

Life the Goal

"Life the Goal" by J. Krishnamurti, 1928

As a cloud hurried by the winds across the valley, so is man where ever he be, hurried along through life. Man has no fixed purposes, man has no understanding of the meaning of life, but is as the clouds that have no resting place, that are chased from valley to valley, that have no quietitude, no tranquillity, no peace. Man has no goal, he is blind to the purpose of life and there is choas and disintegration in him, and hence in the world.

And what is the purpose of life? Is it the freedom of life, the liberation of life from all things, the liberation that comes when you have gone through all experiences, and are, therefore, beyond all experience. And I want to show you that in order to fulfill life, as I have fulfilled life, you must welcome to your heart every experience, however unpleasent, however delightful, so as to make your life full as the rain-drop.

You are afraid of sorrow, thinking it something fearful, something of which you are ashamed. the experience of sorrow gives you strength, strength to sustain you in your struggle, which is also experience. Invite sorrow out of the abundance of your heart, and do not put it aside, for sorrow gives the perfume of understanding, is the creator of affection, and gives you immense sympathy with life. Sorrow and pleasure, evil and righteousness have a meaning if you have established the goal; for the goal gives constantly the aid of its understanding.

The attainment of Truth consists in unfolding life and in giving to life the fullest possible scope for its expression. To me the only, the only world which is eternal, which is absolute, is the world of Truth. A man who has seen this vision, even during his strife in the world, has establishewd for himself this eternal goal. Though he may wander among the transient things, though he may lose himself among the shadows, yet all the time his life will be guided by this goal which is the freedom from all desires, from all experiences, from all sorrows, pain and struggle. For the one who desires to discover the eternal, the establishment of that goal is of primary importance; not the goal of another, not the vision of another, not the out-come of the sorrow of another, but the goal that is born of his own experience, his own understanding. Such a goal, when once he has established it, will throw light on the confusion of his thought and thereby make clear his purpose in life. I want to make this in your minds, as it is in mine, the very foundation for all thought and all feeling.

When once you have realized that goal, whether you are an artist, a musian, an econimist, or an educationalist, you are creating then in the shelter of eternity rather than in the present. Most people in the world are caught up in the present. The present has become a huge shadow, and within that shadow they are creating without the understanding of the Truth. But to understand the eternal they must know that Truth is one, life is one, although that life expresses itself in many ways. But people throughout the world are seeking unity in the expression of life rather than in life itself. Life has no temperament, life has no colors, life has no limitations, life has no barriers; these exist only for the one who tries to utilizes life as the background, the canvas, upon which life will paint the picture.

I hold that the present chaos, anxiety and struggle arise because life has been bound and maimed, and Truth has been limited and conditioned. Human beings throughout the world have put a limitation on Truth, they have stepped it down. (I use the term "stepped down" in its technical sense as electricity is stepped down to a power-house.) But Truth cannot be thus stepped down.

People have placed a limitation on the Truth and so they have betrayed the Truth. The understanding of life has not been the predominating factor but rather the belief in innumerable doctrines, countless gods, and religions. But the understanding of life is much more important, much more vital than the bondage of innumerable creeds, religions, dogmas, and theories.

You have had your various beliefs, you have adhered to your various dogmas, you have given your life and your thought to creeds and to the bondage of religions, and in all this you have not found the lasting happiness. You have moved from one limitation to another, from one narrow cage to perhaps a larger cage, but you have not had the desire to shatter all cages, to break the bars that limit, that destroy, that inflict sorrow. Because you have placed beliefs before life, creeds before life, dogmas before life, religions before life, there is stagnation. Can you bind the waters of the sea, or gather the winds in your fist? Religion, as I understand it, is the frozen thought of men out of which they have built temples and churches. The moment you attribute to external authority a spiritual and divine law and order, you are limiting, you are suffocating that very life that you wish to fulfil, to which you would give freedom. If there is limitation, there is bondage, and hence suffering. The world at present is the expression of life in bondage. So, according to my point of view, beliefs, religions, dogmas and creeds, have nothing to do with life, and hence have nothing to do with Truth.

The web of life is spun out of the common things of life, and those common things you can control. You can give them originality, you can create greatness out of them, or you can destroy them by lack of understanding. The web of life and the understanding thereof is in your own control, and not in the control of another. When you give over the control of your life to another, there is unhappiness, there is authority which can be cut down like a tree, and the comfort of its shadow vanishes away.

By thus limiting and betraying the truth, fear is caused in the mind and in the heart, the fear of good and evil, the fear of narrow morality, the fear of heaven and hell. And on that background of fear you paint innumerable beliefs that place a limitation on life. Because of this fear there is a desire to seek comfort. But I say to you, seek not comfort but understanding. The search for comfort is the bondage of life and the search for understanding is the freedom of life, and you can only gain that freedom through experience. How can there be any comfort other than the understanding of Truth? You want to attain without a struggle, without a tear. A spiritual drug store is what most people are looking for, antidotes for fears - that is why you look for external help to uphold you. You are afraid to face whatever weakness is yours; afraid to face yourself and conquer. Being inexperienced of great heights, of great solitudes, of loneliness, of eternal life, you think that you must carry with you your friends, your qualities, your churches, your moralities, your dignities, your bonds, your rites and your religions. At these great heights, you do not want such things.

In the shadow of the present, man is caught, is entangled and thereby creates great sorrow. Life for him is a continual struggle, a continual strife, a continual jostle. To dig through the present to the eternal is the purpose of man. Every human being must go through the process of digging that tunnel, the tunnel which is the direct path to the attainment of life. And that tunnel, which is the only path to the fulfillment of life, lies within yourself. And in that tunnel you cannot turn back, for you have thrown behind you that which you have dug out. You cannot but go forward, and that going forward must be reached by the discovery of Truth, or else progress, as such, ceases. To go forward with the fixed determination in your minds, to discover the eternal beyond the shadow of the present, is the purpose of life.

And when once you have established for yourself this goal, which is the fulfillment of life, the freedom from all desires, from all experiences, from all sorrows, pains and struggle, then that digging through the tunnel becomes an ecstasy.

I know all the questions that will arise in your minds with regards to the things that cannot be reconciled with what I am saying. You will say: We have been told,- we have been urged,-this has been said,-we have been instructed, brought up in this fashion. Against that I have nothing to say. If you are thirsty, you will drink the waters of the well; if you are not thirsty, you will just pass by. And as the world is really thirsty, and perhaps some of you, it is better not to attempt to reconcile. Why do you want to reconcile? If you are trying to reconcile, you will be lost in the reconciliation. But if you want to understand the purpose of life and desire to experiment, then you must not be led across the lawn of life, the road of life by another.

As the parched lands await the rains that shall nourish, that shall give them cool shades and green lawns, so those who have a desire to understand life, but who have their hearts and minds parched, warped and usurped by fear, to them the tidings of freedom, the news of happiness and the way of attainment of the Truth should be welcome. But welcome the shade, to welcome the green lawns and the tender leaves, they must have been burnt and have known the struggle, the anxiety of the lack of water. Those who have a desire to see the cool green, to enjoy the fresh breezes from the mountains when the rain comes, must utilize it to the fullest extent, they must be prepared to store it for many summers in their hearts and in their minds. Truth is the only balm, the precious ointment that shall cure the wounds of sorrow, the scars of experience; but if it not truly taken to the heart and translated greatly by the mind, there will be a gross misunderstanding and a perversion of judgment. I am not concerned with how many followers there shall be of the Truth, but I am concerned with how many will understand the Truth and give of the Truth to every passer-by. I am concerned with those who will really drink of the waters of life rather than gather those waters in a small vessel, where they will stagnate, and then worship that stagnation.

As I have found, as I have attained, and in me the Truth is well-established, I would show you the way of enlightenment; I would give the waters of that shall quench your thirst, that shall bring forth green shoots from the dead stumps of yesterday. But before you can drink of those waters, you must understand intelligently, you must have your mind and your heart clean, unprejudiced, full, at whatever stage of life you may be.

Of the measure of that understanding each one must for himself. No one else can give you the knowledge of your advance; of your progress, of your attainment. If any one were able to do that, it would be a betrayal of the Truth.

If a man has not ploughed and tilled his land, then when the rain comes it will not bring forth. But when a man has cultivated, has cared for and lovingly developed his land, then the rain shall bring to fruition the seeds he has sown.

This is not mystical or occult; Truth is neither mysticism nor occultism. Occultism and mysticism are the limitations which man puts upon Truth. Truth has nothing to do with the limitations you would impose upon it. You are concerned all the time with compromise, how to reconcile the Truth which I put before you with the lesser things that exist around you. Then there is struggle, there is renunciation and the discontentment not born out of intelligence.

Once in many centuries- this is not a threat or a promise or a hope which I am dangling in front of you for your enticement to Nirvana, heaven, or happiness- once in many centuries a human being attains and gives of his understanding of that attainment; once in a hundred years the century plant, gathering its strength, puts forth its flower for the delight of every passer-by. If the

passer-by is wise, eager in his search, and puts aside the things that are less important, that are secondary to the perfume of that flower, or to the understanding of him that has attained- if he desires to stop and take the perfume and the understanding to his heart and mind, he will find that with Truth there can be no compromise. And as every one in the world is concerned with this compromise, with the reconciliation of beliefs strongly instilled into him, the news of attainment, the perfume of freedom and of happiness passes him by and leaves him parch, empty as a shell. So I would that I could bind your mind and your heart- I am not using that word in the narrow sense- to the eternal Truth and not to those things that have been stepped down, and which are a betrayal of the Truth.

To the minds of most people it seems necessary to have an intermediary, an interpreter of the Truth. And I want to show that such a mediator must of necessity step down the Truth and that a mediator is unnecessary to life. By a mediator I mean a guru- that a guru, in its narrowest sense of the word is unnecessary, and that in order to have a criterion by which to judge our feelings and our thoughts it is easier, I hold, to use the goal itself as the mediator, as the ultimate guru, and not another, either a person or an ideal, which would help momentarily. Because I hold that the person who helps momentarily is stepping down the Truth, and that the danger of that stepping down of the Truth is the betrayal of the goal, of the ultimate. If each one, therefore, fixes his own goal, which is the goal of the world, and is hence thereby creating order, that will act as the guru, as the mediator, as a necessary requirement in helping each one to go towards the goal.

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"...There was an interesting interview with Mother Theresa when she was traveling in Europe. Someone asked her, " What is the worst disease that you have seen?" They were thinking that this woman had been to India and she was going to talk about Cholera, or leprosy, or AIDS. She thought for a moment and she looked at the press and said, "loneliness and isolation in the West..."