

43. Devaluation of Man

There is a great deal of argument and agitation because the currency has been devalued; some say it is a good step, some say it had to be done whether good or bad, some argue it could have been avoided or postponed. But the net result has been anxiety and worry for all. More important, however, and more to be deplored is the devaluation of man that has been taking place systematically in recent times.

Man is held to be a tool, an instrument, and not as born primarily for his own fulfillment. Each man has to educate himself through trials and errors and attain graduation by reaching the full knowledge of his own reality. He has a great destiny and he is equipped with the skills needed to achieve that destiny. He is not a helpless victim of circumstances. But the tragedy is that he has allowed the equipment to rust through neglect and he has forgotten the goal. The road he has to traverse is also overgrown with brambles and the signboards have disappeared. That is why the person who laid the road has come again to lead man along it, after repairs and renewals.

Consider how man has been shaped since millions of years for this high destiny. During the primeval cosmic chaos, there were two phenomena struggling to overwhelm each other. On one side was the fiery lava flood vomited by the volcanoes and emanating from the crevices and chasms that scarred the horrifying face of the earth. The destructive conflagration swept in all directions scattering panic and death, heralding the end of everything. On the other side, scarcely noticed, microscopic amoeba floated furtively on the water's edge or clung desperately in the cracks of rocks, keeping the faint spark of life unharmed from fire and flood. Who could have predicted at that time that the future was with the animalcule or amoeba, whose appearance itself was due to an accident, and whose survival was an enigma? Who could have foreseen that these minute specks of life could hold out triumphantly against the devastating onslaught of heat and cold?

Man is the zenith of creation

But that speck of *Chaithanya* or Life-Consciousness won through. Sheer intelligence, adaptability and perseverance in 'willing' to live helped it to defeat the mortal fury of the elements. By the unfoldment of that *Chaithanya*, the amoeba blossomed into various species of living beings, gigantic and microscopic; at last, it grew into man; in man, it bore fruit as goodness and virtue, sympathy and sacrifice, oratory and music, song and dance, scholarship and *saadhana*, martyrdom and sainthood, and as repositories of Divinity; nay, even divine Manifestations assumed the human form.

This is the reason why man is said to be the zenith of creation. This is the purpose for which he has struggled through stone and grass, tree, bird and beast. Hence, man should not fritter away the precious prize he has won; he should not slide back into the beast; he must move forward into Divinity. He must become aware of his strength and weaknesses and become clear about his goal, his path and his potentialities. He must act up to his worth and capacity.

Ego is the seedpot of down-dragging tendencies

Man is endowed with the capacity to separate himself from his body and the senses and the mind and the intelligence. He feels and says, My eyes, my ears, my feet, my hands, my mind, my reason, etc. He knows, deep down in his consciousness, that he is apart from all these; that he is their user, owner and master. No animal feels itself different from the body; for them, they are

the body. They do not know that they are occupants of the physical frames. Man can, by a simple exercise in silent reasoning, discover that the physical frame is unreal and temporary. This should lead to *vairaagya* (detachment), achieved through *vichakshana* (analysis), the result of *viveka* (discrimination).

Once man is free from undue attachment to the body and its appurtenances, he is liberated also from the pulls of joy-grief, good-bad, pleasure-pain, etc. He is firmly established in equanimity, fortitude, undisturbed balance. Then man discovers that the world is one kin, in God; that all is Joy, Love, Bliss. He realises that he himself is all this apparent world, that all the multifarious manifestations are the fantasies of the Divine Will, which is his own reality. This expansion of one's individuality to cover the ends of the Universe is the highest leap of man. It gives supreme *aanandha* (bliss), an experience for which sages and saints spent years of prayer and asceticism.

Egoism is the seedpot of greed, envy, anger, malice, conceit and a host of other down-dragging tendencies. They cloud his intelligence; they divert the attention from truth and make the false appear as real, the real distorted as false. So it becomes essential to cleanse the mind of these through regular *saadhana*, to tune the little will to the Infinite Will of God, so that it becomes merged in His Glory. Scholarship or skill, however deep and varied, have no cleansing power. They only add the alloys of pride and competition. Learned men are not necessarily good, nor are men with spiritual powers over nature above pride, envy and greed. *Sathya*, *dharm*a, *shaan*thi and *prema* are the hallmarks of a purified heart, a heart where God is enshrined and is manifest.

Man today lives only at the animal level

The world is today in deep distress because the common man and his leaders are all distracted by lower desires and lower motives, which require only the lower skills and meaner impulses of man. This is what I call 'devaluation'. Though man is inherently divine, he lives only at the animal level. Very few live even in the native human level.

Instead of transforming his hearth, his home, his village, his state and this world into a Prashanthi Nilayam, the Abode of the Peace that passeth understanding, man has made the world an arena for the wild passions of anger, hate and greed. Instead of making the senses (which are after all very poor guides and informants) his servants, he has made them his masters; he has become a slave of external beauty, evanescent melody, exterior softness, tickling taste, fragrance. He spends all his energies and the fruits of all his toil in the satisfaction of the trivial demands of these untamed underlings.

When the mind is controlling the senses, you have lasting joy; when the senses are masters, you are dragged in the dust. This is the most tragic result of devaluation. Every act which lowers the authority of *viveka* and honours the siren-call of the senses devalues man. Intelligence must be the Lord, the Master.

Whenever the senses demand anything, intelligence must start discriminating, asking the question, "Is this an act in keeping with the Divinity immanent in me?" That will prevent devaluation.

Tragic result of man's devaluation

To accept that man is related to the apes or that he is an animal made of mud or matter is to devalue him. Man or *maanava*, as he is called in Sanskrit, is a spark of *Maadhava* or God. He can blossom into God. He is born to be perpetually happy, but is everywhere in misery. This is a tragedy; it is the like the *dhobi* (washerman) who died of thirst though he was standing knee-

deep in the running stream; or like the man who closed his eyes and stumbled along in the darkness. The source of happiness is in him; the source of light is in his eyes. Real education has to teach man how to tap this spring of joy and light. If this task is not undertaken by schools and colleges, it should be performed by parents and elders and all who are keen to prevent this devaluation.

Trichirapalli: Prashaanthi Vidwanmahasabha, 18-12-1966

Speak so that your language is as sweet as your feelings are. Make the words true and pleasing. (Sathyam brooyaath; priyam brooyaath). But, for the sake of pleasing another, do not speak falsehood or exaggerate. Cynicism which leads you to speak about a thing in a carping manner and in order to bring it into disrepute is as bad as flattery which makes you exaggerate and cross the boundaries of truth.

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