

## HUMAN EVOLUTION

*The last public lecture given in Europe by the late  
Pir-O-lvlurshid Inayat Khan.*

Beloved Ones of God - I will speak thjs afternoon on the subject of human evolution.

It is not only that the hwnan race has evolved as the time has passed, but as the human race evolves period after period, so any individual evolves **in** his life-time. In other words, in the world's life-time the human race evolves, and in the life-time of an individual the individual evolves. Of course it is possible that the human race may take an opposite course; instead of evolving, it may come down; and so it is with mankind also. But a person who is really evolving, will not fall back. **If** he does, he will only take four steps backwards; then he will feel uneasy and discontented, and go forward again. Maybe that a hundred times he will come back and a hundred times he may come forward. The person who has once experienced the joy and happiness of evolution, will never be contented in going back. No doubt the rhythm of every person's evolution is different. As you will have read in *Vadan*: "One soul creeps, another soul walks, another soul runs, and another soul flies". And yet they live on the same earth and live unde1 the same sun, and they are all called human beings.

How strange it is that at the present time a new spirit seems to have wakened in humanity, that they do not distinguish the personality, they do not distinguish the evolution of the personality, but what they distinguish is the nationality! And we do not see this only in the evolution of a personality, but in every country. The first thing they ask you for, is the passport: it does not matter what

evolution you have. That you are distinguished as the subject of this or that country -- that is something important. And very often people make a great virtue of it to say: "I am as good as you"; but imagine the insolence of it! The better you are, the less you consider yourself to be. In saying, "I am better than you", you are less than you think you are.

The other day I happened to see a distinguished lady who told me that a maid-servant who had lived in her house for twenty years and who always had such a good manner and such a sympathetic attitude, had suddenly changed. "And will you tell me what is the reason?" "She is insolent; she has lost sympathy; she is more keen about money than her work." I said: "This is the spirit of the day. They think that they are evolving, but instead of evolving they are going down, and not only are they going down themselves, but they are pulling others with them." Instead of making an equality with the higher spheres, they want to make an equality with the lower spheres. One might ask: "Whose fault is it?" It is the spirit of the time; it is no one's fault. But at the same time, to go through a condition in a form of intoxication is not necessary. It is better to awaken to the knowledge of the real condition of humanity to-day, rather than to blind one's eyes to it. When we study human nature from a metaphysical point of view, we shall see that the origin of human nature is the same as the origin of all other beings. And the central theme of that origin is intolerance. Man without reason has the feeling, as his first feeling, that another must not exist. And after that feeling, he becomes more moderate, and he becomes more considerate, more harmonious, but as his first feeling he has this, that another one must not exist. And one might ask: "Where does this feeling come from?" In reality there is one life and there is one deed, and this world of variety is made of one deed; it is the manifestation of the One. But at the same time, in this world of variety, the One Being loses his consciousness of being One; there comes the

consciousness of being many, and therefore one being stands against another being. Friendship, sympathy, harmony, attachment, devotion, all these things come afterwards, as man evolves, but these are not his first tendencies. The first tendency is a kind of jarring influence; for example, when you are sitting in a train alone, how happy you feel, and as soon as another enters the compartment, you say: "Why does he come in; I wish he would go". In the restaurant, if you are sitting at a table alone, and perhaps a stranger comes and sits at your table, you may be an angelic being, but as soon as a stranger comes and sits next to you at the table, you say: "Have they not any more tables? Why does he sit at my table?" This feeling comes even to the most harmonious people. Therefore, is there anything to be surprised at if they had in the world so many wars and battles? And for what? For nothing. Now you must remember that man is more fond of war than of peace. He likes peace, but peace must come after war. If they had liked peace before the war, there would never have been a war.

What is the soul? If there is any explanation that can be given of the soul, that is that it is the feeling of a knowledge, or the feeling of "I am", the feeling of one's existence; that is the soul, that part of one's being which feels: "I exist".

And what is the ego? The ego is what is gathered round the soul; the body, the mind with all its attributes; and that is the knowledge of one's self. When a person feels: "I exist", that is the feeling of the soul. But then he goes further, and says: "Exist as what?". It is the body round the soul, that tangible and perceivable being: it is that knowledge round the soul, which makes the ego, and that ego is called *Nufs*. And there are many friends in this world, and there are many enemies, but the best friend and the worst enemy is your own ego - the best friend when it becomes a friend; but first of all it is the worst enemy. Every desire, every impulse that a person feels, it all comes from *Nufs*.

And what is this ego like ? It is like the rose and like the thorns which are around the rose. When the thorn is cultivated, it becomes a rose. Roses take the place of the thorns. But there are two ways of refining the ego so that it may become a rose. The one way is to humble oneself and to crush one's desires. It is this process of crucifixion by which a person refines the ego. The ego is hard grain and must be ground till it is fine powder, and then the powder becomes paste. But when it remains in the condition of a thorn, there come more thorns, and more and more till it increases its thorns so that everyone that touches that person is dissatisfied. Among one's friends there are some you would be most thankful if they kept away, if they did not come near you. What is it that gives you this feeling ? It is the thorns that hurt, thorns they have unconsciously, that they keep; and they hurt. And in what way do they manifest? They manifest in the form of words, desires, actions: in the form of manner. This is why you become annoyed with certain people in life even before they speak, because a thorn is pricking. Before a person moves, even his presence pricks you. But it is a natural outcome of the ego. Either the ego develops into thorns, or it develops into a rose. Then everyone is attracted by the beauty, fragrance, colour, softness, structure; everything about it is attractive, healing, appealing. Therefore, for every soul there are these four stages to pass through in order to come to the culmination of the ego, which means, in order to reach the stage of the rose. In Sufi terms they call *Amara* the first stage, and that stage is that the person is rough and tough and cruel and thoughtless and inconsiderate. He is interested in what *he* wants, and blind to the needs and wants of others.

And in the second stage the man is nice and good as long as his interest is considered; as long as he can have his own wish done, he is nice and kind and good; but if not, if he cannot have his own way, then he becomes rough and crude.

And there is a third stage, when a person is more concerned with the other person and less with himself. His whole heart is seeking for what he can do for another. In his thought another person comes first and he comes afterwards; that is the beginning of turning into a rose. It is only a rose-bud, but this rose can bloom in the person who entirely forgets himself in doing kind deeds for others.

There is a little story which will explain this idea much better.

The King of Bokhara once went to a Murshid, to a teacher. He had just given up his kingdom and wanted to live a retired life on the spiritual path. He asked the Murshid to take him as his pupil. And the Murshid said: "Yes, I will accept you among my group of pupils, but the first work you have to do, is to take the waste-basket outside the town and empty it every day ". So this man had to take the waste-basket after having dusted all the rooms every day, and empty it. And the other pupils, when they saw the king doing this humble work, felt very sympathetic and sorry, and they said to the teacher: "We pray you will make him one of us, and not give him this work any more ". The teacher said: " The time has not yet come ". But they still asked him. So he said: " One of you will go into the street and carry out the directions I will give you ". So one of the young men went into the street, and pushed roughly against the king who was carrying the basket, so that it fell and was overturned. The king looked at that person and said: "When I was a king, then I might have scolded you, but now the time has passed, so I will not ". So he stooped down and picked up the garbage and put it back in the basket. And the young man came to the teacher and gave his report, and the teacher said: " Did I not tell you, the time had not yet come ? " But, after a time, again they were anxious, and again the teacher said: " Go and do the same thing ". And this time the king did not say one word but looked sternly at the young man, and when the report came to the teacher, the teacher said: " It is not yet

time ". But the third time when they did the same thing, he did not even look at him, and when this report reached the teacher, the teacher said: "Now he is ready to be taken on the spiritual path ".

So the ego must be ground; but how can one grind the ego ? By sometimes taking oneself to task. The self says: " Oh no, I must not be treated like this". As soon as a thorn shows itself, one must crush it, and, by constantly crushing, it will in time turn into a rose, for the thorn and the rose belong to the same plant. When a person says: "I will not occupy this position; I despise it; I dislike it; I cannot look at it; I cannot endure this; I hate that; I cannot bear that; I cannot stand this " - well, these are all little thorns; but when the thorns are crushed, then the rose comes out of it and sometimes a person says: "We want to learn occultism; we want to know mysticism (or they even give some greater name) ". But by reading books, by doing practices, can one develop the rose quality ? No. It is the everyday life that teaches us from morning till night. We are constantly up against something, something for us to overcome, and that is our opportunity.

But now the question is: " For whom shall we build this throne of soft cushions ? For whom shall we cultivate the rose ? For vanity's sake ? " No, for the pleasure of others, and not for vanity. As soon as there comes a question that: " I should be better than others, I should be more wise than others, I shall be more spiritual, I shall be better ", that is wrong; that is " I ". What does it matter what one is, as long as one is able to give pleasure to the others, to make life easy for others ? For there is no end of troubles, anxieties, sadness, and every individual is blinded. If you can be of a little use to others, you cannot learn better occultism or mysticism. Then a person thinks: " I please God by pleasing mankind ".

But then there is another way. Perhaps I have told this story, but still this story explains this more, and this story gives an example of a higher attitude. There is a

story of Aias, a slave who was brought before the king and the king wanted to take him in his personal service. There were ten of them, and the king had to choose one from the ten, and the king gave in the hand of each one of them a cup of a very fragile glass, a thin glass, and asked the first one of them to throw it down, and he threw it down, and so it was with all the ten. And then he called one and said: "Why did you do this"? Each one answered: "Vlhy, because Your Majesty told me to do it"; "Because it was the command of Your Majesty"; "Because it was Your Majesty's desire". All nine of them answered in the same way. And there came the tenth, Aias, and the king asked: "Why did you do it"? He said: "I am sorry; I pray you, forgive me". The king said: "This is the one who has some sense. The others all repeated to me the same thing which I knew, but they said to me nothing new; this one has said something different". Let us take the same attitude before God and man. There is one man who says: "I have sinned, because you have given me power to sin; you are all power, all majesty; why did you give me that wish to sin? It is your fault". And there is another man who is sorry, who is sad, who repents, who kneels down and who says: "It is true, without your command nothing moves. You were all goodness, all power; I am sorry, I kneel down and ask forgiveness". There is a difference between these two persons. The difference is that one person has a thorny personality and the other is like the rose.

And then the story goes on that the king was so pleased with Aias for his wonderful help and attendance that he made him his treasurer, the one who would keep his precious jewels. In his change many men were against him, saying that a slave had been brought to such a position! And they went to the king and said: "He certainly robs; he certainly steals some jewels from the treasury-house. He goes there often and closes the doors and remains there for hours". The king said: "I cannot believe it" ... And when they insisted, the king replied: "I will see

for myself ". So a hole was made in the wall and he looked from the hole trying to see what he was doing. Aias went in the house, and closed the doors and opened the cupboard, and he took out from there the clothes which he wore as a slave. He kissed them and placed them to his eyes, and then he put them on and he looked in the mirror and said: " This is yourself; remember what you are, what you were; do not forget, Aias, that you were a slave; keep your modesty, your humility, your bumble manner; don't become drunken with this wordly position and power, for it is here one day and gone another. Be grateful to the one who has made you this; pray for him and appreciate what he has done for you, and thank God for all His gifts which you do not deserve ". After saying this in a sacred manner, he took off the clothes and put them in the cupboard. And the king was so impressed that he was waiting outside, and, as he came out, the king embraced him and said: " So long you were my treasurer, but from to-day you are my minister, for you have taught me the lesson of the right attitude towards God, the Only King of the whole Universe ".

It is in this way you can crush thorns every time they prick. You may say that you will not be the cause of unhappiness, you do not want to see your own being in the form of thorns, you want to be a rose that you may be a comfort and blessing to others. If there is anything in the spiritual teaching, if there is anything in finding truth, in self-realisation, it is the refining of the ego, because the same ego which begins to be a worst enemy, in the end, if developed and cultivated and refined, will become your best friend.

INAYAT KHAN.

