

BENEVOLENCE

(DIARY LEAVES)

BY PROF. NICHOLAS DE ROERICH

When one remembers Bhagawân Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and all the leaders of the Ramakrishna Mission and its centres, there always comes to mind the concept of Benevolence. Benevolence is a powerful word. Both its constituent parts presuppose an accumulation of blissful force. *Bene* means the Good in its entire constructive sense. *Volence*, volition, is the power of thought and will. And when this immense high might is directed towards the upliftment of humanity, it represents the true essence of the Sri Ramakrishna movement. In this movement there is revealed so much of direct self-sacrificing labour. Precisely there is a constant benefaction, untiringly and gloriously penetrating into the hearts.

All these good words are easily pronounced but for the ordinary person it is not easy to manifest them in life. The very thought, the art of thinking, requires education and training. And only in the process of good-doing does Benevolence receive its vital significance. In the same good-doing is created a better future. This is not a truism, on the contrary, at present all nations should exercise the art of thinking in this direction. Let us beware that somewhere instead of benefaction there should not appear the ugly grimace of malefaction.

People sometimes think about the future, yet very often it does not enter at all into vital deliberations. Indeed, it is not entirely within human forces to determine the future, but each one

should strive for it with all his consciousness. And not to a beclouded future should one aspire but to precisely a better future. In this striving will already be the pledge of success.

On days of solemnity prayer is uplifted about the future. No misty abstractions does it affirm. In it are expressed three principles; realization of that which is most Lofty, building of world peace, and benevolence, as the fundamentals of existence. Without these three bases, construction is impossible; yet they must not be promised abstractly, but in their full and indefer-able reality. It would seem that the third mentioned principle ought to be the most ordinary feature of every day life. Only benevolence! Only goodwill and altruism! For whom? Why, for people themselves. For those with whom the task has been set to pass over this field of life.

It is a fact that no deep studies and instructions are needed for benevolence. It would seem that it is already presupposed at each human encounter. Can it be possible to draw near to any human being without fundamental goodwill? How, is it possible to meet the neighbour with hatred or suspicion, even with plotted villainy? Where then, in what sort of Covenants, written or unwritten, have malice and suspicion been ordained?

“Man is a wolf to man”. Surely this is one of the most malignant aphorisms. For, so much results from auto-suggestion. If one hears from the cradle about good, then it too will surely

remain a guiding principle. Even all the confusions of corrupted life will not eradicate the concept of good. Where man has been accustomed to live in good, there he values all the remarkable significance of the word benevolence. Surely this word is very imperative. Volition, formulated will . . . this is already something accomplished, done!

Volition cannot be only instinctive. It is promoted in full consciousness, in full responsibility. Perhaps each state council ought to be opened with the important question: "Is there benevolence?" And he who remains silent should take no part. It will probably be said that precisely the malicious will themselves cry out about benevolence. And here too an imprint of the human radiations would show the truth.

Heart radiations will show the true feelings, without the mask of insincerity. How mottled will be the radiations of the false, the insincere! The man who has not pondered upon the deep significance of benevolence will not often understand in general what is being spoken about here! Why underline words known to all and which moreover have never improved anything? Of course such monstrous opinions are possible.

Not seldom a vendor cries out something very useful, absolutely without thinking about the meaning of the words uttered by him. Does a scribe often know the contents of what he has copied? Sometimes even one who reads aloud to another thus frees himself, as it were, from understanding of what he reads. In such a manner, often the most valuable and urgent considerations become meaningless words.

Is a better future possible without benevolence, without benevolence in all its solemnly imperative meaning? What sort of peace will there be on earth without benevolence? And

where will be the "glory in the highest" without profound and unceasing desire for good?

A better future. You must be better today than yesterday. If there is no longing for this, then surely from that which is most important and already ordained only a negligible fraction remains. All the great signs may be in readiness. But if there be no desire for the sake of good to follow them, then what part of them will be perceptibly carried out? Who then has the right to vitiate or belittle that which has been composed by great paths? Surely this is no empty dreaming but the responsibility of the messenger.

Even a simple postman, in twilight and in darkness proceeds with caution in order not to stumble, in order that a branch may not lash him in the eye, in order to avoid wild beasts. Yet, he bears someone else's letter about which he knows nothing. When, then, man thinks about the future, when he takes into consideration all its conditions and all good wishes, how much more strivingly and carefully does he proceed, ready and alert. He proceeds vigilant and imbued with feeling. He makes haste in order not to pilfer an ordained hour, and in his heart sound glory in the Highest, and peace on earth, and benevolence for his neighbour.

Benevolence needs to be taught. Peace needs to be established. With every palpitation of the heart one should be enraptured by glory in the Highest!

Examples of the creation of a better future may be drawn from various domains. One of them has remained in memory from early school years.

We were all tremendously impressed by the story of Schliemann—the noted investigator of Troy. We were all entranced by how he from early years set

himself to the task of future researches and how he began to prepare himself in all branches of learning. How he tenaciously enriched himself with knowledge, yet at the same time and just as perseveringly, he amassed a fortune. Of course he maturely thought out all the resources which he would need.

After many years of conscious labour, he brought to science his precious offering, and remained the forefather of many brilliant investigators coming after him. One can imagine how in his time the business men shrugged their shoulders at the scholarly tasks of Schliemann. Likewise one can see how other scholars probably not once labelled him as an amateur, and made fun of his undertakings. Yet with originality and persistence he composed his own scientific future.

That which for another would have been attainment was for Schliemann only a means which had an applied relative value. In so many years of conscious labour is a large share of selflessness.

One can find in the history of the world many examples of such self-

sacrificing attainments. But why dig in ancient annals, when in our age we have the glorious examples of the lives of Bhagawân Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. In them is manifested the highest blissful benefaction and a lionine striving into a better future. And in what simple all-penetrating words were expressed their outlines of spiritual unfoldment. May everyone be blessed, who can speak of the Good in simple words. All the heaps of evil thoughts have deviated humanity from simplicity and constructive work. Every day people are accustomed to witness destructions and murders. It is shocking with what indifference people imbue the abhorrent stories, which altogether do not befit humanity. With every day these horrors and cruel-heartedness grow. Every place, where the word Benevolence is affirmed, becomes a true shrine and stronghold of a better future.

Thus again let us recall the beautiful word Benevolence. Verily, the conscious creators of a better future are filled with true Benevolence.

RICHARD MULCASTER AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF MODERN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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Richard Mulcaster, an Englishman, lived about 1582 to 1611 A.D. Scion of an ancient and honourable border family he was educated at Eton, Cambridge, and Oxford. He was appointed the first Headmaster of the famous Merchant Taylor's School in London. Here he carried on a successful work for twenty-five years. Later he was made Headmaster of the equally

famous St. Paul's School, in which position he continued for upwards of twelve years or until a few years before his death. Due to his work in these schools and to his educational writings Mulcaster came to be regarded as one of the foremost educators of his day.

Mulcaster's fame as a writer rests chiefly on two educational works the first of which, his *Positions*, appeared