

3 March 1975

READING 6

At the Meditation meeting we had on the 11th February, it was stressed that, if you have come to value the 'good impulse' which feels so like waking up out of the sleep of ordinary life, you have to do something about it in the instant you recognise the impulse for what it is. If you want more and stronger impulses, not only do you have to have something ready prepared to which you can turn your mind instantaneously when the impulse strikes, but you also have to order your life to some extent if you want these 'impulses' to become part of your Nature and provide a solution to any situation on demand.

There have been many ways of living advocated for this purpose, but the only one which seems to be possible for us in our busy lives is that advocated by the Shankaracharya's Tradition, which consists in 'giving up' what stands in the way. We know quite well that we never get something valuable for nothing and, since these experiences turn out to be the most valuable of all as the first step on the Ladder of Self-realization, we must expect to have to 'give up' for them more transitory mental activities.

This, however, turns out to be something very gratifying rather than frightening, as these words will show if you practise them:

S.. Where the *Bhagavad-Gita* prescribes 'giving up', it also explains how to give up. What we have to give up is the desire to derive benefit from our actions – and not actions themselves. If we give up acting but continue to indulge in desires, then we would simply be pretending to give up. Before undertaking an action, an ordinary worldly man always tries to assess what benefit would accrue to him as a result of that action. But a Realized man undertakes it as a matter of duty, with no desire for its consequential benefits.

(Record, 15 April 1972)

At that time, three years ago, while I was still taking literally that one had to 'give up' a part of one's external life, I got the following answer:

S. You say: 'It seems impossible to give it all up just yet, but I can usually give up everything for two days in a week...'

No, giving up can be done psychologically at all times and in all conditions. In this, there is no question of today or tomorrow, or of one or two days a week. Practise giving up all the time. You just consider the body, the mind and the emotions as belonging to Param-Atman and, for that reason, offering all these to the Param-Atman. That is what 'giving up' means.

At another time, while pointing out that the intellect will only take us a certain distance, he said that 'we have to bring our inner Nature into line by conquering the inherent bad habits we have contracted; and that all these bad habits are to be overcome by putting in their place one over-all good habit, namely the habit of substituting for all personal claims the idea that everything is part of the Universal Consciousness and its laws.'

None of us having got very far in the practice of this 'good habit', it would be advantageous, with the idea of your principal aim in view, to begin to find out how to do it.

First, then, how far have we got with the instruction:

We should never admit a doubt;† even if we have only a single moment to live, we should forsake all worry about the past or the future and make a good use of the present, in a dignified manner, feeding the mind with some fine thought.

Since a lot of people aren't doing this at all yet, can we remind each other to do it at our meetings and at certain times in-between?

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†This is Bowra's translation of a poem by Mr. Ouspensky's favourite poet, Lermontov:

When life's oppressive hour is mine
And in my heart griefs crowd,
A prayer of wondrous power is mine
That I repeat aloud.

Blest is the strength that flows to me
In concords of sweet sound;
Past reckoning it blows to me
Divine enchantment round.

Doubt, like a burden, leaping then
Far from the spirit flies;
From words of faith and weeping then
How light, how light we rise!

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