

**PATHS PART 7****Devotion**

What is meant by devotion? In a meeting last week someone remembered Dr Roles saying that it was like the feeling of being in love: whatever else one was doing, the feeling never went away. This could apply to both paths, knowledge and devotional, so an extra definition is needed for the devotional path. The Shankaracharya described those who tread the devotional path successfully as follows:

They have full knowledge of the beloved and so walk unhesitant. They seem to turn to love in their present form to experience unity by emotional centre. They look at everything in creation as different manifestations of the same beloved who presents himself in ever-changing beauty. To such people there is nothing but a beauty aspect of the Absolute. [16.10.65]

The devotional method is to see the object of devotion in everybody and everything and to see everybody and everything in the object of devotion. Devotion to what or to whom? The Shakaracharya emphasised that it must be an 'ideal' object so that devotion will not fade. In general it could be God; in Christianity Jesus Christ; in the System the Absolute; in Advaita the Param-Atman or the ultimate power in the universe, or however one likes to put it.

Devotional people are ruled by their heart rather than by their head and knowledge takes second place. There is a phenomenon in the use of the Bible which illustrates the difference in approach in the devotional path and the knowledge path. Most strict theologians analyse the New Testament minutely so as to arrive at a picture of the historical Jesus and what he was really trying to say. Those taking the knowledge route in Christianity follow the theology and come to their own view, hopefully a revelation, of the essential message of the Gospels. For the devotional route, so-called 'Bible Study' is more appropriate than strict theology, a study in which the exact truth is not so important as an interpretation which carries an emotional charge.

The Shankaracharya took great pains to discuss the difference between the two paths: he brought it up or was asked about it on a dozen different occasions. Here is a small selection:

HH. Those who are critics, that is critical in their approach, are intellectual. They need the Jnana, intellectual teaching. Those who are emotional belong to Bhakti. [10.1.78]

H.H. Out of the two types ... there are those who are emotionally predominant and also those intellectually predominant. Their destination is the same. The emotional type work more with faith and trust, and like to do everything that seems right to them out of their own feeling which emanates from their emotional centre. They reach the goal by their way, whereas the intellectuals also reach there by enquiry. The intellectual would ask for explanation and proof of everything that is told and once they find the proof then these are the people who become unshakable. Once they are satisfied nothing can divert them. They stand extremely firm and weather any circumstance. Most people are emotional type and they are satisfied with the Way of the Bhakti (love). [12.10.65]

Q. How do we know for ourselves about the predominance?

H.H. It is very easy. The key is to see whether - if there is intellectual discussion, reasoning being practised - after a little while you cease to feel interested in the whole affair, and do not want to listen. In that case you are certainly not the intellectual type. But the same man, if he went to a gathering where emotional attitude is being shown and encouraged, will find that he is very much interested, and would take to it. The same would apply the other way, for an intellectual would not take to anything emotional very quickly until he is intellectually satisfied. So it is by one's own interest that one can know immediately where the predominance lies.

Q. There are certain cases where people are extremely confused - they are neither intellectually predominant nor emotionally but they are confused and they can't locate themselves. Can H.H. say anything about them?

H.H. Such people do in fact have one capacity of either type which is dormant. It is very much like a person who has buried their wealth underground and has forgotten where he hid it and can't find it - so he gets very agitated. This is the type of person who is very confused and can't locate where he is but in fact one of these two must be predominant and if tackled properly it can be channelled and used. [9.3.70]

Finally, it may be helpful to think of the devotional path as outward-looking and the knowledge path as inward-looking:

H.H. There are two divisions or aspects of Sadhana, practice; one aspect is that 'I am everything' - that is Bhakti; and the other is that 'everything else is in me' - that is Jnana. [21.12.79]

## **Easter**

Next week will be the last meeting before Easter and the last of this series of papers. We would like to have something of a programme for Easter and any suggestions of material would be welcome – *new* suggestions.

Also, we need to think about the exercise. At one of the meetings someone said how much it helped to know that the exercise was being done by the group, and it certainly seems to have helped us to wake up, but where to now?

Consider the following:

There is a type of Samadhi [i.e. union with the real self] which is a natural phenomenon, available to everyone but not tapped by us, not tapped by people usually. This Samadhi comes after the fulfilment of one desire and before the rise of the next desire. There is a point where there is no desire either fulfilled or unfulfilled. That moment in the life of individuals comes quite a number of times even during each day, and yet people do not realise and do not tap the energy which could be made available at that moment. It is a natural phenomenon but the energy cannot be acquired because people are not aware of its existence. If they could be aware of this stillness, then the energy would be available to them. [26.9.75]

When a desire has been fulfilled by the activity, then a new desire can arise in consciousness. There lies a little gap. If this gap can be increased for, say, a minute or two, then this will give so much power to the individual that he can face the next event or activity and fulfil the desire which is yet to follow from a better position.

During this Samadhi, if we can extend this period of rest between two desires, what we can save is more powerful than what we can get out of eight hours of rest in sleep.

The sort of rest we are discussing is mental rest and for that one doesn't have to stop work. The moment something has been completed we have to register that it has been completed and immediately extend that moment a little so that a clear demarcation in the mind is made and two activities are not inter-mingled.  
[28.8.79]

