

Start with Meditation

There have been interesting emails from Bob, Prue S and Anthony on our progress so far this term. The important question from Bob was how different is the brain of the Realised Man (from ours)? He adds in his email: 'The mental state is a product of mind, brain, chemistry and external factors, all of which interact. Long practice of meditation and sustained efforts probably changes neuronal connections'.

He implies that change is going on from step to step as a disciple moves up the Ladder of Self Realisation. One feels that this is the case.

Prue S. puts the basic question very precisely when she writes: 'What am I meant to be aiming at?' P D Ouspensky kept asking his pupils to formulate their aim? So we should keep doing this.

Dr Peter Fenwick who is a neuropsychiatrist and often worked closely with Dr Roles on subjects of medical research, wrote an interesting article: 'Consciousness and Science' in 'The Bridge' (2001 Edition). In his article he discusses some of the points raised by Bob.

It seems that technology, using electrical tracings from the surface of the head of a person experiencing samadhi did not register anything unusual. This led to the conclusion that the study of consciousness was outside the range of laboratory experience at that time.

Peter Fenwick is giving a talk to the Society at the AGM on April 10th so questions can be asked to find out if any further information is available a decade later.

PF's article is well worth re-reading. Several valuable comments made by Dr Roles refer to the Ladder of Self Realisation, such as:

Peak experiences are what the Shankaracharya means by the good impulse – the first step on the Ladder. In my own case (FCR) any further progress starts from these.....Such experiences are not the end but truly the beginning of something of extreme importance.....namely the evidence of the eternal presence of the miraculous True Self within everyone.

From Bob's observations let us now put the following question: 'How would I see life, the universe and Param-Atman if I were fully realised?'

Anthony's thoughts went along the line of: How do we see ourselves? What picture do we each have of ourself? He then gives some useful quotes from the Shankaracharya and Dr Roles about our make up and the right outlook. This brings us back to the fundamental question 'Who am I?'

So let us look again at these three questions: 'Who am I?'; 'What am I aiming at?'; 'How would I see life, the universe and Param-Atman if I were fully realised?'

In January 1975 Doctor Roles wrote a paper which had this to say on the first two questions:

It would be a good exercise perhaps after meditating for a few minutes, for each of us to ask questions: 'Who am I?' and 'What is it I want?' What did life seem to hold out for us as children, what did we promise ourselves as adolescents, what made us take some trouble to get this meditation, what has made us come here (to this meeting)?

He then goes on to say:

One: *Until you get the right answer to the first question, you won't be able to answer the second; for unless you find the Real 'T' that never changes, you cannot say what 'you' want and have always wanted.*

Two: *To know what you want, is really to keep recalling something you once had but have lost; how else could you know what it is.*

The Doctor wrote that 36 years ago. How much more do we understand to-day.

Pause for discussion

It is because we don't know what we want that we must keep asking: 'What is it I once had and lost but still want beyond everything else?' The Doctor says we have to keep putting this question to oneself in the most cogent way until at last one realises that every human being really wants and has always wanted, the same thing though usually without realising what that is.

More light on how to think about this question came when the Shankaracharya was asked about: 'the need for guidance, as in the children's story 'hunt the treasure' and the need for someone to say 'you are getting warmer or colder.'

The Shankaracharya replied:

Before answering, let us get the question right. The eyes are present and, moreover, they are performing the right function of seeing all the time. The reason the child is not finding the thing he is looking for, is that he is searching for it in the wrong place, other than where it actually is. For example, suppose we have lost a thing in our own house, and that in searching for it we labour under the false impression that we have lost it somewhere outside the house.....

Similarly, there is this false impression in this case of the individual and the Universal Self. In order to correct this we must constantly get direction from someone more experienced.

The comment that followed in the meeting paper written (Jan 27th 1975) by the Doctor is that we are always looking for the secret of happiness, the source of True Knowledge, self confidence etc., in the outside world around us, but the source of all these lie within oneSelf.

From all that has been said we have enough hints now to enable us to begin to remember and realise what it is we want beyond everything else. It is annoying that we can't just be given the 'treasure' but that is the way the game is played, you have to find it.

In this drama of 'Hunt the Thimble' let us return again to the question of 'Who am I?' In last week's Meditation paper we discussed the role of the Gunas and it was said that what we wanted was beyond them. Here is what the Shankaracharya has said on this point:

HH: The states of consciousness which we experience are governed by the influx of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in people, places, situations and events. These all undergo change but the Observer, who sees them all as a passing show, always remains the same.

We know by now that the Ultimate Observer is our Real 'I'. What we are beginning to understand is that the Observer is always with us and part of us. The problem is that through our ignorance, sleep and the cloud of unknowing it is insufficiently to the forefront of our awareness. If it were, then we would begin to find the answer to the third question: 'How would I see life, the universe and Param-Atman if I were Fully Realised?

Well, for a start one would not be concerned about the Gunas because one would be above their powerful influences. We would see them all as a passing show. Surely that would be liberation. Manas would no longer be caught like a fly in the sticky treacle of identification. A still Buddhi would discriminate at the right speed on incoming impressions to make sure all our actions are correct and appropriate to the circumstances. Chitta's store of knowledge would be available to answer all questions. We would remember that We are all One. Duality would disappear and be replaced by Unity. And our consciousness and sense of 'I am' would expand to take in the whole universe as described in the beginning of Talbot Mundy's poem 'Evolution:

*Tides in the ocean of stars and the infinite rhythm of space;
Cycles on cycles of aeons adrone on an infinite beach;
Pause and recession and flow, and each atom dust in its place
In the pulse of eternal becoming; no error, no breach,
But the calm and the sweep and the swing of the leisurely, measureless roll
Of the absolute cause, the unthwarted effect – and no haste,
And no discord, and nothing untimed in a calculus ruling the whole;
Unfolding, evolving; accretion, attrition; no waste.*

Finally, we would truly see that the Param-Atman, who created this Universe is the Only Reality and by Grace we are part of that.