

19 November 1973

READING 8

Old habits of thought die hard. Whenever we are advised to 'forsake all worry about the past and the future and make a good use of the present', then the personality begins to argue back. The following short dialogue at the Guyatts' new meeting in Chepstow Place is typical of what goes on in most of us. Here Mr. Martin speaks with the familiar voice of personality, while Sarah Stuart uses the quiet voice of wisdom:

Mr. Martin. Does that mean you are absolutely fatalistic if you give up thinking of past and future? This would make one an utter failure. If one is a householder living in this age one *must* be worried about it, particularly if one is conscious of one's surroundings.

Sarah Stuart. There is a great difference between practical planning and worrying.

Mr. Martin. But there must be a dividing line between action and inaction.

There is confusion here because of the different approach required in our practical life (the 'market place'), and the quiet periods in the day when we go inward to the 'treasury' for refreshment. We follow the Shankaracharya's lead in advising that, in the conduct of our daily life, we should always take the *reasonable* line, picking the course of action which, on the evidence, seems the best one. Worry about the past or fears for the future, are part of the dream world which prevents us choosing that reasonable response to the demands of each moment.

I commend to you one of those salty Scots fables of Robert Louis Stevenson:

A man met a lad weeping. 'What do you weep for?' he asked. 'I am weeping for my sins,' said the lad. 'You must have little to do,' said the man,

The next day they met again. Once more the lad was weeping. 'Why do you weep now?' asked the man. 'I am weeping because I have nothing to eat,' said the lad.

'I thought it would come to that,' said the man.

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DOUBTS

While reason must be operative all through life's problems, recommendations for the Spiritual life (which must run concurrently) often appear unreasonable. Here the advice (also quoted in Reading 7): 'We should never entertain a doubt', is of the greatest importance to success. This is an age of scepticism and doubts, and with regard to material progress those may be justifiable, though it is better to observe dispassionately what goes on. But, what must never be doubted, is the existence in each of us of a Conscious Being who can be approached individually for guidance within the Spiritual realm, if one only remembers to ask, and asks humbly and repeatedly.

The following instructions personally received last February, should be committed to memory and brought into the mind whenever a doubt tries to creep in:

You want to know what exactly, from all the discourses you have had with me so far, is the most important for you today? My difficulty is that, unless I can recall all you asked and all I said in reply, I cannot be in a position to say that. Roughly, however, it may suffice to indicate that the gist of all that should be:

- a) Physically, you devote yourself to universal service, considering yourself everyone's servant.
- b) Emotionally, you give importance to the Supreme Power, keeping in mind its unlimited benevolence.
- c) Intellectually, you identify yourself as One with Param-Atman, who witnesses everything and shows Himself in all the forms you see.

In medieval times this doubting habit of mind was called 'the devil' on the model of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, and it is – the very devil! But of our own making. His Holiness treats such habits with less respect. There is a story (re-told in *A Lasting Freedom*) of a man who went to an expert to be instructed in meditation, but was first asked to recall anything he had seen on the way. When he said he could only remember seeing a monkey in a tree making silly and offensive gestures, he was told to go and get the monkey out of his mind; but failed completely.

On a later visit, I asked His Holiness more about this story because this kind of thing seemed to be happening much too often! His reply throws light on these questions we have just been discussing, such as how the mind can become refreshed by shedding the burdens it is carrying unnecessarily:

When the student expressed his inability to get the monkey out of his mind, his teacher pointed out that this is just the nature of our existence, namely that whatever is taken in by the mind stays there, emerging at awkward moments to cause trouble. In a way, the mind *becomes* whatever catches it or gains entrance, or one can say that it becomes a 'monkey' when attention is lost.

...There are many such 'monkeys' within each individual which have taken up their abode during the journey through life, and it is these that keep reducing our being to a low level. They will play around as long as one allows them to play. To put a check on all this, one needs discipline.

(Record, 13 September 1968)

He has often explained that by 'discipline' he means the twin disciplines, of meditation twice a day and attention in the moment at all times; and these must be self-imposed.

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We were reminded at one of the meetings last week that the word 'humble' comes from the Latin '*humus*', meaning 'prepared ground'. The 'discipline' referred to in His Holiness's comment 'prepares the ground'; so that the mind can listen and accept the health-giving True Knowledge, distinguishing it from 'relative' knowledge of all sorts.

A thought from His Holiness

Therefore, what we have to do is to resort for guidance to that immense source of Power, the Param-Atman, with fullest concentration and *humility*.

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