

CONVERSION

We all need the experience of conversion. What is conversion, what does it mean? Conversion is usually taken to mean changing from one set of beliefs or one religion to another, but this is not the way the great teachers have explained it. Most of us are born to a religion, yet the fact we are born to a certain religion does not mean we believe in God, it does not mean we believe in truth, it means only that we are born to a certain religion. In the world today many religions have become a business, they have become a political party, a way to bring a specific group together, imposing the will of some in that group on the rest. This is what is often called religion today, it is often what religions do in this world.

The experience of conversion, according to the wisdom of saintly beings, is something other than that. Conversion means coming to the point where we realize we need God in our life. No matter what religion we are born to, we now take the position that we choose God instead of the world, we take that step, a step which lies beyond what the world has given us, what the world has supplied us with, what the world says is correct. We step into a place where we say there is something else, I need to know what this something else is.

At this level of consciousness, a place where we no longer find answers with our intellect, where we know something else is going on in our heart which is not being responded to, which is not being answered, we know that we need answers, we need heart answers, not mind answers because all the answers or directions from the mind have not

led to satisfaction, to peace in the heart. This is a conversion, an experience in which we leave the understanding we have been fed and strike out on our own.

There is a scriptural observation which tells us there can be no compulsion in religion. This means two things: first, we cannot force someone to be religious in the way we want them to be, and second, it is impossible. Not only should we not try to force people, it is impossible to force them. We might be able to force them outwardly, but they alone know what is going on inwardly, the only place where something actually happens. When we make this decision to step into the religion of the heart, the melting heart, the open heart, religion becomes valid.

No one can take anyone else to God. Others can assist us, they can point things out to us, explain things to us, nurture us, fertilize us, water us, but we have to do the work because we want to. If we resist it is not going to happen. We are involved in the process of growth, we have to be the same kind of active ingredient in this process as the genetic materials of a seed which make it develop as an oak, a sycamore or a pine. The seed is an active ingredient in its own growth, it is not only the fertilizer and water fed to it, it is not only the soil it is planted in. Well inside us, God has planted a piece of Himself which is waiting to grow.

Here is a little story with an interesting point. Certain fields of rice were owned by some poor people and by one rich man. The rich man bribed those who brought the water to put more on his field than on the others; he also bribed those who fertilized the fields to put more fertilizer on his fields. This meant his fields were much greener than all the others, but he forgot that the same water and fertilizer which nurture the rice nurture other seeds as well. His fields were greener because he had more weeds, the things which make

the rice grow also make weeds grow. We have to be very careful to know what we are growing, we also have to be careful what we use to make it grow, understanding that merely because something looks green, it does not mean it is rice. We may look attractive to the world, but this does not mean the true seed inside us is germinating or maturing, providing the mechanism for growth, the movement for growth.

We have to determine what is truth and what is a lie, then take a stand on the side of truth. We must position ourselves on the side of truth, we must align ourselves with truth. This understanding is natural for us because when we come close to the truth it resonates. If we are free, if we are not bound by the passions of separation and hatred we can resonate with truth, but when we are caught up in passion, in the heat of hatred, the heat of this is mine not yours, or the heat of I have to have this, it means we cannot have truth, we are cut off from it, we have cut ourselves off from the qualities which understand truth. These qualities of separation and a sense of differences cannot understand the truth because they do not belong to it. We have to change, we have to live in a place where truth can be understood. This involves the experience of conversion.

But one such experience is not enough, we need these experiences throughout the day, a reason why we pray at different times during each day. As we are affected by the world our intention wanes, our intention becomes weaker, we are beaten down by the hypnotic illusions, the magnetism of the world, the constant shout, I am real, I am real, accept me, accept me. We have to withdraw to understand what is real. Every time we set our intention to pray or meditate we go through that experience of conversion again.

What does it mean to set our intention, to make it firm? To set an intention to pray means dropping the world, entering God's space, saying now I intend to believe less in

the world, to believe more in God, my intention is to step closer to reality and leave illusion behind. I need to wash away all this illusion I bathe in continually. Not only do we need to wash in water, we also need to wash in an intention which cleanses us. Cleansing is a necessity in our lives, all the green on the fields of rice which is not rice, all those weeds have to be pulled out, this is the inner cleansing we have to do. We have to do this, we cannot have someone else pull out our weeds, we have to do this for ourselves because no one else knows where to find them.

The only one who knows all our secrets, except God, is ourselves, and we therefore have a choice. We can either keep our secrets, try to hide them and be hypocritical, or be honest and say I have two aspects to myself. I am one part weeds and another part which needs to be nurtured, which can grow if the weeds are removed. Then we have to begin the process of removing the weeds, we have to start this process of cleansing our being. When we do this we change, we step away from yours and mine, from separations and a sense of differences, we move into inclusivity, my heart melts and we are united that way. All the good things I see in myself I can see in you, I know they are shared, I know they are not different, I know there is no separation between us.

The happiness I feel for you is the happiness I feel for myself. If I cannot feel happiness for you I do not really know how to feel happiness myself, I do not understand what happiness is if my happiness and my understanding of happiness are limited to myself. The truth of joy is that it is not limited, if we try to limit joy and separate it into sections, this is not the realm of joy, it is the world of separations and differences, a world which does not belong to God, it belongs somewhere else; at that time we belong somewhere else. We have to decide which club we are going to join, remembering that

God's club includes everyone, no one is excluded, there are no entrance requirements and no entrance fees. He offers the same thing to everyone.

Consider the protection a woman's body affords the embryo. We are in God's body, we are provided for like an embryo. Can we offer everything to each other without discrimination, without expectation, can we become that kind of being? When we become that kind of being what happens to us, who do we become, how does it change the world? If there is to be peace in the world, if there is to be peace among humankind it will happen when individuals make this change, when it becomes evident as they walk down the street that there is something different about them, that when they walk past we feel soothed, we feel as if a burden has been taken from us in their presence.

And what has happened to them? They have entered a vibratory state aligned with God which brings God close to us. When we meet one of these people who bring God close to us, when we have the appropriate intention and behavior we align ourselves with that vibration. This will not happen from the top down, with an order issued by some person insisting we align ourselves with God. It will not happen that way, it will happen from the bottom up. As people begin to align with God that vibration, that peace, that clarity becomes more common within society, and as it becomes more available it spreads, it spreads one person at a time. The only one we are responsible for is ourselves. God is responsible for everyone else, but we have to make that seed grow.