

totally different relationship and way of living.

We have already listened to some words pointing to the basic cause of humanity's problems: 'It is neither Nature nor an imaginary Deity that has to be blamed, but human nature made vile by *selfishness*.' Selfishness is the cause of all mankind's difficulties. The fundamental change is therefore from selfishness, which is also self-centeredness, self-preoccupation and so forth, to a state of sympathy, harmony and unity, where other people's well-being is realized to be of as much, if not of more, importance than one's own. Some may know this theoretically, although millions of people will not even accept it as a valid theoretical proposition. Part of our work as members of the Society is to use all the reasoning, literature, philosophy, devotional methods, discussions, the example of our lives, everything – to show the validity of this fact. When the inner condition changes from self-centeredness to a realization of unity the world will change.

Again I would like to quote a brief sentence from *The Mahatma Letters*: 'The term "Universal Brotherhood" is no idle phrase ... It is the only secure foundation of universal morality.' Let us examine a little what we mean by selfishness. Because we are not aggressively selfish people, we tend to be fairly contented with ourselves. We see that people who are crudely ambitious, cruel, etc. wreak havoc in the world and we look at them as the culprits. We are on the whole nice people – only on the whole – and so we do not regard selfishness as a problem, perhaps even an evil, within us. But let us try to see the selfishness inside without a feeling of guilt. Guilt is unnecessary; all of us are selfish. Not one of us is exempt.

Self-centeredness can be very subtle. We must become aware that even in relationships with people who are close to us – the family, children, parents, a friend for whom we have affection there is still a barrier. That person is always the 'other' and I am 'myself'. This is also selfishness. The other person's body is of course different, but why need the mind regard everything as 'other' - human beings, animals, trees and even the earth. Human relationships are the most complicated. Plants do not cross us. Even the poor animals cannot really set themselves against us. They have no chance. But other human beings do. We cannot wipe them out as we do the animals and plants, unless we go to war.