

Growing Into A Complete Person¹

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Growing into a complete person. This is very important for every human being. It is another type of growth which does not take place as a routine, *prakṛtithah*. A calf will grow into an adult—an adult cow or bull, and after that, there is no further growth. There is only aging; it will age and die. So too, every human being if he or she survives for a few years, undergoes a metamorphosis, ages and dies. He is born, *jāyate*, and he exists, *asti*. This sequence given by Yāska is very interesting. The one who is born, *jāyate*, is alive, *asti*. And if he continues to be, *asti cet*, he grows, *vardhate*, and then metamorphoses, *vipariṇamate*. This change, *pariṇāma*, is not just a modification. It is *vi-pariṇāma*, a metamorphosis. All the cells undergo a change. One becomes a potential mother or father. Then, Yāska tells us, he declines, *apakṣīyate*, and dies away, *vinaśyati*. This is for every living organism. A human being is no exception.

Whether I like it or not, I will grow into an adult. All that I need to do is to survive. I just need to survive a few years. If I do, I will become an adult, and, to accomplish that, I need not do anything special. As a routine I will grow into adulthood. In India, not only will you become an adult, you will get married also, immediately. That is why we have the dual number in Sanskrit—I,

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we two, and us, *aham*, *āvam* and *vayam*. So this growth is routine; it happens naturally. But it is not enough. You need to have a second firing.

Every human being is like a Concorde. You are not a simple turbo jet. Because there is another growth that you have to undergo. You need to become a complete person. The completion does not consist in putting on weight or thinning yourself so that you can pass through the eye of the needle. Nor does it consist in accumulating titles. You can have titles and still be childish. You can have money to sit upon and still be foolish. After gathering so much wealth you do not know whether the money is for you or you are at the mercy of the money. We completely lose sight somewhere along the way. One needs to grow into a complete person. That takes another firing. It takes one's own initiative. What can that be? First I am talking of growing into a simple human being. Once you are a complete human being, we have so much to offer you. That is where the spiritual teaching begins. But to become a complete being, it takes one's initiative. That initiative is used to conform to a matrix of values which really do not cause any conflict in me.

Conformity to values should never cause conflicts. If it does, I need to grow. If I go against my values, behaving in a way that leaves me feeling guilty, I have not even started my life as a human being. This is very simple. The values are common; they are universal. That I am a person who needs to be free from

harassment, if not cared for, is very common. I do not want to get hurt, I do not want to be cheated by anybody, I do not want to be robbed, I do not want to be lied to, I do not want to be a victim of anybody's anger, jealousy, or hatred. This is what I expect of others, and others also expect the same thing from me. This I know. I can never plead ignorance about this. Neither, in a court of law, can one plead ignorance of the law, even though people are ignorant and can be ignorant of the laws. But this one form of ignorance does not exist, because when you ask different people—a panditji in Banaras, a Harvard scholar, a person in Alaska or a simple aboriginal in the out-back of Australia—the same question or set of questions, the answer is always the same. I do not want to be hurt, I do not want to be lied to, I do not want to be cheated. It is the same answer. And everybody knows that others expect the same thing from him or her. When somebody comes to rob someone, and with a knife in hand asks the person at home, "Please give me the keys; tell me the truth which key opens the safe," he wants the truth. Does he not? Nobody wants to be lied to. Even a Mafia don does not want to be double-crossed. Those who might be informants do not get to the police. They take care of that.

Knowing what is to be done and what is not to be done is very simple. By saying that at a particular time somebody came and revealed that these are the things to be done by you and these are the things not to be done by you, we have made a mystery of what is

commonly sensed by all and sundry. Every human being senses these values. This I consider is the most important thing. All human beings have an inherent, common value structure. But this value structure gets interfered with and disturbed by some peculiar theologies. The theologies say that you can hurt a person if that person does not conform to your belief system, because that person is an enemy to God. They maintain that what God has mandated, that person has not accepted, and therefore, that person is already an enemy to God. He is going to be punished, and if you, the faithful, do away with that person, God will be pleased, and you will have a special place in paradise. This is the worst thing that can happen to a human being. A human being, a simple human being who has empathy, who is born with empathy, is made into a missile because of religious indoctrination. We create double standards.

Values are universal, and we must acknowledge that. We must live up to them. What I want to say here is that to be a complete person I should go along with my empathy. Empathy is a human emotion. Its full manifestation is peculiar to the human heart. And, it is a necessary component in the emotional structure of a human being. A tiger kills when it needs to. A lion kills when it needs to. But a human being is not programmed in this way. He or she is someone who has to make choices. When one has to make choices, then what is the basis of this choice? Some say that God has mandated certain norms which you should follow. If you do not

follow them, he will punish you. This is ridiculous. If the mandates are not known to people, they will not know what is right and what is wrong. No value will be universal, if it has to be taught. Values are universal, however, because they need not be taught. We have this innate sense of values, this matrix of norms. In fact the whole value structure is very clear to every human heart. And I consider that this value structure is really safeguarded by a human being only through this one single emotion called 'empathy'.

To give an illustration, I once saw a Wimbledon final. It was a five-setter. Four sets are over and both players have two games each and require a couple of points to have a break. Anybody can win. All the sweating it out during the first four games is nothing. Now they have to win this particular game. One has to win. Think of this. A couple of points and one fellow wins. I remember it well. The Australian player, Pat Cash, won. He kisses the ground, boxes the air, throws up his racquet and his t-shirt also. He is so ecstatic. After half a minute—the whole drama was only for one minute, maybe half a minute—he approached the net and everything changed. In tennis, the etiquette is that you should rush to the net and shake hands with the opponent. When Pat Cash was doing this, I watched his face. I wanted to see what would happen to him. Suddenly, that fellow looked sad. It did not take time. In no time the whole face changed and he looked sad. Why? Because he wished, for that moment, that his opponent had won and that he had

been defeated. That's what it looked like. He was sad that he defeated him. That is the human heart. No human heart is ever made without empathy. That is called 'empathy'. Because he knew what it felt like when he was on the other side, and he was on the other side many a time.

Everybody is on the other side many a time. What does it do to a human heart? Pain is known to everybody, and therefore, this empathy is in all our hearts. The human heart knows. And we need to take the cue from this empathy. That is the window through which the world enters into me, the world that needs help enters into me. And then I come out in the form of sympathy, compassion, help and service. Thus, I am not merely a survivor, a grabber all the time. I grow into a complete person. A complete person is one who has compassion to spare. Compassion towards himself and compassion to other fellow human beings. Compassion to spare, compassion for every tree, every plant and every animal, well, that is compassion. One can grow into that person. That should be a routine job.

Embedded in the Hindu culture is the assumption that this growth is a routine job. That is why, professionally, we are not inclined to compete. We never competed originally. Whether it was good or not, definitely it was ideal. It was ideal for a society which is committed to spiritual growth. To become compassionate and to conform to what is to be done by me, not to yield to my own likes

and dislikes, is the commitment. Everybody has likes and dislikes, *rāgas* and *dveṣas*. As long as their fulfillment does not disturb anybody it is O.K. It is fine. To desire is a privilege. Lord Krishna says in the Gītā, “I am desire, which is unopposed to dharma, in all beings,” *dharma-aviruddho bhūteṣu kāmō’smi* (BG 7.11). *Bhūta* can be any being, but he says, “I am the desire that is not opposed to *dharma*,” so this is the desire in a human heart. Lord Krishna says here that he is the desire that you fulfill conforming to *dharma*. That means it is a privilege to have a desire. And to fulfill a desire is also a privilege—as long as one is able to conform to what is valuable to oneself, and to others also. That is called a universal value, and here, that is called *dharma*.

We go one step further. *Dharma* is not merely not robbing, not cheating, etc. There are different levels of hurt, different sorts of hurting. You can hurt a person by a look, you can hurt a person by a word and you can even hurt a person by deliberately entertaining a certain type of thinking. Do not think that there is only one type of hurt. You can hurt a person in so many different ways, and you do so all the time. Therefore, not hurting another person, not yielding to my own likes and dislikes, and, on the other hand, conforming to what is right and wrong is the bedrock of our human society. In the Hindu society we go even further; the son of a priest is a priest, and he marries the daughter of a priest. We did not have job consultants at the time that this society was flourishing. What would we do with

them? There was no problem. That is how it is even today in some places. A priest is the son of a priest. For the most part, those days are gone, and I am not asking you to go back to that. But there is some beauty in it that I want you to understand. All that I want you to understand is the emphasis. The emphasis is not to grab, not to accumulate, but to give. And to give is your duty, whether you like it or not. In the beginning I do it whether I like it or not. And later I begin liking what I do; I begin liking to do what I need to do, what I am supposed to do in a given situation. It becomes a privilege. Then you are a complete person, I would say. Not doing what you like, but liking what you are called upon to do. In any given situation, you are called upon to do certain things. You are a son, or you are a daughter. You are a father, or you are a mother; you are a husband, or you are a wife. You have many hats to wear every day. And every role has a script to follow. If you can follow the script, which we call duty, and enjoy doing it, that is completeness in growth. You enjoy your duty. All our Indians have this concept of duty. Nobody says with a grumble, "It is my duty, so I am doing it." He may not be enthusiastic about it, because, in general, nobody says happily that he is doing his duties. That takes growth. That takes a new firing on your part. One has to have a commitment to that, which is why, perhaps, only in the Hindu culture is this concept of duty is so well-developed. I can say this because I have been exposed to and studied many cultures. In Hindu culture, *dharma* is an end in itself, a *puruṣārtha*.

I have tried to understand this *dharma* as an end in itself, a *puruṣārtha*. We say that there are four types of ends to be pursued, *dharma artha kāma mokṣa*. When *dharma* is a *puruṣārtha*, it does not sub-serve your pursuits of security and pleasure, *artha kāma*. It, in itself, is an end to be achieved. One has to, by one's own initiative, grow into that person for whom *dharma* is an accomplished end. One begins loving what one has got to do, and not what one loves to do. If one loves what is to be done, the growth is complete. If one does what one loves to do that is not an accomplishment at all; even the animals do that. Further, if you go with your own fancy, it does not take time to grow out of what you once loved. Is it not so? Our life is full of this. You can very easily grow out of what you love. Therefore, growth lies only in loving what I do in a given situation. As a father, as a mother, as a husband, as a wife, as a son, as a daughter, as a citizen, as a neighbor, there is so much to grow into. That is what the challenge is. One has to have that kind of challenge. With that, one can be quite alive and fresh. There is no retirement here. This is the initial growth that one has to gain for oneself. In this there is no negotiation possible, because you need to be a grown up person.

A human being means we expect certain behavior. If there is a theology that goes against this, we should change that theology. Theology is an interpretation, and we should change that interpretation if it compromises our universal values. People should

just walk away from a theology that does not support our universal values. And the theology will change, because orthodoxy always chases the people. If people move away, the orthodox people will chase them. And therefore, people should think responsibly, and understand that universal values should be upheld, and nothing, including a theology, should change that. On the other hand, the theology should conform to those values, should confirm them, and help us grow into them. That is what religion is supposed to do. It should help us grow into that complete person. Every religion has to help us that way, and we have to understand religion that way. Therefore, I say that to be a complete person is within the growth possibility of a human being. Within *saṃsāra* there is the possibility of growing into a *dhārmika*, a person who enjoys following *dharma*. If you do not like it, and if it is to be done, do it. If you like it and it is not to be done, do not do it. Grow into that person who likes what is to be done and does not care for what is not to be done. This is the complete person.