

Chapter 1

Man has throughout the ages been seeking something beyond himself, beyond material welfare – something we call truth or God or reality, a timeless state – something that cannot be disturbed by circumstances, by thought or by human corruption.

Man has always asked the question: what is it all about? Has life any meaning at all? He sees the enormous confusion of life, the brutalities, the revolt, the wars, the endless divisions of religion, ideology and nationality, and with a sense of deep abiding frustration he asks, what is one to do, what is this thing we call living, is there anything beyond it?

And not finding this nameless thing of a thousand names which he has always sought, he has cultivated faith – faith in a saviour or an ideal – and faith invariably breeds violence.

In this constant battle which we call living, we try to set a code of conduct according to the society in which we are brought up, whether it be a Communist society or a so-called free society; we accept a standard of behaviour as part of our tradition as Hindus or Muslims or Christians or whatever we happen to be. We look to someone to tell us what is right or wrong behaviour, what is right or wrong thought, and in following this pattern our conduct and our thinking become mechanical, our responses automatic. We can observe this very easily in ourselves.

For centuries we have been spoon-fed by our teachers, by our authorities, by our books, our saints. We say, ‘Tell me all about it – what lies beyond the hills and the mountains and the earth?’ and we are satisfied with their descriptions, which means that we live on words and our life is shallow and empty. We are secondhand people. We have lived on what we have been told, either guided by our inclinations, our tendencies, or compelled to accept by circumstances and environment. We are the result of all kinds of influences and there is nothing new in us, nothing that we have discovered for ourselves; nothing original, pristine, clear.

Throughout theological history we have been assured by religious leaders that if we perform certain rituals, repeat certain prayers or mantras, conform to certain patterns, suppress our desires, control our thoughts, sublimate our passions, limit our appetites and refrain from sexual indulgence, we shall, after sufficient torture of the mind and body, find something beyond this little life. And that is what millions of so-called religious people have done through the ages, either in isolation, going off into the desert or into the mountains or a cave or wandering from village to village with a begging bowl, or, in a group, joining a monastery, forcing their minds to conform to an established pattern. But a tortured mind, a broken mind, a mind which wants to escape from all turmoil, which has denied the outer world and been made dull through discipline and conformity – such a mind, however long it seeks, will find only according to its own distortion.

So to discover whether there actually is or is not something beyond this anxious, guilty, fearful, competitive existence, it seems to me that one must have a completely different approach altogether. The traditional approach is from the periphery inwards, and through time, practice and renunciation, gradually to come upon that inner flower, that inner beauty and love – in fact to do everything to make oneself narrow, petty and shoddy; peel off little by little; take time; tomorrow will do, next life will do – and when at last one comes to the centre one finds there is nothing there, because one’s mind has been made incapable, dull and insensitive.

Having observed this process, one asks oneself, is there not a different approach altogether – that is, is it not possible to explode from the centre?

The world accepts and follows the traditional approach. The primary cause of disorder in ourselves is the seeking of reality promised by another; we mechanically follow somebody who will assure us a comfortable spiritual life. It is a most extraordinary thing that although most of us are opposed to political tyranny and dictatorship, we inwardly accept the authority, the tyranny, of another to twist our minds and our way of life. So if we completely reject, not intellectually but actually, all so-called spiritual authority, all ceremonies, rituals and dogmas, it means that we stand alone and are already in conflict with society; we cease to be respectable human beings. A respectable human being cannot possibly come near to that infinite, immeasurable, reality.

You have now started by denying something absolutely false – the traditional approach – but if you deny it as a reaction you will have created another pattern in which you will be trapped; if you tell yourself intellectually that this denial is a very good idea but do nothing about it, you cannot go any further. If you deny it however, because you understand the stupidity and immaturity of it, if you reject it with tremendous intelligence, because you are free and not frightened, you will create a great disturbance in yourself and around you but you will step out of the trap of respectability. Then you will find that you are no longer seeking. That is the first thing to learn – not to seek. When you seek you are really only window-shopping.

The question of whether or not there is a God or truth or reality, or whatever you like to call it, can never be answered by books, by priests, philosophers or saviours. Nobody and nothing can answer the question but you yourself and that is why you must know yourself. Immaturity lies only in total ignorance of self. To understand yourself is the beginning of wisdom.

And what is yourself, the individual you? I think there is a difference between the human being and the individual. The individual is a local entity, living in a particular country, belonging to a particular culture, particular society, particular religion. The human being is not a local entity. He is everywhere. If the individual merely acts in a particular corner of the vast field of life, then his action is totally unrelated to the whole. So one has to bear in mind that we are talking of the whole not the part, because in the greater the lesser is, but in the lesser the greater is not. The individual is the little conditioned, miserable, frustrated entity, satisfied with his little gods and his little traditions, whereas a human being is concerned with the total welfare, the total misery and total confusion of the world.

We human beings are what we have been for millions of years – -colossally greedy, envious, aggressive, jealous, anxious and despairing, with occasional flashes of joy and affection. We are a strange mixture of hate, fear and gentleness; we are both violence and peace. There has been outward progress from the bullock cart to the jet plane but psychologically the individual has not changed at all, and the structure of society throughout the world has been created by individuals. The outward social structure is the result of the inward psychological structure of our human relationships, for the individual is the result of the total experience, knowledge and conduct of man. Each one of us is the storehouse of all the past. The individual is the human who is all mankind. The whole history of man is written in ourselves.

Do observe what is actually taking place within yourself and outside yourself in the competitive culture in which you live with its desire for power, position, prestige, name, success and all the rest of it – observe the achievements of which you are so proud, this whole field you call living in which there is conflict in every form of relationship, breeding hatred, antagonism, brutality and endless wars. This field, this life, is all we know, and being unable to understand the enormous battle of existence we are naturally afraid of it and find escape from it in all sorts of subtle ways. And we are frightened also of the unknown – frightened of death, frightened of what lies beyond tomorrow. So we are afraid

of the known and afraid of the unknown. That is our daily life and in that there is no hope, and therefore every form of philosophy, every form of theo- logical concept, is merely an escape from the actual reality of what is.

All outward forms of change brought about by wars, revolutions, reformations, laws and ideologies have failed completely to change the basic nature of man and therefore of society. As human beings living in this monstrously ugly world, let us ask ourselves, can this society, based on competition, brutality and fear, come to an end? Not as an intellectual conception, not as a hope, but as an actual fact, so that the mind is made fresh, new and innocent and can bring about a different world altogether? It can only happen, I think, if each one of us recognises the central fact that we, as individuals, as human beings, in whatever part of the world we happen to live or whatever culture we happen to belong to, are totally responsible for the whole state of the world.

We are each one of us responsible for every war because of the aggressiveness of our own lives, because of our nationalism, our selfishness, our gods, our prejudices, our ideals, all of which divide us. And only when we realize, not intellectually but actually, as actually as we would recognise that we are hungry or in pain, that you and I are responsible for all this existing chaos, for all the misery throughout the entire world because we have contributed to it in our daily lives and are part of this monstrous society with its wars, divisions, its ugliness, brutality and greed – only then will we act.

But what can a human being do – what can you and I do – to create a completely different society? We are asking ourselves a very serious question. Is there anything to be done at all? What can we do? Will somebody tell us? People have told us. The so-called spiritual leaders, who are supposed to understand these things better than we do, have told us by trying to twist and mould us into a new pattern, and that hasn't led us very far; sophisticated and learned men have told us and that has led us no further. We have been told that all paths lead to truth – you have your path as a Hindu and someone else has his path as a Christian and another as a Muslim, and they all meet at the same door – which is, when you look at it, so obviously absurd. Truth has no path, and that is the beauty of truth, it is living. A dead thing has a path to it because it is static, but when you see that truth is something living, moving, which has no resting place, which is in no temple, mosque or church, which no religion, no teacher, no philosopher, nobody can lead you to – then you will also see that this living thing is what you actually are – your anger, your brutality, your violence, your despair, the agony and sorrow you live in. In the understanding of all this is the truth, and you can understand it only if you know how to look at those things in your life. And you cannot look through an ideology, through a screen of words, through hopes and fears.

So you see that you cannot depend upon anybody. There is no guide, no teacher, no authority. There is only you – your relationship with others and with the world – there is nothing else. When you realize this, it either brings great despair, from which comes cynicism and bitterness, or, in facing the fact that you and nobody else is responsible for the world and for yourself, for what you think, what you feel, how you act, all self-pity goes. Normally we thrive on blaming others, which is a form of self-pity.

Can you and I, then, bring about in ourselves without any outside influence, without any persuasion, without any fear of punishment – can we bring about in the very essence of our being a total revolution, a psychological mutation, so that we are no longer brutal, violent, competitive, anxious, fearful, greedy, envious and all the rest of the manifestations of our nature which have built up the rotten society in which we live our daily lives?

It is important to understand from the very beginning that I am not formulating any philosophy or any theological structure of ideas or theological concepts. It seems to me that all ideologies are utterly idiotic. What is important is not a philosophy of life but to observe what is actually taking place in our

daily life, inwardly and outwardly. If you observe very closely what is taking place and examine it, you will see that it is based on an intellectual conception, and the intellect is not the whole field of existence; it is a fragment, and a fragment, however cleverly put together, however ancient and traditional, is still a small part of existence whereas we have to deal with the totality of life. And when we look at what is taking place in the world we begin to understand that there is no outer and inner process; there is only one unitary process, it is a whole, total movement, the inner movement expressing itself as the outer and the outer reacting again on the inner. To be able to look at this seems to me all that is needed, because if we know how to look, then the whole thing becomes very clear, and to look needs no philosophy, no teacher. Nobody need tell you how to look. You just look.

Can you then, seeing this whole picture, seeing it not verbally but actually, can you easily, spontaneously, transform yourself? That is the real issue. Is it possible to bring about a complete revolution in the psyche?

I wonder what your reaction is to such a question? You may say, 'I don't want to change', and most people don't, especially those who are fairly secure socially and economically or who hold dogmatic beliefs and are content to accept themselves and things as they are or in a slightly modified form. With those people we are not concerned. Or you may say more subtly, 'Well, it's too difficult, it's not for me', in which case you will have already blocked yourself, you will have ceased to enquire and it will be no use going any further. Or else you may say, 'I see the necessity for a fundamental inward change in myself but how am I to bring it about? Please show me the way, help me towards it.' If you say that, then what you are concerned with is not change itself; you are not really interested in a fundamental revolution: you are merely searching for a method, a system, to bring about change.

If I were foolish enough to give you a system and if you were foolish enough to follow it, you would merely be copying, imitating, conforming, accepting, and when you do that you have set up in yourself the authority of another and hence there is conflict between you and that authority. You feel you must do such and such a thing because you have been told to do it and yet you are incapable of doing it. You have your own particular inclinations, tendencies and pressures which conflict with the system you think you ought to follow and therefore there is a contradiction. So you will lead a double life between the ideology of the system and the actuality of your daily existence. In trying to conform to the ideology, you suppress yourself – whereas what is actually true is not the ideology but what you are. If you try to study yourself according to another you will always remain a secondhand human being.

A man who says, 'I want to change, tell me how to', seems very earnest, very serious, but he is not. He wants an authority whom he hopes will bring about order in himself. But can authority ever bring about inward order? Order imposed from without must always breed disorder. You may see the truth of this intellectually but can you actually apply it so that your mind no longer projects any authority, the authority of a book, a teacher, a wife or husband, a parent, a friend or of society? Because we have always functioned within the pattern of a formula, the formula becomes the ideology and the authority; but the moment you really see that the question, 'How can I change?' sets up a new authority, you have finished with authority for ever.

Let us state it again clearly: I see that I must change completely from the roots of my being; I can no longer depend on any tradition because tradition has brought about this colossal laziness, acceptance and obedience; I cannot possibly look to another to help me to change, not to any teacher, any God, any belief, any system, any outside pressure or influence. What then takes place?

First of all, can you reject all authority? If you can it means that you are no longer afraid. Then what happens? When you reject something false which you have been carrying about with you for generations, when you throw off a burden of any kind, what takes place? You have more energy,

haven't you? You have more capacity, more drive, greater intensity and vitality. If you do not feel this, then you have not thrown off the burden, you have not discarded the dead weight of authority.

But when you have thrown it off and have this energy in which there is no fear at all – no fear of making a mistake, no fear of doing right or wrong – then is not that energy itself the mutation? We need a tremendous amount of energy and we dissipate it through fear but when there is this energy which comes from throwing off every form of fear, that energy itself produces the radical inward revolution. You do not have to do a thing about it.

So you are left with yourself, and that is the actual state for a man to be who is very serious about all this; and as you are no longer looking to anybody or anything for help, you are already free to discover. And when there is freedom, there is energy; and when there is freedom it can never do anything wrong. Freedom is entirely different from revolt. There is no such thing as doing right or wrong when there is freedom. You are free and from that centre you act. And hence there is no fear, and a mind that has no fear is capable of great love. And when there is love it can do what it will.

What we are now going to do, therefore, is to learn about ourselves, not according to me or to some analyst or philosopher – because if we learn about ourselves according to someone else, we learn about them, not ourselves – we are going to learn what we actually are.

Having realized that we can depend on no outside authority in bringing about a total revolution within the structure of our own psyche, there is the immensely greater difficulty of rejecting our own inward authority, the authority of our own particular little experiences and accumulated opinions, knowledge, ideas and ideals. You had an experience yesterday which taught you something and what it taught you becomes a new authority – and that authority of yesterday is as destructive as the authority of a thousand years. To understand ourselves needs no authority either of yesterday or of a thousand years because we are living

things, always moving, flowing, never resting. When we look at ourselves with the dead authority of yesterday, we will fail to understand the living movement and the beauty and quality of that movement.

To be free of all authority, of your own and that of another, is to die to everything of yesterday, so that your mind is always fresh, always young, innocent, full of vigour and passion. It is only in that state that one learns and observes. And for this a great deal of awareness is required, actual awareness of what is going on inside yourself, without correcting it or telling it what it should or should not be, because the moment you correct it you have established another authority, a censor.

So now we are going to investigate ourselves together – not one person explaining while you read, agreeing or disagreeing with him as you follow the words on the page, but taking a journey together, a journey of discovery into the most secret corners of our minds. And to take such a journey we must travel light; we cannot be burdened with opinions, prejudices and conclusions – all that old furniture we have collected for the last two thousand years and more. Forget all you know about yourself; forget all you have ever thought about yourself; we are going to start as if we knew nothing.

It rained last night heavily, and now the skies are beginning to clear; it is a new fresh day. Let us meet that fresh day as if it were the only day. Let us start on our journey together with all the remembrance of yesterday left behind – and begin to understand ourselves for the first time.