

Start with Meditation

His Holiness the Shankaracharya spoke of the Meditation in this way:

The System of Meditation is very old; I would not call it a system – rather the principle of meditation is very old.

The realised men, when they come, they try to make this principle easier so that it suits the needs of the present time. So Guru Deva did not invent anything, he only tried to simplify for us the eternal principle of meditation.

(At the initiation ceremony) The offering of flowers, white handkerchief, fruit, are offerings as it were only in a representative manner. It represents that whatever we have, we offer it to the Universal. When we use these offerings for ourselves, then we treat them as prasad (a gift) from the Universal. This is done to establish a connection between the individual and the Universal.

And at another time He said:

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 until one reaches the realm of unity and stillness. 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 union all movements stop; there is only 'One without a second' and that is Atman Himself, the Observer. (Good Company p30)

Meditation

Sometimes it is hard to find the words to describe what the meditation does or how it works. Doctor Roles used this story to explain:

If you go to Chinatown in any of the big cities in America, you will probably see a statue of a fat Chinaman carrying a big linen sack. This man was a Zen master in the T'ang dynasty. He was called everywhere 'the happy Chinaman' or 'the laughing Buddha.' He always refused to teach anybody; he had no desire to call himself a Zen master or to gather disciples around him. He walked the streets with a big sack into which he would put gifts of candy or doughnuts. These he would give to the children who gathered round him to play, establishing a kind of kindergarten of the streets; and whenever he met a Zen devotee looking very serious, he would extend his hand saying: 'Give me one cent.' Once, when he was about this business of his, another Zen master happened to come along, and enquired: 'What is the significance of Zen?' Ho-Tei (the laughing Buddha) immediately dropped his heavy sack down on the ground in silent answer. Then the other asked: 'What is the actualization of Zen?' At once the happy Chinaman flung the sack over his shoulder and continued on his way. (VoD p78-79)

Doctor Roles added the following comment:

If we get asked: 'What is the significance of meditation?' It's exactly this. You lay aside the heavy

load that is on your mind for half an hour, and 'What is the actualization of meditation?' It's that you shoulder your sack and go about your business, doing all your jobs that much better and much more happily. So the whole description of meditation could be given like that, without words.

Meditation

We all need help along the way. This comes from good company, meditating with another person or a group, or reading and discussing certain thoughts and ideas connected with the meditation. When we sit down with a good intention and a willing heart to have half-an-hour of meditation we are already putting ourselves in the way of help – some people describe that half hour as being perfectly safe, of sitting like a child in the lap of Param Atman. And we all need help at some time.

However, Dr Roles tells us:

It's the internal effort that counts and one shouldn't really be discouraged at all because 'discouragement' is a negative emotion, and the more discouraged you are, the slower you'll move. So one should have no regret.

And we should never hesitate to ask for help whenever we need it.

There was a great elephant who was proud of his size and strength, but when he went for a bathe he was caught by a crocodile in mid stream and dragged out of his depth into deep water. He was helpless and couldn't do anything; but just when he was about to be drowned he happened to catch with his trunk a lotus flower floating on the river, and offering that flower to the Absolute, to his God, he begged Him to save his life. So pure was his offering that God came running barefoot from his throne. One might wonder how one could dislodge the Absolute and cause him to come barefoot from His throne by just a little flower. But it was not the flower, it was the spirit behind the flower – it was the heart which prayed.

End with Meditation