you receive in life which is the source of all knowledge. Many people suffer in life, but they gain no knowledge.

Well, is it a whim of God that He suddenly forces knowledge upon you? It is difficult to say; maybe, maybe not. There is no answer. The answer is that this happens. Suddenly you awaken. How did you get up from sleep? Who woke you up – God, man, your efforts, your studies? Nothing of the kind. You cannot say how you woke up from sleep. Something occurs, and that occurrence is awakening. It is a mixture, a blend, a combination, coordination of many factors. God plays a role, man plays a role, society plays a role, your effort plays a role naturally; evolutionary urge also plays a role. All these work together in the production of this tremendous universal effect called awakening. So we have to wait like a servant waiting for his wages. There is nothing that we can do except wait for the first of the month to gain our salary. “When the first comes, when the first comes, when the first comes, I will have my salary.” You go on waiting, but merely because you wait, the first will not hurry itself. It has its own way of coming. If you are eagerly awaiting the first of the month, it cannot come tomorrow merely because you expect it. But, nevertheless, you expect it, and it comes at its own proper time. In due course of time you will get.

But if you are sincerely aspiring, ask and it shall be given. Your soul should ask for the knowledge that is necessary for the sake of this great understanding. Ask and it shall be given. But what are you asking? You don't know what to ask. So, how can you ask? You can only be sincerely awaiting illumination so that you may understand what that is. You cannot ask for freedom – you do not know what freedom is. People ask for freedom, not knowing what it is. You cannot be free as long as you are in a world of elements; when you breathe air over which you have no control, when you depend on water over which you have no control, when you want sunlight over which you have no control, how can you say that you are free? What freedom have you attained? So there is no freedom for anyone who lives in the world; nor is there freedom in getting out of the world. Freedom is an awakening into the structure of the world itself.

Religion has been said to be an answer in the cultural history of mankind. People have turned to religion when there was sorrow in life. But we have religions and religions. They are like professions, like vocations in life. "I belong to this religion." It is something like saying, "I am an industrialist, I am a businessman, I am a teacher, I am a painter." You have some business and profession, so religion also has become a kind of profession. You go to the temple, you go to the church, you have a Sunday, you have a Thursday and whatnot.

We can very easily deceive ourselves into a religious consciousness. And there cannot be anything easier in life than self-deception. Everything is difficult except this. Very simply, you can turn yourself into a great saint in a minute without having altered your position even a little bit. The greatest danger in life is self-deception. Self-deception need not necessarily be deliberate. Generally we define self-deception as a kind of trick that one plays upon oneself and others, for the purpose of gaining an ulterior motive. It is not always true. One can be deceiving oneself without knowing what is happening. Because, a twist in consciousness gets identified with the totality of one's psychophysical being and

one becomes an embodiment of that deception. So you cannot find fault in a person who is under that coma of self-deception. He does not deceive purposely, or deliberately, dexterously with premeditation. It has taken place due to an overwhelming pressure of the unconscious level of the mind.

Why does this happen? Why do we deceive ourselves and place ourselves at the mercy of an unconscious blast that blows upon our face from the bottom of the sea of the unknown? This is because we are many times too over-enthusiastic. We may be very sincere, and yet wrongly; it is possible. Sincerity comes, honesty comes, but we may be duller in understanding even there. All told, the whole thing is a difficulty. We are not in a pleasure garden or a rose bed – we are in a situation where we have to be vigilant at every moment. And we have to wait for an occurrence to take place, rather than press ourselves egoistically into any kind of situation.

The only Sadhana or practice that you can execute is to withdraw your personality from occurrences that take place. You should not thrust your personality into any situation and then seek meritorious work. Nature is very spontaneous in its action. It is not artificial or contrived with any kind of ulterior purpose. So we have to allow nature to work in a spontaneous manner. And spontaneity and egoism are opposites. Where there is egoism, there is no spontaneity. It is all make-believe and make-up. We have to withdraw our personality from the experiences that we are undergoing in life and allow the experiences to take place and pass. When you take a bath in the ocean you should not fight with the waves, you should allow the waves to cross and move over your head; you should not oppose them and press them, for then they will be capable of pressing you down.

Our personality is our trouble, which is an external form of what we call the egoism of the individual. We have no other problem in life except this self-assertive principle in us. Over-enthusiasm in any direction can mislead us into the notion that we are free from this evil. While we can be caught

by engrossments in external objects, which is usually the case with many people in the world, we can also be caught by the ego, like a serpent from inside. A person who is free from attachment to objects can be a devilish ego from inside. And one who is trying to free himself from the ego within may enter the oceanic flood of sense objects outside. So you can be under the pressure of the external phenomena called objects, or the internal phenomenon called the ego. No one has escaped both of these. Either you are caught here, or you are caught there. You have a double tollgate – if you escape one, you get caught in the other. So there is a double checkmate in tolls when you drive reckless on the road. You cannot escape both; it is very difficult.

Likewise, in our practice of religion, philosophy and spirituality, we are likely to make the mistake of not taking into consideration the impact that can be produced on us by these two aspects of natural evolution – the objects outside and the ego within. Both these are Prakriti and Purusha acting in two different ways. Objects are a form of Prakriti, the ego is a form of Purusha. The ego is not Purusha and the objects are not Prakriti. Yet they have some connection with these two respectively. Purusha misconstrued and located within the mind is the ego. Prakriti, misconstrued and located in space-time is an object. Prakriti cannot cause bondage by itself, nor can Purusha cause bondage by itself. But we limit both these and create a new circumstance called individuality. My individuality is a mixture of Prakriti and Purusha – a little of Prakriti and a little of Purusha. The little Prakriti is this body and the little Purusha is this ego. Both these have come together and created a new household.

To extricate ourselves from this real Samsara, free ourselves from this bondage of householdership in this body – this is real Sannyasa. Sannyasa is difficult to understand. It is freedom from the householder's life, but you are a householder as long as you are in this body, because ego is the father and Prakriti is the mother. They produce children in the form of the senses and Pranas. I am not telling you a

new philosophy, I am just repeating to you what Sage Vasistha told Rama in the Yoga-Vasishtha.

Samsara is not outside, even as Moksha is not outside. Bondage is not outside, even as freedom is not outside. Humanity is not outside, even as God is not outside. They are a set of circumstances. Humanity is not a group of individuals; it is a set of circumstances that you call humanity. So is bondage, so is freedom, so is even God-consciousness. It is a condition of Being. It is not a process. It is not a reality somewhere. Inasmuch as we live under conditions and we aspire for a condition, a state of affairs, a state of being, whatever we have to do has to be done at the spot where we are sitting. It does not require physical movement and it does not require any kind of transformation in space, time and objectives. It is a religion of Being, and not a religion of either externals or internals.

We have four kinds of religion in this world, corresponding to the four approaches or faculties or situations in our own lives. We have the instinct and the sentiment aspect in us, which is of course a very predominant aspect, as you all very well know. We are not always intellectualizing or rationalizing things. We have sentiments, feelings and emotions. We may understand one thing, but feel something else. Our feeling may be for something different than what our understanding accepts. Thus we have an aspect of sentiment, feeling, emotion – an instinct, you may call it. Then we have another aspect in us – the aspect of will, determination, conduct, regulation, order, or ethics, as it is usually put. There is a third aspect of love. No one can exist without loving something, and that has to find an avenue of expression. The last one is intelligence, rationality, understanding, logical faculty, discernment. These four sides find expression in what we call the four types of religion in life.

We have the lowest sentimental religion called totemism, fetishism, etc, which you find prevalent not only among primitive types – even among intelligentsia it is present in

some respect. Even the highest intellectual has certain totemic aspects, and fetish persists in him, lying in ambush even behind his genius of understanding and scientific rationality. So, we have totemic religions of the tribes and the aboriginals, what we usually call the instinct religion, the religion of basic sentiments, where we simply act on a religious basis, founding our religious conduct on certain sentiment only, a kind of social acceptance and tradition. This is a religion of this group, we say. It has no rationality behind it, no questions can be asked. And it has nothing to do with ethics even; no question of a special feeling for a code of conduct, etc.

There are religions of ethical behavior that are purely ethical religions, for instance, which insist on the social conduct as well as personal conduct, much more than any other. There are religions which insist upon love and a feeling for others as well as a feeling for the supernatural as the pre-eminent. There are finally the rational or mystical religions which will not accept anything that is not acceptable to reason, and which are founded on experience.

So, corresponding to the four faculties or aspects of human personality, we have the four religions of fetish, ethics, theistic affection and love for all, and rational mysticism. But these are not watertight compartments. It is not that I can be a mystic minus rationality, or that I can be theistic minus the mystic element in me; that I can be this or that, just as I cannot be merely a body or a soul or an intellect or a feeling or a will. I am a blend of all these, so that I am everything at all times.

So in the practice of the religious attitude we have to be very cautious that we do not lean upon any particular sentiment in us, and call ourselves as a moralist, or ethicist, mystic, rationalist, socialist, reformer, etc. etc. Religion is nothing of this kind. It is the whole being in us, responding to the whole which is Reality. As there is no such thing as partitioning Reality, there is no such thing as partitioning human individuality. It is a miniature Cosmos, which is called

the human individual. And so it is a Cosmos, though it is a miniature. We should not forget it is a universe by itself. And we know what the Universe contains; nothing is excluded from it. There is every blessed thing in me, in you, in everyone. So whatever is in us has to be paid its due, it has to be summoned to task and set in tune with the total or the whole of Reality. It is the whole of me that is yearning for the whole that is everywhere.

But if the whole of me is not coming to the surface of action, I cannot be a real religious person. I can only be a sectarian, a cultist, a person who belongs to a faith, a group, which is likely to be set in opposition to other faiths; that is the danger of religious dogma. By summoning only certain aspects of our personalities and deifying them into an apotheosis of what we call a cult or a creed, we set ourselves in opposition to other such formations of similar creeds and cults called religions. So, one religion is different from the other religion, just as one aspect of your personality may differ from another aspect of your personality.

Well, the quarrel between one religion and another religion is something like the quarrel of the eye with the nose, or the nose with the ears. How fantastic is this quarrel, this religious warfare. If the eye cannot hear and the ear cannot see, naturally they cannot be friends. But you know how friendly the two are. The ear only hears and the eye only sees. Is there any quarrel, religious warfare between the two? But why is there warfare outside in social life? There is a central government of the psychophysical constitution which governs the function of the ear, eye, etc., irrespective of the fact that one is totally different from the other, practically no connection between one and the other.

So, there is lacking in us a fundamental concept in life which is the reason for quarrels of every kind, disagreements of every type – social, political, religious. If I cannot agree with you in anything, it means I am not a religious person. I must agree with you in everything – though I may differ from you, I agree with you. Because while the apparent division

marks off one individual from the other and we have what we call society, the agreement creates the atmosphere of unity among us. Though individuals are many, mankind is one, humanity is single. Though the limbs of the body are many, the person is one. So this person that is one is the aspiring individual, and is the religious person. It is not my intellect that is religious, or feeling that religious, or the will that is religious, or this or that aspect of me that is religious.

So until and unless my whole being rises to the surface of this task of what is called religion, one cannot be religious. Until and unless the whole of you has arisen to the surface for the whole of this task, you cannot contact Reality, and until you contact Reality, you cannot experience it. God cannot come unless you are religious, and you cannot be religious unless the whole of you is in action. But never are we entirely in action, so never can we be really religious, never can we get God. Very pitiable if this should be the state of affairs.

I do not want to digress too much, and harangue you about either religion, philosophy or spirituality. I have only thought aloud, the way in which I am used to thinking, as I told you in the beginning. Unless the whole of you comes to action, the Whole that you are asking for cannot come. But mind you, you cannot bring the whole of you into action; either you think without feeling, or feel without thinking, or act without either, etc. But if you can succeed, miraculously, in bringing all the aspects of your personality into focus, and you – the real you – comes to the conscious level of action, that is religious endeavor. God must come, here and now – why not?