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Giving or giving in?

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Giving makes us feel good, but giving in does not. It implies that we're doing so because of fear or force

Giving is part of our daily living, an important part of relating to others. We give people a book, a glance, a meal, a ride, etc. At an emotional level, we may give ourselves to them. Such giving expresses who we are, what we think and what we feel. In close relationships, emotional giving becomes intense and is an intricate part of relating. It involves not only a deeper sharing but also a deeper level of commitment.

The act of self-giving is an act of love; an act of will and choice. There can be tender feelings, warmth and abundance in self-giving. One of the characteristics of genuine self-giving is a deep sense of satisfaction and peace.

Yet when we speak of 'giving in,' it has an entirely different meaning. Giving in is a negative act. It connotes resentment, being forced to do something we are unwilling to do and so on. When we give in we may do so out of fear. Thus giving in has a flavour totally different from the willingness and conviction of giving. 'Giving in' sabotages intimacy and leads to false and superficial closeness. It may solve a problem temporarily but in the long run such peace and conformity only creates emotional conflict and thwarts relationships. Layers of resentment accumulate as a result of one's giving in.

To solve this we have to transform 'giving in' into 'giving'. Such a transformation involves the individual's ability to change attitude. For example, I may not want to go shopping yet when my wife desires it I tell her "I do not want to go yet I respect your need and I will come with you." This transforms giving in into giving. Dealing with obvious or hidden mechanisms of 'giving in' is part of emotional and spiritual growth. It means being able to live with fullness, with the consciousness of the choices we make and the willingness to extend ourselves for the sake of another. The ability to distinguish 'giving in' and 'giving' can make a significant difference in the type of person we become and the type of relationships we form.

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