

Overcoming separateness

Eknath Easwaran, from *The Compassionate Universe*

Our age has been called the age of anger, and it is true that we are living in one of the most violent periods in history. But there is no reason for anybody to be left to the mercy of these storms, whether they be physical or verbal, whether they happen on the streets, on the battlefield, or in the home. Meditation and the allied disciplines enable you to take your convictions deeper and deeper into consciousness, so that they become a constant source of strength and security – even when you are severely challenged or threatened.

Whatever your field of activity, this is a most valuable asset. Life does not always throw roses; sometimes it throws tomatoes, or even hefty bricks. Today someone praises you, tomorrow they will blame you. Today your friends appreciate you, tomorrow the same friends will deprecate you – that is the nature of the world.

Life as a trust

But if your convictions and your desire to love are established deep in your consciousness, your conduct will not be influenced by anger or the desire to retaliate. At the depths, you will be unaffected when others are hostile to you, so you will be free to respond in a way that helps both them and yourself. It is not that you will not suffer or be hurt, but you will no longer get afraid and try to run away. You will feel the grief of others deeply, but you will also have the resources to help them.

The more you look upon your life as a trust for the benefit of others, the less complicated – and the more effective and satisfying – your work and relationships will become. For most of us, dealing with other people is a very laborious process. “If I do this, is he going to like me?” “If I don’t do this, how is she going to react?”

Dwelling on ourselves like this exhausts us and undermines our security. Those who keep on thinking about *their* own needs, *their* wants, *their* plans, *their* ideas cannot help becoming lonely and insecure. The simple but effective technique I recommend is to learn to put other people first – beginning within the circle of your family and friends, where there is already a basis of love to build on. When husband and wife try to put each other first, for example, they are not only moving closer to each other; they are also removing the boundaries that separate them from the rest of life, which deepens their relationships with everyone else as well.

How much can I give

By putting the welfare of those around you first, you will gradually find it natural to focus your energy and creativity into a single sharp beam: how much can I give to those around me? Instead of asking “How much will I get?” or “What will they think of me?” your only question will be, “How much can I contribute to this situation?” The trustee’s motto is “I give, therefore I am.”

Sometimes I picture the mind as a freeway with many wide lanes leading to loneliness and despair – lanes like anger, greed, and fear. On the other side of the freeway, there is just one narrow lane that heads toward peace and a healthy earth: the lane of love.