

The Outlook of Charity

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Charity is often associated with giving in some way and not of giving-in, in some way. The act of giving is sometimes felt as a loss of sorts—something that was mine but now has been given away. This is neither giving nor charity. A timeless rule has been that the right hand must not even know what the left hand is doing.

Swami Sivananda writes that thought is real action. When the idea of giving arises in the mind, that which is to be given is no longer your property and you have no claim to it or its usage. If you are sincere in giving, the thought of how it will be appreciated or used should never enter into your mind at all. Besides, that which is to be given is no longer yours and is eager for the physical giving to complete the cycle of stewardship.

When the business mentality takes grip, we lose our sense of being natural—of being truly human in all its possibilities. Nature has natural reciprocity built in; why do we need to season this with the spice of greed? In the book, ‘Symbiosis: An Introduction to Biological Associations’, the author says, “The term ‘mutualism’ describes any relationship between individuals of different species where both individuals derive a benefit.” Various biological life-forms are aware of this and live naturally without individual fear, which is based solely on greed.

The giving of food, clothing and money are only preparations for the real charity which must come, as charity is a mechanism of evolution. When the outlook of charity takes root within, one realizes that giving is a mechanism to blur the lines of separation between us, others and all of creation. This is very different from the giving of things or even lavish gifts to others. In real charity, we are not the givers, so to say, but the recipients of inner expansion—expansion of being. As long as the shrewd calculating mind works, even in giving, there is no giving. Considering tax benefits and other financial gains while giving is business, not giving. Giving anything less than the best or of real value is only housecleaning.

Giving begins when you give spontaneously, without any calculation or expectation at all. What is given should be most valuable and useful to you, not something old that you wish to get rid of; neither should there be any expectation in any form at all. You do not give yourself or your children junk; neither do you expect things when giving to your closest kith and kin. This is why they feel close—as you give to these ‘close ones’ as you would give to yourself. This spirit has to pervade in giving to others who are not ‘ours’ so that they feel they are ‘ours’ by continued acts of spontaneous charity without any expectation.

You are the world’s and the world is yours—you are the world. If personal motive and calculation enter into charity, how do you plan to blur the lines of separation? Gradually, after continual acts

of real giving, you feel inspired to give ideas that seem to separate you from all mentally. These are the soft walls of personality, comfort and security—harder to give, as it seems that selfhood itself is anchored to the inner buoy.

The mind and heart are trained to give up exclusivity in all its forms, and the personality recoils under the return of cudgeling blows center mass. Real charity only begins when these blows are felt. Giving has to be felt in the core of your being as if a large part of you is being given away, as if you will be markedly less—though you will not be. The balance sheet may show this marked financial decrease, but the paper of the computer screen is not the only balance sheet. There is another sheet called the spreadsheet—expansion of being by continual acts of real charity spread the little fabric of our personality wider, and this is getting—not giving.

The outlook of charity gives way to others' points of view if they are valid without concession to one's own. Any point of view that is more valid—is the right one. 'My point of view' is only one point of view and my opinion is only one opinion. You are as sincere in listening to others as you are to your own thoughts and ideas. Gradually, the air of superiority begins to thin and there is immense joy as you realize that your thoughts and ideas are not exclusively yours and the thoughts and ideas of others can be yours too. The 'yoursness' begins to vaporize and you feel your presence in others and gradually—everywhere.

Others' opinions often reveal your own ego and you see exactly where the walls of self-imprisonment are. The outlook of charity is eager to give away whatever seems to vector back the self-centered personality. The ego is very subtle, but ongoing vigilance will reveal the footprint of the ego by its workings. The portals of action for the ego are both physical and mental. They rise in the mind first, and then overpowering wisdom, make their presence known to you through physical action. If you do not see it rising in the mind, you will know its effects as it dances in the world—not by the actions but by the consequences of the actions—if you are inwardly awake.

The adventure of charity is a rough climb because through things of value, you are trying to offload the owner. Whatever surges within, its opposite is given away. When anger surges within, unconditional forgiveness is instantly given; when meanness surges, full-hearted acts of kindness are poured forth, and on it goes. Let the old self rise; transform the energy through its opposite counterpart and there is continual evolution. You feel yourself becoming new through giving— isn't this getting? You are getting a new you by giving away an old, limited you—and this is wonderful. Trading your old clunker for a brand new efficient car is a crude example with a few parallels, though to the point in substance.

You are not the most important person in your life anymore. Life itself acts *through* you and when self-importance drops, there is immense joy as you feel yourself everywhere at the same time.

Are you prepared to give up self-importance in all its forms? Are you ready, finally, for charity of the self?

Real charity is charity of the self—the giving away of all limitations for the fullest expansion—freedom! Through what is yours, you give up ‘yoursness’, but the giving has to take hold as a need felt for your own highest good. How can you call giving up of limitations, ‘giving’?

The attitude of charity is requisite for the experience of real joy and happiness. There is no security in things—whatever you have, has you. There is security in feeling your presence everywhere. The great Brihadaranyaka Upanishad tells us, “When there is other, there is fear”. For real happiness, comfort and security—exclusivity, which manufactures otherness, must be given up. In real giving, there is real getting and the outlook of charity shows you how. To give is to live!

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