

AUDIENCE WITH THE SHANKARACHARYA

NEW DELHI, 1973

FIRST AUDIENCE. 9 NOVEMBER

Mr. Whiting quotes a message from N. Windsor in London:

May we convey to His Holiness the appreciation of all the members of the School for the words he sends us, from all the people who have not seen his face, but whose eyes light up when those words are read.

S. Through the words, the Self was also present. It is not only the physical body that has to be there in person, but the finer levels of Being are embodied in the words, and with the words the Self appears.

One appreciates the message from London and hopes that the words will be heeded, so that they improve the lives of the members of the School and everyone connected with it.

W. When one was here last (six years ago), it seemed that you had made it clear to us; and if we could realise the true significance of your words, we perhaps wouldn't need to come to disturb you. Still we seem to need your help even though the presence is always with us.

S. Any effort made on the Way is itself a realization of the Way. Slowly and steadily everything is being done, and one doesn't have to worry about the end of the journey which is where there would be nothing further to do at all. All one can do is to make these little efforts from day to day. Making the effort is itself a part of the realization of the work, and one feels happy that these efforts are being made towards understanding the words.

A certain man had to go out to another town miles away. It was night and pitch dark, and all he had was a tiny little lantern which could, at most, light a couple of steps. Because the journey seemed so long, and the night dark, he was depressed and unsure – unsure of reaching his destination with only this tiny light.

While he stood at his door in utter disgust and helplessness, a Realized man happened to appear there, and asked him why he was standing at his door with a lantern. The man replied that he really did not know what to do; though he was all set for the journey, it appeared so long, and the night so dark, that his small lantern could not really be of much use.

The Realized man explained to him that it was not necessary to have a light big enough to illuminate the whole way. 'As you proceed,' he said, 'the light will move with you, so that the next one or two steps will always be clear. All you need do is to *hold on to this light and start walking*. As the darkness clears (with the rising of the Sun), if you keep walking you will reach the destination in the full light of noon.'

The same applies to one's little efforts. After hearing the words, however small the efforts one can make, the Light will be enough for the goal to be achieved. Then there will be nothing else to do except enjoy the full bliss of Union.

W. Your Holiness speaks of 'light' and certainly the words you spoke at my last audience brought great light to the people in the School. At that time when he spoke of 'rest' (through meditation) he said: 'Your job is to provide 'rest' and make them give up.' Can he tell us more?

S. There are three types of rest: the bodily rest of the physical realm, the mental rest of the subtle realm, and the Spiritual rest of the causal realm. As far as the *physical realm* is concerned, everyone knows that after a full day's work one must get rest during the night. Even after exertion during the day one must stop to rest and gain energy to start again. Most people know about it, although not everyone knows the art of physical rest.

The rest at the *subtle level* appears between the end of fulfilment of one desire and initiation of the next desire. This is the state of non-desire which provides rest of the subtle level. One stops all hankerings, and the thinking process comes to stillness.

The rest at the *Spiritual or causal level* is available when all activities of the physical and subtle body – the desires, the thinking process and even the feelings and emotions – are stilled. The body, Manas, Buddhi, and Chitta are all stilled. Buddhi and Chitta at the causal level are the ultimate initiators of all activity, and when complete satisfaction with everything and every situation is materialised, and there is no hankering after any further need, then one gets the rest of the Spiritual realm.

In that rest the Atman appears, as the sole witness, in its luminous glory; and observes the great stillness of the whole universe as one single unit where there is no play of physical movement, mental movement, or even emotional movement. This could be described as 'complete surrender', or 'complete faith in the Will of the Absolute'. One simply accepts everything without any rejection or opposition. These are the three types or levels of rest which the School should provide for its members according to the varying needs of individuals.

W. Is it possible to ask more about actually providing this rest? We seem to know the words of his answer, but it remains to be realised.

S. The rest at the *physical level* provides enough energy to employ eight or nine hours of activity for any individual. This is how the human race keeps going without much trouble. At least people with common sense appreciate this and provide themselves with physical rest, and keep in good health and normal activity.

The rest at the *subtle level*, by cessation of conflicting desires, provides another dimension to the idea of rest. In this dimension of rest the efficiency arises, and this works through all activities – the ordinary physical work or the artistic work. Thus, rest at this level between fulfilment of one desire and initiation of another, will be rewarded with efficiency.

The third or *causal level* of rest, which is profound stillness or total immobility, is in the realm of the Absolute. Since the causal realm cannot be described, one learns about it from its effects. One can see it in the activities and dispositions of such men who provide themselves with *Spiritual rest*. There are three prominent features:

Firstly, they show love and affection toward everything they encounter. All activities will be initiated with love, and then held and nourished with love till they come to their fulfilment. All relationships with individuals or activities, direct or indirect, will be lighted and guided only by love and affection.

Secondly, their ideas, intentions or motives will be pure and simple. Purity and simplicity widen the horizon, and they think and work for the whole of humanity and only through the Laws of the Absolute. The divisions of groups, races or nations disappear and only natural Laws are employed. Their thoughts naturally encompass the whole of the human family, and its intrinsic goodness.

Thirdly, the physical movements of such people are only geared to the natural rhythm, and the result is simplicity and economy of movement. They never rush into any situation; are never agitated; and perform all actions in an efficient, sublime, and refined way. Whatever they do will emerge from stillness, be held in stillness, and again submerge in the same stillness which they experience in this great total immobility. This would establish an ideal or a standard for the common man to aspire to, if he somehow awakes to the need to improve his lot.

As an example: anyone here who has learned to read could recite the verses from a famous epic (such as the *Ramayana*) and explain its meaning; but if a man with that profound stillness undertakes to recite and explain, then the love and wisdom pour out through him. He dives deep and brings out fresh and new relationships and interpretation, and convincingly leaves a deep impression of love and devotion, and of the poetical glory.

W. His Holiness said that the meditation was only at the immobile level. This is what we have been attempting to discover. Could he say more about it?

S. The ultimate end of the meditation is to reach to this total immobility, or the profound stillness, and this is very deep. No meter could measure it; it is without end. It is not necessary that one should remain in this state for a long period. Longer meditation does not mean the achievement of this profound stillness. Most of the time spent during the meditation is in preparation to lead one to this state. There may be meditators who would sit for hours and hours but without any avail, for they keep on churning their mechanical thoughts in particular rotation. They end up tired, both physically and mentally. Those who manage to dive deep, they come out with potentiality emanating from the Will of the Absolute.

During the *Mahabharata* episode, Arjuna asked Shri Krishna about the man with such stillness. In the *Gita*, such a man is called Sthitaprajna – ‘one who is steady and still in his Knowledge and Being’. Krishna says that such a man would not be agitated in discomfort, pain or misery. He would not rise in revolt against such misfortune. Even if a calamity befalls, he neither gives up nor feels sorry – he only attends to overcoming its effects with a smile. When honoured with success, pleasure, or comforts he never bursts into jubilation; he simply accepts them with gratitude, and then forgets. In short, one could say that a man with this profound stillness *always remains the same* and expresses efficiency, wisdom, love and mercy.

W. That proves that this immobility or stillness must be ever present; therefore, in truth, it would seem that meditation starts there.

S. One would say rather that this stillness is itself the real experience of meditation. Since there is no movement, one cannot call it a starting point – for nothing is ‘starting’. When one comes out of such a state, then one comes out with the treasure, and this treasure is without end. In ordinary rest and stillness, one regains only some of one’s lost energy; but, having reached to this stillness, one is never without energy and love. Such a man always does everything fresh, new and for the first time. This is because his body, mind, Buddhi, feelings and emotions come together in unity to face any situation. When he attacks any problem, all his forces work through this one-pointed attention.

During the great war of India (described in the *Mahabharata*), one day Karna was appointed commander-in-chief of the whole army. When he was going to the battlefield, his charioteer said to him: 'Although you are a great warrior and an efficient leader, it would not be possible for you to vanquish Arjuna because he is supported by Shri Krishna, who has achieved this profound stillness.' (Karna was proud of his descent from the Sun God, and also of his own strength and efficiency.)

The charioteer told him a story about a flock of crows. One of them was strong, clever and good-looking, so they made him their leader. This king of the crows felt proud of his exploits, and hence looked down upon all other creatures.

One day a young swan appeared in that vicinity. They all assembled around the swan and asked him if he knew about the great deeds of their king. He pleaded ignorance and wished to see their king. The king crow appeared and asked the swan about different types of flight. The swan, in his simplicity, said that he knew only one style.

The king crow then embarked on an exhibition of his 101 styles of flight. Having performed his 101 types of acrobatics, the king wanted to see the art of the swan. The young swan took off in a graceful, gentle and natural flight and, as usual, increased his speed gradually. Since the crow was small and swift he flew fast and realising that the swan was left behind, he came back to cheer him up. The swan gradually increased his speed, and it was not very long before the crow was tired and trembled, and ultimately fell into the waters of the sea. The swan came down and rescued the crow and helped him back to his flock. The crow then became ashamed of his pride, and thanked the swan for his modesty and magnanimity. You see, the swan lived a natural life, while the crow occupied himself in acrobatics and cleverness.

The ultimate victory goes only to the natural, steady, still and simple man; while the clever, smart and arty-crafty waste their energy in trifling pursuits only leading to their destruction.

So, my great master, you must keep in your mind the steady, still and natural Krishna, for no one can ever transcend Him or anyone whom He likes to support.

W. His Holiness has spoken of meditation itself as Yoga, practice of meditation as Dharana, and the repetition of mantra as Japa. Could he say more about it?

S. This is a journey of the individual Consciousness (Vyashti) into the Universal Consciousness (Samashti, the Absolute). One starts the mantra, and repeats the mantra, one initiates this at the level of the individual (the Vyashti), and then this repetition of the mantra is leading on to the bare thread of meditation which is the Dharana. This movement is aimed at only one thing, and that is to cut out or diminish the activity – the Rajas involved in life. Although it is known as the 'practice of meditation,' yet this 'practice' is leading towards the end of all activity. Slowly and gradually this march towards non-activity takes place and one reaches the realm of Union (Yoga), which is stillness or unity. This is the experience of Self as universal; here there is no duality and there remains no *place* to move on to, and there is no *time* to change to, for He is the place, the time and also the substance. In that profound silence, stillness or Yoga all movements stop, and there is only 'One without a second' and that is Atman Himself, the Observer.

This does not mean that all relationships and agitations would have disappeared from our

inner universe; for it only indicates that there is no initiation of any agitation from the Self. We know that there are five levels of consciousness known as unconscious, sleep, dream, awake and Samadhi. This particular state, which we are considering, is unique and does not come under any one of the five 'states of consciousness'.

When one comes away from that state then one feels joyful, just as when one goes to see some great man and returns with indescribable joy and enthusiasm feeling that everything seems good, beautiful and pleasant. That state of Yoga is devoid of all Vikshepa, agitation, desire, need, ignorance and is profoundly still, without any hankering, fully satisfied and complete in all respects.

W. It seems that people in the School of Meditation need help, particularly over this second aspect. This seems that repetition of mantra is only sounding it again and again; and the final union being union, there can't be any problem there. Is there anything to help them on the second aspect?

S. The Japa (repetition of God's Name) is of many types. It can be loud, mild or even silent, it can be fast or slow, but it is repetitive and involves time and rhythm. One takes a mantra and repeats it over and over again, or allows it to be repeated. The state of yoga, although it means unity of the Self with the Universal, only means dropping off all activity. Activity is the product of desire and ambition, so yoga means dropping off all desires. These desires are obstacles in the way of the ever-present unity of the Self and the Absolute.

The practice of meditation by itself is not an isolated act, it is a journey from the start of a mantra to the end of all agitation. This is a bridge over which one needs to throw one's belongings of desires and activities while walking towards the other end. Japa itself (the act of repetition) has no meaning. Although a mantra repeated and sounded would naturally create its Sattvic effect, yet just this is not enough.

The practice of meditation demands relinquishing activity. At one end (of the bridge) is the start of an activity and at the other end is the stillness, the immobility. The practice of meditation between these two points is to pick up the mantra, embark on the activity of repetition, and with the help of the mantra, allow everything – even the mantra – to disappear without doing anything extra. The rhythm of activity will settle down to come to a complete stillness – not of a void, but of fullness, which is the presence of the Self.

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