

## Awakening To Total Revolution

The following article is excerpted from Vimala Thakar's *Spirituality and Social Action: A Holistic Approach* (Berkeley: Vimala Programs California, 1984).

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In a time when the survival of the human race is in question, to continue with the status quo is to cooperate with insanity, to contribute to chaos. When darkness engulfs the spirit of the people, it is urgent for concerned people to awaken, to rise to revolution.

The cleverness of the human mind has led us to the complex, horrifying, and all-encompassing crisis that we now face. The familiar solutions, based on a limited view of what a human being is, continue to fail, to be pathetically inadequate. Yet we pour vast resources into these tired solutions and feel that if we achieve a grand enough scale, the old solutions will meet the new challenges. Do we have the courage to see failures as failures and leave them to the past? Do we have the vitality to go beyond narrow, one-sided views of human life and to open ourselves to totality and wholeness? The call of the hour is to move beyond the fragmentary, to awaken to total revolution.

The call is not to one of the revolutionary formulas of the past; they have failed—why drag them out again even in new regalia? The challenge now is to create an entirely new, vital revolution that takes the whole of life into its sphere. We have never dared embrace the whole of life in all its awesome beauty; we've been content to perpetuate fragments, invent corners where we feel conceptually secure and emotionally safe. We could have our safe little nooks and niches were it not for the terrible mess we have made by attempting to break the cosmic wholeness into bite-size bits. It's an ugly chaos we have created, and we try to remedy the complicated situation with the most superficial of patched-together cures.

Today, with the scars of our past failures marring our existence and the fears of the future weighing heavily on our spirits, we can no longer go on with this dangerous game of fragmentation. We can no longer escape the fact that we are all bonded, equal in wholeness. Science and technology have brought each of us into intimate relationship with all others. We are truly a global human family. Yet as a family, we have not learned how to live together in peace, to live without violence and exploitation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Bertrand Russell wrote: "Man knows how to fly in the air like a bird, he knows how to swim in water like the fish, but how to live among other human beings, he does not know."

### Penetrating to the Roots of Conflict

Even though our very survival is in question, we tend to look at the crisis superficially, emotionally, sentimentally. We have tried in subtle ways to absolve ourselves of any deep responsibility for the condition of the human family. We perceive ourselves, or our small identity groups, as truly sincere and peace-loving, and we ascribe to outsiders, to those apart, to power-hungry villains, responsibility for aggression and wars.

Yet as members of societies that are prepared for war, how can we set ourselves apart as peace-loving and the others as violent? This is, however, what we attempt to do. We see on the television or hear on the radio news about massacres and wars taking place in different countries, and we feel how stupid it is to wage war and wonder why the politicians and the statesmen don't have the wisdom to stop all this nonsense. This is the reaction perhaps of every sensitive citizen of the world. But who wages war? Where are the roots of war? Are they

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in the minds of a handful of individuals ruling over their respective countries? Or are the roots of war in the systems that we have created and have been living by for centuries—the economic, the political, the administrative, the industrial systems? If we are not romantic and sentimental, and do not feel gratified just by reacting emotionally, by expressing how bad the wars are, but rather go deep, won't we find the roots of war in the systems and structures that we have accepted?

We will discover that there are systems and structures that inevitably lead to aggression, exploitation, and war. We have accepted aggression as a way of living. We create and entrench ourselves in structures which culminate in wars. Retaining the structures and avoiding wars is not possible. You and I as individuals have to realize how we are responsible, how we cooperate with the systems and thereby participate in the violence and wars. And then we must begin to inquire whether we can discontinue cooperating with the systems, whether we can stop participating in wars, and explore alternative ways of living for ourselves.

We must go to the roots of the problem, to the core of the human psyche, recognizing that collective social action begins with action in individual life. We cannot separate the individual and the society. We each contain the society when we accept the value structure of society, when we accept the priorities worked out for us by governments and the states and the political parties. We are expressions of the collective, repeating the pattern created for us, and we feel happy because we are given physical security, economic security, comfort, leisure, entertainment. We have been trained to be obsessed with the idea of security; the idea of tomorrow haunts us much more than the responsibility for today.

### **Going Beyond Fragmentation**

If there is a willingness to face these unpleasant facts, and be with these facts, then we can proceed. If we enter into self-pity and depression, then negativity may lead to cynicism and bitterness against others and bitterness against the system. And releasing such negative energy does not help solve the problems. We have to stick with the facts as they are. Whether we like it or not, we are responsible participants in what is happening in the world.

If we sanction violence in our hearts, we are going to cooperate with whomever is waging war. We are participants because psychologically we sanction violence. If we really want to put an end to warfare, we need to explore deep into the human psyche where the roots of violence have a stronghold. Unless we find the roots of violence, ambition, and jealousy, we will not find our way out of chaos. Failure to eliminate their roots will doom us to endless miserable repetitions of the failures of the past. We must see that the inner and the outer are delicately intertwined in a totality and that we cannot deal with the one successfully without the other. The structures and systems condition the inner consciousness, and the conditionings of the consciousness create the structures and systems. We cannot carve out one part of the relationship, make it bright and beautiful, and ignore the rest. The forces of human societal conditionings are powerfully entrenched; they will not be ignored.

Traditionally, there have been two separate approaches. One approach takes us toward the social, the economic, the political problems, and says, "Look here, unless the economic and political problems are solved, there will be no happiness and no peace, there will be no end to suffering. It is the responsibility of every individual to engage in solving these problems according to some ideology. Turning toward the inner life, the imbalances and impurities of the inner life, that is not so important, that can be taken care of later on, for it is a self-centered, egoistic activity. But the responsibility is toward the society, toward the human race, so keep aside all those problems of meditation and silence, inner sophistication, transformation for inner revolution—keep all that aside. First turn toward this." And the other approach says, "The political and economic problems cannot be solved unless the individual is transformed totally. Be concerned with your psychological mutation, the inner, radical revolution. The political, the economic, the social problems can wait."

People have generally followed one or the other of these two conventional approaches: religious groups concerned with inner growth and inner revolution, and social activist groups concerned with social service. Traditionally we have created boundaries, and exploration beyond our home territories has been only superficial. The social activists have staked out their territory, the outer life—the socioeconomic, political structures—and the spiritual people have staked out theirs—the inner world of higher dimensions of consciousness, transcendental experiences, and meditation. The two groups, throughout history, have been contemptuous of each other. The social activists consider the spiritual inquirers to be self-indulgent, and the inquirers consider the activists to be caught in a race of activity, denying the essence of living. Traditional spiritual leaders have divided life into worldly and spiritual, and have insisted that the world is illusion. They said, "This world is *maya*, is an illusion. So whatever action you take should be in relation to the absolute truth and not in relation to *maya*." Thus a religious person sitting in meditation for ten hours a day need not mind the tyranny or the exploitation or the cruelties surrounding him. He would say, "That's not my responsibility. It's God's responsibility. God has created the world. He or She will take care of it."

There have been superficial blendings, as spiritual groups take up social service work and social activists join religious organizations, but a real integration of social action and spirituality at a deep, innovative level has not yet happened to any significant degree. The history of human development has been fragmentary, and the majority of people have been content with the fragmentation. It has the sanction of society. Each fragment of society has its own set of values. Among many social activists, anger, hatred, violence, bitterness, and cynicism are accepted norms, even though the effectiveness of these motivations for peaceful living has been seriously put in doubt. And indifference to the needs of the poor has had shocking acceptance among generations of spiritual people who considered higher states of consciousness much more significant than the misery of the starving millions.



A new challenge awaits us at the beginning of the twenty-first century: to go beyond fragmentation, to go beyond the incompatible sets of values held even by serious-minded people, to mature beyond the self-righteousness of one's accepted approaches and be open to total living and total revolution. In this era, to become a spiritual inquirer without social consciousness is a luxury that we can ill afford, and to be a social activist without a scientific understanding of the inner workings of the mind is the worst folly. Neither approach in isolation has had any significant success. There is no question now that an inquirer will have to make an effort to be socially conscious or that an activist will have to be persuaded of the moral crisis in the human psyche, the significance of being attentive to the inner life. The challenge awaiting us is to go much deeper as human beings, to abandon superficial prejudices and preferences, to expand understanding to a global scale, integrating the totality of living, and to become aware of the wholeness of which we are a manifestation.

As we deepen in understanding, the arbitrary divisions between inner and outer disappear. The essence of life, the beauty and grandeur of life, is its wholeness. Life in reality cannot be divided into the inner and the outer, the individual and social. We may make arbitrary divisions for the convenience of collective life, for analysis, but essentially any division between inner and outer has no reality, no meaning.

We have accepted the watertight compartments of society, the fragmentation of living as factual and necessary. We live in relationship to these fragments and accept the internalized divisions—the various roles we play, the contradictory value systems, the opposing motives and priorities—as reality. We are at odds

with ourselves internally; we believe that the inner is fundamentally different from the outer, that what is me is quite separate from the not-me, that divisions among people and nations are necessary, and yet we wonder why there are tensions, conflicts, wars in the world. The conflicts begin with minds that believe in fragmentation and are ignorant of wholeness.

A holistic approach is a recognition of the homogeneity and wholeness of life. Life is not fragmented; it is not divided. It cannot be divided into spiritual and material, individual and collective. We cannot create compartments in life—political, economic, social, environmental. Whatever we do or don't do affects and touches the wholeness, the homogeneity. We are forever organically related to wholeness. We are wholeness, and we move in wholeness. The awareness of oneness refuses to recognize separateness. So the holistic approach *de-recognizes* all the fragmentation in the name of religion or spirituality, all the compartmentalization in the name of social sciences, all the division in the name of politics, all the separation in the name of ideologies. When we understand the truth, we won't cling to the false. As soon as we recognize the false as the false, we no longer give any value to it. We de-recognize it in daily living. A psychic and psychological de-recognition of all manner of fragmentation is the beginning of positive social action.

When awareness of the totality, of wholeness, dawns upon the heart, and there is awareness of the relationship of every being to every other, then there is no longer any possibility of taking an exclusive approach to a fragment and getting stuck there. As soon as there is awareness of wholeness, every moment becomes sacred, every movement is sacred. The sense of oneness is no longer an intellectual connection. We will in all our actions be whole, total, natural, without effort. Every action or nonaction will have the perfume of wholeness.

### **Inner Freedom Is a Social Responsibility**

Viewing the world as a large pieced-together collection of fragments, some of which are labeled as friend and others as foe, begins internally. We map out our internal territories with the same positive or negative designations as we do external territories, and wars go on there as they do in the world. Internally, we are divided against ourselves; the emotions want one thing, the intellect another, the impulses of the body yet another, and a conflict takes place which is no different in quality, although it is in scale, from that of the world wars. If we are not related to ourselves in wholeness, is it any surprise that we cannot perceive the wholeness of the world? If we believe ourselves each to be a patched-together, unmatched assortment of desirable and undesirable features, motives at odds with each other, undigested beliefs and prejudices, fears, and insecurities, will we not project all this on the world?

Because the source of human conflict, social injustice, and exploitation is in the human psyche, we must begin there to transform society. We investigate the mind, the human psyche, not as an end in itself, as a self-centered activity, but as an act of compassion for the whole human race. We must move deep to the source of decay in society so that the new structures and social systems we design will have a sufficiently healthy root system that they will have an opportunity to flourish. The structures of society need to be transformed, but the hidden motivations and assumptions on which the structures rest need to be transformed as well. The individual and collective values and motives that give sanction to the injustice and exploitation of modern society must become the focus of change as much as the socioeconomic and political structures. We no longer will be able to allow the motivations and values that underlie personal and collective behavior to remain hidden and unexamined. It serves no lasting purpose for us to change the surface structures and behaviors while the deep foundations remain decadent and unsound.

Those of us who have dedicated our lives to social action have considered our personal morality and ethics, our motives and habits, to be private territory. We not only want our personal motivations and habits cut off from public view, but from our own recognition as well. But in truth, the inner life is not a private or personal thing; it's very much a social issue. The mind is a result of collective

human effort. There is not *your* mind and *my* mind; it's a *human* mind. It's a collective human mind, organized and standardized through centuries. The values, the norms, the criteria are patterns of behavior organized by collective groups. There is nothing personal or private about them. We may close the doors to our rooms and feel that nobody knows our thoughts, but what we do in so-called privacy affects the life around us. If we spend our days victimized by negative energies and negative thoughts, if we yield to depression, melancholia, and bitterness, these energies pollute the atmosphere. Where then is privacy? We need to learn, as a social responsibility, to look at the mind as something that has been created collectively and to recognize that our individual expressions are expressions of the human mind.

Inner freedom from the past, from the thought structure, from the organized, standardized collective mind, is absolutely necessary if we are to meet one another without mistrust or distrust, without fear, to look at each other spontaneously, to listen to one another without any inhibition whatsoever. The study of mind and the exploration of inner freedom is not something utopian, is not something self-centered, but it is urgently necessary so that we as human beings can transcend the barriers that regimentation of thought has created between us. Then we will perceive ourselves, each as an unlabeled human being; not an Indian, an American, a capitalist, or a communist—but as a human being, a miniature wholeness. We have not yet learned to do that. We are together on this small planet, and yet we cannot live together. Physically we are near one another, and psychologically we are miles apart. Clearly the social responsibility for arriving at inner freedom is a very relevant issue. We study the mind because we want the harmony of peace to prevail, because we need the joy of love in our hearts, because we care about the quality of life our children will inherit. We do not undertake such study because we want something new and esoteric for the ego, some transcendental experiences to enhance our self-image. We study the mind as a social responsibility; we recognize that the roots of violence, injustice, exploitation, and greed are in the human psyche, and we turn our clear, precise, objective attention there.

We are related organically, and we have to live that relationship. To be attentive to the dynamics of the inner being is not creating a network of escapes to avoid responsibility. It is not continuing a false superiority that I am sensitive and you are not. It is simply recognizing that our personal relationships and collective relationships are miserable affairs, and that these relationships stimulate fear and anxieties and throw us on the defensive. However much we yearn for peace, emotionally we are not mature enough for peace, and our immaturity affects everything we do, every action we take, even the most worthy of actions.

The elimination of inner disorder takes place in the lives of those who are interested in being truly creative, vital, and passionate whole human beings, and who recognize that inner anarchy and chaos drains energy and manifests in shabby, shoddy behavior in society. To be attentive requires tremendous love of living. It is not for those who choose to drift through life or for those who feel that charitable acts in society justify ugly inward ways of being. The total revolution we are examining is not for the timid or the self-righteous. It is for those who love truth more than pretense. It is for those who sincerely, humbly want to find a way out of this mess that we, each one of us, have created out of indifference, carelessness, and lack of moral courage.

### **The Choice Is Ours**

Most of us are not aware of our motivations for living or our priorities for action. We drift with the tides of societal fashions, floating in and out of social concerns at the whim of societal dictates and on the basis of images created by the media or superficial, personal desires to be helpful, useful persons. We are used to living at the surface, afraid of the depths, and therefore our actions and concerns about humanity are shallow, fragile vessels easily damaged. Ultimately most of us are concerned chiefly with our small lives, our collection of sensual pleasures, our personal salvation, and our anxiety about sickness and death, rather than the misery created by collective indifference and callousness.

We have reached the point, however, where we no longer have the luxury to

indulge in self-centered comfort and personal acquisition or to escape into religious pursuits at the cost of collective interests. For us there can be no escape, no withdrawal, no private arena in which we can turn our backs on the sorrows of humanity, saying, "I am not responsible. Others have created a mess; let them mend it." The writing on the world's wall is plain: "Learn to live together or in separateness you die!" The choice is ours.

The world today forces us to accept, at least intellectually, our oneness, our interrelatedness. And more and more people are awakening to the urgency of arresting the accelerating madness around us. As yet, however, our ways of responding are superficial, unequal to the complexities of the challenge. We do not take or even consider actions that threaten our security or alter our habitual ways of drifting through life. If we continue to live carelessly, indifferently, emphasizing private gain and personal indulgence, we are essentially opting for the suicide of humanity.

We can become involved in many acts of social service, according to our resources, without ever moving one inch from the center of our private interests; in fact, the very act of social service typically enhances self-image and self-centeredness. But we cannot become involved in true social action, which strikes at the roots of problems in the society and in the human psyche, without moving away from ego-centered motivation. We must look deep into the network of personal motivations and discover what our priorities are. Our yearning for peace must be so urgent that we are willing to free ourselves from the immaturity of ego-centered action, willing to grow into the sane maturity required to face the complex challenges that affect our existence. If we are motivated by desire for acceptance either by the dominant culture or the counterculture, clarity of right action and passion of precise purpose will not be there. We may be praised for our contributions, but unless there is a deep awareness of the essence of our lives, a penetrating clarity about the meaning of human existence, our contributions will not penetrate to the roots of human misery.

To be ready for social responsibility, we will have to be mercilessly honest with ourselves. Wherever we are, we are responsible to resist injustice, to be willing to put our comforts, securities, our lives at stake in fearless non-cooperation with injustice and exploitation. If we adopt all the habit patterns of the enslaved—the fear, the acceptance of tyranny, the intellectual and emotional blindness to injustice—we deserve the inevitable consequences that are descending upon us in a dark storm cloud. If we are submissive, clinging to our small islands of security, naturally terror will reign. If we are willing to allow all others to perish—the peoples of other countries, races, castes, cultures, religions; the other creatures of the earth—so that we may flourish and endlessly increase our network of pleasures and comforts, obviously we are doomed to rot and decay. The callousness of letting others be abused so that our petty little lives will be undisturbed, so that all the comforts of a lovely home, pleasant meals, and good entertainment will not be threatened, portends doom for us all.

When we come face-to-face with the actualities of human and planetary suffering, what does the powerful moment of truth do to us? Do we retreat into the comforts of theories and defense mechanisms, or are we awakened at the core of our being? Awareness of misery, without defense structures, will naturally lead to action. The heart cannot witness misery without calling the being to action, without activating the force of love. We may not act on a global or national scale; it may be only on a community or neighborhood scale—but act, respond, we must. Social responsibility flowers naturally when we perceive the world without the involvement of the ego-consciousness. When we relate *directly* to suffering, we are led to understanding and spontaneous action—but when we perceive the world through the ego, we are cut off from direct relationship, from communion that stirs the deepest level of our being.

### **The Force of Love Is the Force of Total Revolution**

A tender, loving concern for all living creatures will need to arise and reign in our hearts if any of us is to survive. And our lives will be truly blessed only when the misery of one is genuinely felt to be the misery of all. The force of love is the

force of total revolution. It is the unreleased force, unknown and unexplored as a dynamic for change.

We have moved very far away from love in our collective lives, dangerously near destruction, close to starvation. Perhaps we have the wisdom now, the awareness that love is as essential to human beings as the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Love is the beauty, the delicate mystery, the soul of life, the radiant unspoiled purity that brings spontaneous joy, songs of ecstasy, poems, paintings, dances, dramas to celebrate its indescribable, never-to-be-fully-captured bliss of being. Can we bring love into the marketplaces, into the homes, the schools, the places of business, and transform them completely? You may call it a utopian challenge, but it is the only one that will make a significant difference or that is fully worthy of the potential of whole human beings.

Compassion is a spontaneous movement of wholeness. It is not a studied decision to help the poor, to be kind to the unfortunate. Compassion has a tremendous momentum that naturally, choicelessly moves us to worthy action. It has the force of intelligence, creativity, and the strength of love. Compassion cannot be cultivated; it derives neither from intellectual conviction nor from emotional reaction. It is simply there when the wholeness of life becomes a fact that is truly lived.

Compassion does not manifest itself when we live on the surface of existence, when we try to piece together a comfortable life out of easily available fragments. Compassion requires a plunge to the depths of life—where oneness is reality and divisions merely an illusion. If we dwell at the superficial layers of being, we'll be overly conscious of the apparent differences in human beings on the physical and mental level, and of the superficial difference in cultures and behavior. If we penetrate to the essentials, however, we will discover that there is nothing fundamental that differentiates any human being from another, or any human being from any other living creature. All are manifestations of life, created with the same life principles and nurtured by the same life-support systems. Oneness is absolute reality; differentiation has only transitory, relative reality.

It is not sufficient that a few in society penetrate to the depths of living and offer fascinating accounts about the oneness of all beings. What is necessary in these critical times is that all sensitive and caring people make a personal discovery of the fact of oneness and allow compassion to flow in their lives. When compassion and realization of oneness becomes the dynamic of human relationship, then humankind will evolve.

We are suffering throughout the world in the darkness of the misery we have created. By believing in the fragmentary and the superficial, we have failed to live together in peace and harmony, and so darkness looms very large on the horizon. It's in such darkness that common people such as you and I feel the urgency to go deeper, to abandon superficial approaches that are inadequate and to activate the creative forces available to each of us as expressions of wholeness. The vast intelligence that orders the cosmos is available to all. The beauty of life, the wonder of living, is that we share creativity, intelligence, and unlimited potential with the rest of the cosmos. If the universe is vast and mysterious, we are vast and mysterious. If it contains innumerable creative energies, we contain innumerable creative energies. If it has healing energies, we also have healing energies. To realize that we are not simply physical beings on a material planet, but that we are whole beings, each a miniature cosmos, each related to all of life in intimate, profound ways, should radically transform how we perceive ourselves, our environments, our social problems. Nothing can ever be isolated from wholeness.

There is much unexplored potential in each human being. We are not just flesh and bone or an amalgamation of conditionings. If this were so, our future on this planet would not be very bright. But there is infinitely more to life, and each passionate being who dares to explore beyond the fragmentary and superficial into the mystery of totality helps all humanity perceive what it is to be fully human. Revolution, total revolution, implies experimenting with the impossible. And when an individual takes a step in the direction of the new, the impossible,

the whole human race travels through that individual.

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