

Going deeper

Last thoughts on 'being serious', from audiences with the Shankaracharya:

Meditation is already given to you which should bring you to a state when you will develop certain capacities to make serious enquiries, and if you have not reached that state, then you should examine your practice of meditation again. [Record 24.10.89]

Is this what is supposed to happen: meditation brings forth questions; questions call for knowledge to answer them; knowledge brings understanding; understanding brings illumination; illumination fires meditation?

And what sort of questions?

R. Will the pressure of questions and necessities, together with the feeling of insufficiency of one's ordinary state, force one actually to dive deep instead of merely thinking or talking about it?

S. There are two sorts of situations where questions arise. There is the one where people who are by nature curious raise questions; they may understand the answer or keep on questioning as long as they are not fully satisfied, but once their curiosity is assuaged they drop the questions completely. These people who are activated merely by curiosity don't take the further step of wanting to go deep into the Self, for this makes no appeal to them.

The other sort are those who, starting with curiosity, want to enjoy and experience the True Knowledge that lies behind these answers they get. If they find any obstacles to further experience, then they ask more questions relating to the obstacles which prevent them enjoying the inner Being. When that kind of question arises, and proper guidance is given, then the door is open to them to dive deep without any obstacle and get the bliss from the Self.

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Most of us have been through some sort of crisis in life, major or minor, and some of us have to endure crisis-ridden lives. Attempts at self-remembering during a crisis can bring real benefits, but there is often a salutary realisation of how little control we have and of how far we fall short of our goal. At the time we may make a vow that when the crisis has subsided we will really 'get down to it', but then when the crisis does subside so does the urgency.

So, how can we go deeper in normal times? HH speaks of the need for purity of action, intellect and emotion:

A. My main question turns out really to be a request which is: How can I have His Holiness' help to dive deeper?

S. There are three ways this help can be taken and these three ways relate to the three bodies: The first one is the field of activity, and quite a number of disciplines and of meditation practice have been given us for the physical body. The second one is in the realm of the subtle body or mind, through which one communicates whatever one has within; whatever one feels, whatever one thinks, one communicates and tries to get further guidance which is, of course, being done here and now.

The third realm is of the Bhāwanā or the emotion. This is far the most potent of the fields. In this field the aspirant gets inspiration – inspiration to move on the Spiritual line. This is what usually takes one to the deeper levels.

To be on the deeper levels is to be in the purified states of these three types of function. So when the activity which one undertakes is entirely tuned in to the Truth (that true Knowledge which has been given to one), then the physical activity will take one to the deeper levels. When the ideas, the true Knowledge which is being imparted to the aspirant, are held in their true and pure form without being adulterated with any other ideas or doubts, these then purify the mind and take it into the deeper level.

The third one is the realm of emotion. For that the meditation has been prescribed, and the more one does it properly, the more one goes deeper, one comes to a state where there is no division in the act of meditation, then one would find oneself at the deeper levels. It is only through these three ways one can go deeper. Whatever one says – one should do, whatever one thinks – one should say, and whatever one feels – one should express. [Record 17.1.74]

At bad times it may help to remember that we are not alone. Meditating together and its remembrance can be a life-line.

(Meditation)

Here is something about remembrance, involving intellect and emotion:

A. When I came in here this morning, I felt complete reassurance of the absolute unity that exists in all things, and I was again completely certain that there is no need for any anxiety and that all things are cared for. How can one hold that?

S. When one comes to certain places which hold a particular type of influence just as Lord Allan describes, there are two ways of holding this experience. One is by the mind – by the thought or Buddhi. If it is held by the mind constantly and one reminds oneself about the experience and the taste of the experience, or the content of the experience, then in the course of time it becomes one's own.

The second way of holding is to hold by faith – Shraddhā – and that is held in the emotional body of the individual. It holds it very tight; this is where it is held totally. Having held this from these two standpoints – from faith and from mind or thought, then it becomes one's own; and then wherever, or under whatever circumstances, or under whatever influences one may move about, one will never lose this experience which has become one's own. And over and above that, one would be able to transmit these influences wherever one goes, provided this influence is held by mind and by the emotion through faith. [Record 16.1.74]

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How to deal with difficult times, difficult issues? HH went on to say:

There is an example from the life of a Mahatma. A particular Mahatma used to say that “all movement is poisonous – not useful to the Self – and yet there is movement all over the creation. So it has to be held somewhere, otherwise the bliss of the ocean will not be experienced and the Self will not manifest; so this movement must be held somewhere.”

In the mythology of India, Shiva is depicted as holding that poison in his throat. He does not allow it to go to either the outside or the inside body or it would kill the Truth about both the outer and the inner world. So he simply holds it at the threshold of the outer and inner body. He can do this because he is always in Samadhi.

Anyone who has acquired the taste of this great unity of peace in which everybody’s soul is cared for, feels that if he could hold this he would, like Shiva or Shankara, be able to keep the peace himself and provide it for others who need it. Thus, Shankara is one who has the peace and can bring peace to everyone.

We are not Shiva or Shankara, but there may be a practical insight here for us about how to deal with difficult things: experiencing them but not being overwhelmed, and not passing them on.

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