



CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH LOVE

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We all dream of a better life in a better society. However it has become difficult to go through a complete day without becoming disillusioned, disappointed and drained by the selfishness surrounding us. So many people seem to be interested only in their personal gain. They have become rude and arrogant, critical and insensitive. In a nutshell we don't find peace and harmony in the world. Most of us feel that there is nothing we can do

to change this and we attribute the cause of our disappointment to the world. We believe that the world needs correction. From time immemorial, human efforts have been directed towards improving the world but so far these efforts have met with little success. We do not realise that the solution lies in improving not the world but ourselves. We can find peace and harmony only by purifying our inner world. When we purify ourselves, the world is purified. This is a law of nature. The world is but a reflection of our thoughts. If our thoughts are good, the world is good. If our thoughts are bad, the world is bad. Therefore when we change the pattern of thoughts within us, the complexion of the entire world changes.

No sooner are we born, than we are indebted to the world for all that it provides for our living. As long as we live, we must maintain a sense of gratitude to the world. So must we serve the nation, serve the family and serve ourselves. This is the first element of right living. We need to do service to maintain our proper spiritual wellbeing. The *Bhagavad Gita* says it is criminal on our part to consume the resources of the world without contributing to it. There are two broad principles governing human actions. The first principle is based on an attitude of giving and the second on an attitude of taking. If the attitude of taking prevails in a society, we find its members possessed with multiple selfish demands and desires. Consequently there is stress and strain in society. Let the attitude change to giving, and our demands, desires and selfishness drop. Harmony, peace and happiness reign in the very same society.

The dignity of the human race is founded upon the principle of giving. The Buddha used to say to his disciples, "if you know what I know about the power of giving, you would not have a single meal without first sharing it with someone." In fact no man has the right to claim anything as his and demand anything from society. Perhaps his only right in the world is to 'give', 'to serve'. "Be content to serve," pleaded Christ. Richness of mind and heart lies in selflessness and as we give selflessly, we acquire more inner power. Riches come to us to serve mankind in a bigger way.

The best work is work that is done impersonally. We should keep our mind free, unattached to the work we perform. We shouldn't get mentally entangled in our work. People believe that if they don't get entangled in worldly matters, they cannot work; they cannot progress. It is an erroneous concept. In fact truth is just the opposite. As soon as we assume an egocentric approach, "I am the doer," we involve ourselves completely in the performance of our duties with an egocentric attitude. We believe that the burden of duty rests upon our shoulders. We start hurrying and worrying about its completion. This creates mental fatigue, attachment and fear about the outcome which spoils the glow and richness of the work we are performing. We should remember that the so-called material work in hand is quite immaterial. Our foremost occupation in life should be just to do whatever work is in front of us. This is the beginning and end of our entire obligation. When our ego, our little self is absent, when we are unattached, impersonal towards our work, then real work is turned out. And we progress in life.

If we take a close look at nature we can learn our lessons from the sun, moon and rivers. They work so tirelessly, so impersonally. Rivers flow. They have no personal motives. Flowers bloom. They give out a sweet fragrance. There is neither ego prompting them to do so, nor do they have any selfish desire to fulfil. We must banish the thought, "I am doing this." The more one rises above the little self, ego, the more glorious the work.

While our physical body resorts to service, the mind must embrace the world with love. This is the second element of right living. Love means realising our oneness with the entire universe. Love is being in harmony with one and all. As for maintaining harmony in our body, every part of it must consider itself one with the whole body. Similarly when we feel and realise our unity with our fellow beings, our oneness with the entire universe, harmony in society, in the world, prevails. That is love. This is the right use of love. The moment we are in harmony with the universe, with the world, with nature, there is joy, peace and happiness all around. If we lack that feeling and consider ourselves as separate and distinct from others, we fall out of harmony with nature. There is 'we' and 'them'. Others are not like

us, we fear them. We cannot trust them, they are dangerous. We project our hatred, our failures, onto them. We blame them for our problems rather than looking within ourselves. We attempt to solve our problem by 'fixing them', often with violence. But when we reach out with caring and compassion to those who seem different from us, we conquer our fear and replace it with love. We overcome violence.

We are all created in the image of God and God is within us all. God is love. So our basic underlying nature is loving, peaceful, balanced and harmonious. We are innately compassionate and kind. The child, when it takes birth on this earth is all love. The child has no motives, no desires, no personal attachments. It is an embodiment of pure love. It is not being the lover but it is love itself. It is purity itself. That explains why the whole world adores the child. Over the course of our lifetime an overlay of fear, anger, envy, sadness, insecurity and many other negative thoughts and emotions accrue and cover our beautiful inner nature. The outer covering is intensified and reinforced by our childhood training and experiences in our current life. We appear to be what we are not, angry and fearful people filled with insecurity, guilt and self-doubts. We have forgotten who we really are.

Fear prevents us from recognising our true spiritual essence. We have so many fears. We fear being rejected, being ridiculed, being humiliated, being perceived as weak, being labelled or being foolish. Yet, these fears are false. We are always loved and protected. Love dissolves fear. One cannot be afraid when one is feeling love. True love is the state of complete fearlessness. As the depth of love increases, intensity of fear slowly decreases. The more love we have, the more divinity is expressed within us.

When we remove the outer layers of dirt and debris, negative thoughts and emotions, when we clean and polish away the outer overlay, we can once again discern the true diamonds we really are. The majority of us don't live our lives being aware of our spiritual nature, so our task is to unlearn those negative and harmful emotions and attitudes that plague our lives and cause us, our communities and our world such misery. As we let go of these negative traits, we discover our true nature, our positive and loving self. It has always been there, all the time, covered, obscured and forgotten. The spiritual journey therefore, is from where we are to where we have always been.

What people call love is far from true love. The concept of love today is distorted. The much talked about love is nothing but personal attachment. Love and attachment are diametrically opposed to each other. Attachment is perversion

of love. When we attach ourselves selectively to a particular object or being, we automatically detach ourselves from the rest. Attachment is not possible without relative detachment. All personal attachments limit us, they make us dependent, they prepare our fall. People rightly say “he has fallen in love.”

The love that people claim to possess is far from true love. It is preferential love, uneven love. True love is universal, even, the same to one and all. Jesus Christ attained that state. His love was uniform. When he was crucified, he maintained the same feeling of love and compassion for those who crucified him.

The feeling of love arises from purity wherein there is no distinction, no demarcation. Purity of heart is attained when one is evolved. When we are flying in an aircraft 40 thousand feet above the ground level, hills and vales appear to be at the same level. When we reach an elevation, all differences in the objects down below disappear. Similarly when we realise our supreme self, when we reach the pinnacle of spiritual glory, all differences and distinctions of the terrestrial world disappear. Spiritual ignorance is the cause of all sorrow and suffering in the world. There is only one way to eradicate sorrow and establish enduring peace and happiness. This is to instil knowledge of the inner self that we are all divine beings and inter-connected.

Only Spiritual practices can take us to that state of elevation as they help us to develop a purer mind and subtler intellect. We get nearer and nearer to our inner core and attain realisation of universal brotherhood. It is only through spiritual practices we come to realise that we are all the same, we are all rowing the same boat, and there are only superficial and unimportant differences amongst us, no difference that really matters. Then only can we reach out to people with love and compassion. Because of the purity inside, we become humble and respectful. Without such purification there is a danger of falling prey to one’s little self, ego, while serving. It really counts for nothing when we begin to feel that “I am doing service to the world.”

Real social service demands soul service first. What should precede social help of any kind is the basic current of oneness between giver and taker. Only then can the social help extended work wonders for both giver and taker. In the words of Bro. N. Sri Ram, “The greatest service one can render to one’s fellow beings is to spread an understanding of those fundamental truths with regard to life which can lift them out of their problems and ignorance and bring them to a condition of tranquility and happiness they had not experienced before.”

If we accept the task to become enlightened beings of our planet, we can begin to change the world. Changes will occur slowly as we begin to practise acts

of kindness every day. These acts do not have to be expensive or complex. They can be nothing more than a pleasant smile or assistance to someone needing help. They can be a kind word, a sweet gesture, a caring action, a compassionate attitude, a shared joy or a helping hand. Step by step, a huge transformation of our society could begin. People will feel nourished by the kind gestures of others. Fearful attitudes and defensive mind-sets would begin to melt in the warmth of kindness. Kindness and caring cannot only be reserved for our families and friends. Our spouse, our children teach us to love. We perhaps didn't know how to love until we raised a family. Now that we have learnt the art of loving, it shouldn't be restricted or confined to the family unit alone. Our home may be the centre but not the boundary of our affection. Having generated it in our home let the rays of our affection radiate all over. If we could inspire everyone to perform a few acts of kindness each day we could change the world. At least a good beginning could be made and we can harbour more hope for the future.

In addition we could be role models for our children. They would learn the power and importance of being kind. Our children watch us closely. They model themselves on what they observe, our behaviour, our values, our attitudes. If we are hateful and violent, they will become the same. One of our most important tasks is to teach our children right values and right behaviour through our own example. And we should do this right from the time they are infants because babies too are observing us closely and they understand far more than we think.

There is no time schedule for changing the world. The only important thing is to begin. If it is true that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, then the first step is to let go of our fears and isolation and begin to practise acts of kindness, whether random or planned, whether big or small and to do this every day. Whether we reach out to a few or to many is not important. The numbers do not matter, the act of reaching out with care does. Sometimes when a physician touches a patient with compassion and healing, the physician benefits more than the patient. All of us are physicians of the soul.

Changing the world from its current violent and hate-filled nature will not happen through the efforts of only a few enlightened individuals even if they are powerful world leaders. Rather, day-to-day acts of kindness and compassion shared between people and within small groups can bring about the change to a more loving and kinder place. The responsibility lies on each of us to reach out to the world with love and compassion without any concern for what we may gain. When our communities are co-operative and compassionate, when we are responsible and kind, we can create a little bit of heaven upon the earth. As it is said, "if we do not have the opportunity to do great things, we can do small things in a great way."