

FCR 1976-82

Giving up: practice

Last week we saw the gradual acceptance by Dr Roles of the idea that the individual ego had to be 'given up'. But the practice lies not in 'killing the ego', it lies rather in replacing the individual by the universal.

We start with a misunderstanding. Dr Roles had wanted to tell the Shankaracharya that he had given up some of his professional work so he had two free days a week for his work at Colet, but HH took this to mean that Dr Roles managed to work at 'giving up' for two days a week:

S. You say: 'It seems impossible to give it all up just yet, but I can usually give up everything for two days in a week . . .' No, giving up can be done psychologically at all times and in all conditions. In this, there is no question of to-day or to-morrow, or of one or two days a week. Practise giving up all the time. You just consider the body, the mind and the emotions as belonging to Param-Atman and, for that reason, offering all these to the Param-Atman. That is what 'giving up' means. [*Record* 15.2.73]

In 1975 Dr Roles gave advice about overcoming bad habits:

At another time, while pointing out that the intellect will only take us a certain distance, he [HH] said that 'we have to bring our inner Nature into line by conquering the inherent bad habits we have contracted; and that all these bad habits are to be overcome by putting in their place one over-all good habit, namely the habit of substituting for all personal claims the idea that everything is part of the Universal Consciousness and its laws.' [75/8]

And in 1977 he advocated silent reflection:

Q. This is a question about loss of direction: What is the right effort involved in remembering what one has forgotten?

Dr. R. I think it is to be silent for a moment. In that silence one collects oneSelf – one comes to oneSelf. It seems to be the one effort that works, for a sense of direction comes from within. Then go into action with attention. One aspect of this is to give up all problems, all thinking, all mental activity and do what you have to do as if you were under orders – simply stepping out when you are walking, unlocking a door with attention, nothing else going on at all. That is so very refreshing; one is just a servant of the Param-Atman, or an actor playing one's own role. [77/16]

Cultivating this silence, this stillness, is the Great Art. It is to be the subject of another paper, so we have to leave it there for the moment – no poaching!

Based on these last two papers and our own experience, can we arrive at a real practice of giving up?

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The Observer

Trying to bear the Param-Atman in mind at all times and 'giving up' are the two sides of a single coin. But we are used to the idea that where there are two factors, whether in opposition or in potential harmony, a third element is needed to resolve or bind them. The candidate here is the Observer.

One of the starting points in the System is the idea of 'many 'I's', that we are not unified but that we change from one 'I' to another according to circumstances and mood. Here is the last of several restatements of the idea by Dr Roles, written for new people:

For householders leading active lives there is just one reliable way – to establish an 'Observer' who can watch what is going on, provided he himself does not get involved. There is only one part of the brain to which we have immediate access during the day, and over which we can acquire a measure of control – that is the front of the brain behind the forehead (technically called the 'pre-frontal lobes'). It is in this part we have to set up an 'Observer'; he is only of course a 'locum tenens' or caretaker, but he plays an important role in attention. Our Western System put it this way: 'Each person inhabits a three-storeyed house in which there are many dwellers and servants most of whom claim to say "I" and represent the whole person while "on stage"; only to be quickly displaced by another who sees things quite differently. One makes a purchase, another writes the cheque and all the others have to find the money! There is no caretaker and the Owner of the house is away for an indefinite period. What can be done in this unhappy situation? One of the servants (who is particularly disgusted with the state of the house) gets a few of his friends together and they agree to appoint one of their number as "Deputy Steward". Together they do what they can to improve matters – like getting the cook to confine herself to cooking, turning the gardener out of the kitchen, getting the chauffeur to work in the garage, and expelling a few drunks and crooks out of the house altogether! As soon as possible the real Steward will come, complete the task according to the wishes of the Owner, and prepare for His return.'

These are the steps immediately ahead, and just now we have to find and establish this 'Deputy Steward' as 'Observer'. At least he could keep us meditating twice a day!
[78/4]

Later he changed his mind and said: 'the Deputy Steward can see the chaos and was put there to put the chaos right; and the Steward I would link to the Observer. [78/10]

HH also emphasises the need to cultivate the Observer, though it often seems that the Observer is to be equated with the Self. The first reference was in a description of meditation:

When the body is relaxed, the breathing stilled, there is a feeling of expansion, the 'Self emerges as observer. Now the Self takes command . . . He only watches whatsoever is happening'. [*Record* 8.8.64]

One doesn't have to choose anything, but stand at the middle and see both sides the outer and the inner. Or stay in the present and watch the passing life - the play of 'past' and 'future'. Each state is part of the Absolute, and one does not have to select one of

these situations. One has to become the impartial and silent observer of whatever happens, may it be Samadhi, waking dream or sleep. If that is achieved, it is beyond all these states of the world we live in, and in effect everything is Sat-chit-ananda the Absolute. Even the most humdrum work such as digging, then gives bliss or Ananda. [*Record* 3.10.72]

When you look at creation and see everything as an observer, then you start getting glimpses. That I am not the ego, but the ego belongs to me; the Manas, the body, or the chair is not my Self but for my Self. Likewise when you see everything as the observer then you get a glimpse of the Self. When this becomes permanent then it could be self-realisation. [*Record* 14.10.65]

The witness or the observer is the Atman and he doesn't do anything. [*Record* 3.10.67]

'In order to appreciate the Self described in the Upanishads, one needs simple methods. Many such descriptions have been given in the past, but more light can now be thrown on the subject. The states of consciousness experienced in deep sleep, dreams, the day-time state, spiritual awakening, Samadhi, etc., are governed by the influx of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas from people, situations and events. These all undergo change, but the Observer who sees them all as a 'passing show', always remains the same. This Observer never registers any change in itself; if any modification appears, then this must happen to the individual ego ('Ahankar') since change is its very nature . . . '

'For example, pure gold always remains gold while its uses and shapes and forms are liable to many variations. The sky remains the same, while storms, clouds, rain and snow keep on changing our view of it, and yet do not affect the sky in any way.' (One experiences this vividly every time a plane takes us up above the cloud ceiling). 'The waves of the sea cause no loss or gain to it. In the same way all these passing shows of the Gunas do not change the Atman, but only provide variety in its appearance.'

[*Letter* 30.8.7]

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Dr Roles's final revelation shortly before his death was that 'there is only one consciousness'. If there is only one consciousness, it follows that there may be only one Observer. It is the Self, the Atman. Through consciousness the Atman is self-aware; it knows it exists. It is somehow reflected in the mirror of the mind¹, so that our usual experience of self-awareness comes from this reflection; 'through a glass darkly'. But we can come to realise that our dim consciousness comes from the Self, and if in stillness we 'give up', the silent impartial Observer may emerge and even come to stay for a while.

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¹ cf. *Record* 20.1.76