

10 February 1975

READING 3

NB: Here is something more for the third week in case some of it is needed.

FROM MONDAY MEETING, 3RD FEBRUARY

Dr. R. One hears of a lot of people who are dissatisfied with their own powers and progress; in fact, dissatisfaction is the general cry one hears on all sides today!

Leaving aside our dissatisfaction with the social world outside, what about our dissatisfaction with our own progress? This is how the Shankaracharya answered a question asked by Mrs. Allan (as she was then), which seems to voice what a lot of people are feeling today:

A. reads:

Q. As one gets glimpses of a truer state, dissatisfaction grows with the usual state. Though one feels this should lead to further efforts, it seems to prevent a feeling of happiness, and dissatisfaction prevails. Could H.H. advise how to see this and yet be happy?

The Shankaracharya replied:

Of course whenever anyone experiences a truer state, then it is natural that there will be some dissatisfaction with the usual state which is mostly filled with external activity (Rajas, active hemisphere).

The truer state is one with abundance of Sattva, and certainly it has more contentment and peace than one could experience in such a state of Rajas. So the natural effect is that one likes to get away from this tumultuous state of the (inner) world; for, if this prevails in the mind, then the dissatisfaction will kill everything which has been earned.

But if one were to adopt an aesthetic ('devotional') attitude, then the whole situation changes, for with such an attitude one would not take any activity as a responsibility which one must perform, or a duty which one must undergo. One would take it as a sort of drama and only play one's part without any personal involvement in any of the activities one takes up.

Once you have established yourself in the state in which you simply act as best you can, then just as in a dramatic performance the actor enjoys acting, and the onlookers enjoy seeing the play, so then you will find that whatever you undertake will have this lively colour, or will have a colour so pleasing that you will both enjoy whatever work comes before you, and everybody surrounding you or connected with you will also enjoy the work which is being done so nicely.

So, before one starts any activity, one should prepare oneself with this artistic attitude and just carry out whatever work presents itself to one.

Mrs. Cardew. I would like to have a copy of that and be able to read it again.

Dr. R. All right; we'll have it in the next paper. There won't be a meeting here next week, so I wanted to try it on you first, and then give it to the small weekly groups.

Miss Wright. How do you know whether you are personally involved or not?

Dr. R. It's a nasty sort of sticky feeling; the Hindi word H.H. uses is 'Kashaya' from a root word

meaning the sticky gum from a tree. I realise fully that you are asking this question not just for yourself, but because it comes up all the time.

Miss W. Surely there can be tremendous pleasure in doing something properly?

Dr. R. Much more pleasure than if you were personally involved!

Miss W. But does it necessarily mean that you are personally involved because you have pleasure in doing it?

Dr. R. No, not at all! Personal involvement spoils things. *You* are not really doing anything! Yet when things go well we congratulate *ourselves*. Next minute things don't go so well and we imagine it's *our* fault. Thus we go up and down with the water like a barometer – which tires the mind, sickens the heart, and has repercussions on the body also. Enjoy each job, but be detached.

Miss W. I don't quite understand what you've just said combined with this rather superior sounding detachment?

Dr. R. That's the personal involvement calling it 'superior'! (laughter)

Lady Allan. You mentioned the different roles which may or may not be given us in connection with this house. We could easily measure our personal involvement by asking ourselves what our reactions would be if the role is suddenly taken away from us!

Dr. R. Very good. Yes. Let's use our connection with this house in that way.

Now I want to appeal to Michael and Alexis MacOwan in their professional stage capacity. It's easier to understand, MacOwan, from the point of view of the actor's part in a play, because he may have to take the part of a villain like Iago, or the part of a hero, like Henry V, or he may even have to be killed like Mercutio at the height of the drama. In fact, as an actor, you know you aren't the villain, you aren't a hero, and you aren't dead – a great relief! And isn't it a great relief for the producer of the play not to have to deal with personal and temperamental actors and actresses all the time! (M. assents)

This, in my experience, is the only safe attitude to keep in all we do here for the Society, and eventually in our private lives as well.

Mr. Koren. Can I ask a question about that? It feels to me when things are working properly in me and I am doing the job as I should and I am not personally involved – it literally feels that I am not taking part. It is as if something is working *through* me, yet I never seem to be present at the experience. It's a feeling of non-me; therefore it seems that I am not really there!

Dr. R. No, that is the right attitude, and the one we must try to cultivate. If you are doing the job properly, *you are there* doing it! If you stop to say, 'Am I doing it well?' or 'Are things going well or badly?' you cease to do the job properly and *you* cease to be present. Otherwise it is only some subjective idea which is present in your place!

In fact, my dear Koren, you are a constant source of inspiration to me in this respect. For in my dealings with you, you keep giving me the impression of doing a job well for its own sake; I may be prejudiced, but this is the impression I get from you when you are the

Samazen Bashi in the Mukabeleh (or when we meet at a Committee or something) that you constantly try to be true to the high Tradition of Mevlana. You do *not* intrude your personality, and yet, I always regard you as there! (R. laughs) I never see an empty chair!

Mr. Koren. It's almost not even being aware of what's going on!

Dr. R. But then you are really more aware, not less aware. In the absence of this I-ishness, this ego, the job is going well. When the ego begins to intrude, I've noticed you begin to doubt your capacity. You lose your authority and some of your usefulness to us! That used to happen, I remember, but now no longer. So carry on quite happily!

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Dr. R. went on: Really, the method in the Fourth Way – the Way of people who try to live their lives very well and do things for their neighbours – is to do everything as well as they possibly can, but dedicate their actions to the Supreme Self and not take the credit themselves.

Our Oxford dictionary, Mademoiselle, says that 'dedication' means 'to give the credit to the patron' (Dr. R. then pronounced '*le patron*' the French way), and the Supreme Self is '*le Patron*'; this gives the idea that you dedicate your thoughts, deeds and words to the Spirit of Truth, not worrying about your own profit or loss. I recommend the word '*le Patron*' for your private use.

Mrs. Gil. Reverting back to the idea of 'I'; is it not a fact that individuality is something we have and that's *there*? But what we are trying to restrain and not give a free rein to, is our ego?

Dr. R. Yes, you put it very well Mrs. Gil. It's some false idea about our individuality that we are trying to get rid of. We must treat ourselves objectively, cutting ourselves down to size or raising ourselves up to what we should be; then you are really yourSelf – not like anybody else. Self-realization means that you become more like yourSelf, not less, not an artificial imitation. To use His Holiness's simile, we become a real elephant, not a toy elephant made of felt!

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