

Start with Meditation

The aim of this meeting is to look at the Gunas or 'three forces' in connection with the meditation. Here is an explanation of the Gunas given to us by Dr Roles:

Briefly the 'Law of Three', one of the fundamental laws of the universe can be stated: There are two well known forces governing the manifestations of nature, namely Action and its opposite Inaction (or Reaction or Inertia). But since 'to every action there is an equal and opposite Reaction', the two invariably cancel each other out so that a state of static equilibrium is reached. For any thing new to happen a third force is needed; but man in his ordinary state of consciousness is blind to the necessity for, and the nature of, a particular third force appropriate to the situation; just as he cannot see, unaided the fourth and higher dimensions.

The three forces are fluid, being always specific to a given event and to see the third force you have first to see the two equal and opposite forces in the given case. Then one can perhaps see that in many instances the third force is expressed in something that harmonizes the opposition or apparent contradiction. The ordinary mind, for example, says a categorical 'yes' or 'no' but receiving True Knowledge, it sees that the Truth contains both the 'yes' and the 'no'.

The three Gunas of His Holiness' system are specific to man's psychology and the practical aim of experiencing the Atman; that is of Self-Realisation. Thus Rajas is present in all activity, Tamas is needed in sleep for renewal of energy, but unless the third, Sattva is present in sufficient concentration to govern the other two, no spiritual progress will be made.

It is important to realise at the outset that there are no single words in any Western language which give the full meaning of the three Sanskrit terms. It has been found necessary to retain these words and gradually put more and more meaning into them through a sort of 'taste' acquired by individual experience and through a study of the Shankaracharya's use of the words in the examples he gives.

Pause for questions and observations

When the Shankaracharya was answering questions about the Ladder of Self Realisation, He spoke about 'levels of meditation' and how these are related to a person's position on the Ladder. He went on to say:

But Gunas also play an important role. The Gunas are in all manifested things. People have predominant combinations of Gunas, and events and places have also. So there is always the possibility that the influence of a certain predominant Guna in a person or place will change the level of meditation. A person with more Sattva will have better meditation, whereas people with Rajas will have thoughts visiting them and those with Tamas will find a nice corner to sleep in.

People given responsibility for initiations or checking other meditators will have observed how the levels of meditation are related to a person's position on the Ladder at the time of observation. And everyone who meditates will experience the effect of the Gunas.

We are told that the opportunities to collect Sattva come in the morning and evening, sometimes during the night when all is quiet, and also when we have ten minutes to spare and remember to repeat the mantra.

The Shankaracharya gave some very specific advice about this in 1964:

HH: *One should watch three things. Time, Place and Body. Place should be clean, purified, secluded, quiet and devoid of interference. Time factor is also important. The day is divided into three periods of different influences – Tamas, Rajas and Sattva. From 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. the Tamas influences prevail over the place, and from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the day it is all activity, so the particles of Rajas reign over the place during the day. The rest of the time in morning and evening from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. the influence of Sattva prevails and one should try to meditate during these periods so as to avoid Rajas and Tamas influences. The other factor is the body; one should prepare it before meditation. There are three places of importance – the hands, mouth and the eyes. Through hand passes the energy, in the mouth we repeat the Mantra, and the eyes take in light. We must clean these properly before sitting for meditation. With a clean body, pure and clean place, at the proper time, we should try to fill ourselves with serene feeling and visualise the whole of the universe and dive deep into the Self for meditation.*

Pause for Meditation

Sometimes people have difficulty meditating at the recommended times. This can be a temporary situation and people should not worry about it too much. The best thing to do is to find a quiet time and a quiet place and sit quietly and repeat the mantra. If you have a particular place in your house where you can be quiet even for a few minutes try to form the good habit of using this place. The practice of meditation is a good habit and will respond to patience and quiet persistence. If you are for instance, in the habit of waking up during the night then, if you wish, you can use this time. The Shankaracharya said in 1965:

In the night, when somebody wakes up and the whole world is sleeping in Tamas, the atmosphere is very clean and pure..... if one can make just a little effort at that time and do a little meditation one will be rewarded.

On another occasion he explained that most of the night is spent by ordinary people in a state somewhere between deep and refreshing sleep and a restless dreaming state near awakening. Four hours deep and dreamless sleep is all that is required for complete refreshment and that meditation can gradually bring this about.

However the times recommended to people when they are initiated into the meditation are the beginning of the day before they get started on the day's activities and the evening when the day's activities are completed and preferably before the evening meal.

HH: *Meditation in the morning and evening is the important work. In the morning and evening darkness and light meet. This time of confluence is very suitable for meditation. The Rajas of the day and the Tamas of the night are impregnated with the Sattva we get from meditation. During active work and pressing times one can remember the Mantra and that should be enough as one changes gear to accelerate.*

In 1964 the Shankaracharya was asked a question about how to steer the accumulated energy of Sattva towards the achievement of serene happiness. He answered:

We live in Rajas, we act in Rajas because activity is all Rajas. It is the direction of Rajas which is

important, whether it goes towards Sattva or Tamas. If it goes towards Tamas we become lazy, we postpone doing work and don't like doing good work and lose our desire for development. If it turns towards Sattva, we have intense desire and continue to do so. If one seems to be falling into Tamas, one can substitute something for encouragement. One can pray, sing fine music or get into good company to discuss useful subjects. This would help one to turn the direction from Tamas to Sattva and ultimately develop a stronger desire for meditation.

On another occasion he said:

Accumulation of Sattva would certainly lead to greater energy and there are both good and bad ways of spending it. This Sattva has the power to give you the proper direction and you don't need any outside direction to tell you what to do. You would know by your own Real Self.

This idea that 'you would know by your own Real Self' is a very encouraging one. By seeking good company and by practicing the meditation and remembering the mantra in quiet moments we have clear guidelines as to how we can use meditation in our lives to accumulate Sattva and the part played by the Gunas.

Meditation