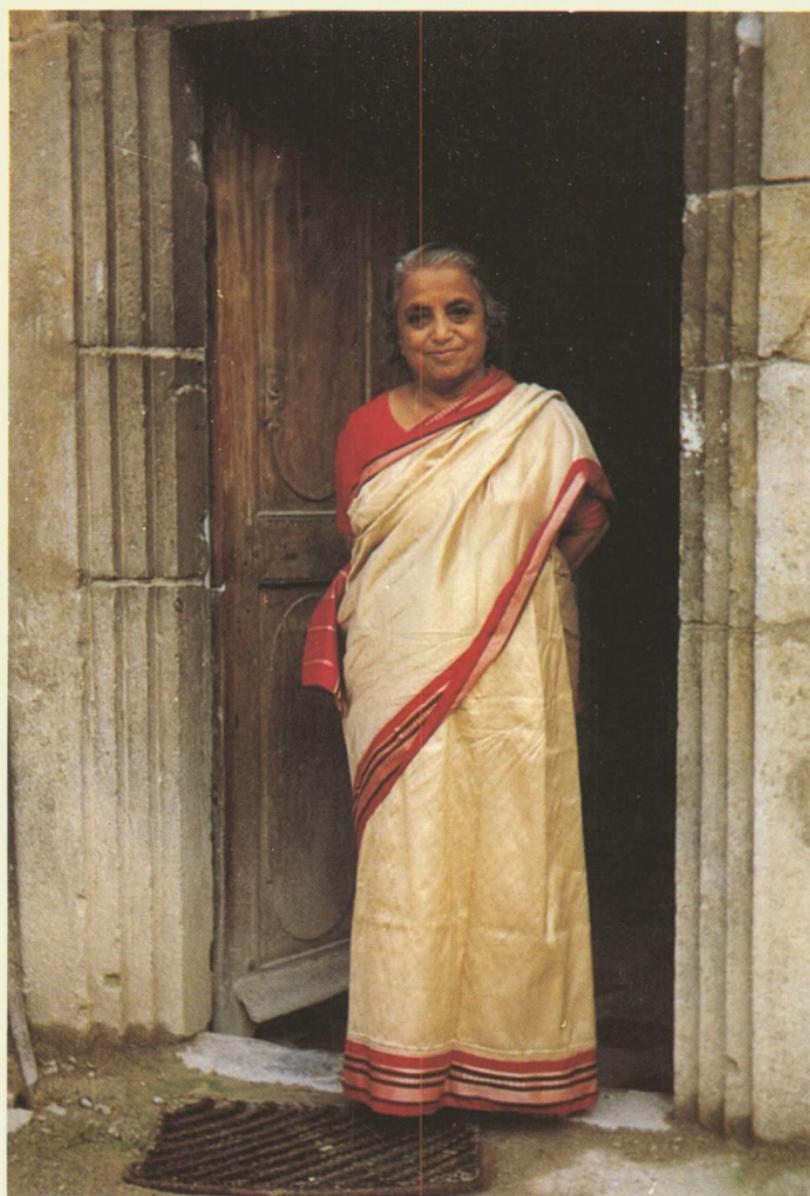


EXPLORING FREEDOM



VIMALA THAKAR

How pleased we were to have received the following text of the Talks given by Vimala Thakar in New Zealand, from the friends there, completely ready for the printer! Many thanks to them for all the work they have done!

Lies and Lau Frankena

EXPLORING FREEDOM

by

VIMALA THAKAR

Bookfund Vimala Thakar
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"EXPLORING FREEDOM"

INTRODUCTION

"Exploring Freedom" is an edited version of eight talks given by Vimala Thakar, at a retreat so named, on her first visit to New Zealand in March 1986.

In editing from the spoken to the written word, great care has been taken to adhere closely to the depth of meaning within the spoken phrases. At Vimala's request, personal anecdotes in the talks have been omitted from the book. The verbatim talks are available on audio and video cassettes.

Vimala came to New Zealand at the invitation of two people who had been interested in her work for many years, and attended a retreat with her in Australia in 1984. She was almost unknown in New Zealand, a country of little more than 3,000,000 people and the retreat, by world standards, was a small one.

Planning began with writing to the six in New Zealand who subscribed to "Contact with Vimala Thakar". Four replied and three of those attended the retreat. There was some advertising among groups with similar interests and a maximum of 45 people was set - the residential accommodation allowed for 40, with some camping sites also.

A week before the retreat began there were 39 enrolments - but it opened with 45 people, no one had to be refused. While most were New Zealanders there were others from Holland, Australia, two from Canada, a Yugoslav, one American, a visitor from England and two women, previously unknown to each other, from Germany. Their ages varied from 23 to 80 with age groups remarkably evenly distributed. In the long, narrow country of two main islands, some had to travel as much as 1000 kilometres to attend the eight day retreat.

The venue was Tauhara Centre, on the shores of the great Lake Taupo, in the centre of the North Island. Named after a mountain in the vicinity, Tauhara was established as a spiritual and educational meeting place for those united in their search for truth and dedicated to the realisation of the harmony within all creation. In one of her talks Vimala refers to Tauhara as this "serenely beautiful place."

The retreat was offered as an opportunity "to gain a new awareness of oneself and of reality." Several commented on the feeling of "family" that arose from the very beginning, and which included the dedicated staff at Tauhara. The inspiration of the talks, Vimala's presence there, something vibrant in the very atmosphere, the fun and laughter as well as a deep seriousness, brought a sense of one-ness. The teaching and learning, the sharing, the experiment in living together, engendered a real sense of joy and love. People returned to their daily lives, certainly with a new awareness of themselves and a deep gratitude for this time with Vimala.

THE BENEDICTION OF LIFE

I wonder if we have ever looked into the issue of what it is to be religious? To belong to an organised or institutionalised dogma or code of conduct, is not. To be religious one must be totally committed to the whole of life and living. One does not select certain agreeable aspects of life and try to escape from the others that are not agreeable.

One who can meet life choicelessly is committed to its totality. Let us examine this totality of life and how one lives in relation to it. Totality is not an abstraction, not a theory deduced from certain principles or tenets. It is a reality. Unless one has a true perspective of the totality it is not possible to live in relation to it.

The perception of life begins with the visible and the known, which we reach out to through the senses. We see through the eyes and we feel a presence. We hear sound, words, and through audible perception gain the feeling of existence. We smell, we touch and taste so our first contact with life is through the sense organs.

This visible world and its mysteries have been probed by mankind, so that much of the known is related to the visible, the tangible, and so on and while this may not be the foundation of totality, it is an organic part of it. Therefore the visible cannot be neglected nor ignored if one is interested in living.

The sense organs must have the energy to relate to the visible, health and pliability so that they can sense clearly. It is very difficult to see any thing as it is without the subjective reaction of preferences and prejudices that we have been accumulating all our lives, contaminating the process of perception.

Religion concerns itself with the health of the physical body so that the senses are not clouded. It is a joy to have a body vibrant with vigour and vitality and so be able to see things objectively. A non-subjective perception is the foundation of the religious life.

Behind the world that we see with our senses there seems to be an invisible world which is another aspect of totality. One can see water flowing in a river, lying placidly in a lake or in turbulent waves on the breast of an ocean, yet electricity which is derived from the energy in water cannot be seen. You can feel the coolness of water and the speed with which it flows on the river bed. You can see and feel its gentleness, yet the energy in water, even in the earth, is not visible.

The invisible aspect of totality is beyond the reach of the sense organs yet it is reached through the brain, therefore perception takes place through the brain not through our physical eyes. The invisible is still known - it is not unknown. Much of it has been discovered, analysed and put into different categories by mankind.

You and I contain the knowledge and experiences of our family and country and, surprisingly, carry in ourselves the totality of human knowledge and experience. We may not be aware of the contents of our consciousness, but the known is contained in the consciousness, the mind. It is a conditioned energy contained in our whole being, so the brain sees and feels the invisible. There is a perceptive sensitivity in consciousness which contacts the known part of the invisible, perhaps the unknown parts of the invisible also.

As there is perception through the sense organs there can be perception through the mind, which is conditioned energy containing the languages, philosophies, sciences, everything that mankind has undertaken in bygone centuries.

When one friend looks at another or a mother looks at her child, a wife at a husband, they can see and feel the love which is transmitted in a very subtle way. Nothing happens on the gross physical level, but love emanates through the glance and the other feels and perceives it. Hatred and anger can also be seen and felt that way. The energies contained in the universe and in oneself can be felt similarly. Is the perception and contact of the invisible possible through this conditioned energy, which we call the individual mind?

However, the totality of life is not limited by the known or even by the unknown. The unknown is only that part of life which is yet to be discovered and analysed, which is still not available to the brain through the senses. Beyond that unknown, beyond the invisible, there seems to be vast life in the cosmos. This is the unknowable infinite which cannot be reached through the brain.

The known, the unknown and unknowable, the visible, invisible and infinite, together constitute totality. It is possible for a human being to be in contact with these three aspects simultaneously. That is the beauty of being born in the human body which has this immense potential. To be religious is to be so equipped that one can be in touch with different dimensions of life simultaneously and live with them in harmony. This is a great challenge.

Life is for living. It has no purpose outside the act of living, which is perception, contact and relationship. How do we relate to what is perceived and what we contact?

Our first sensual contact with reality makes us aware that there is constant movement around us - in the earth and sky; the solar system, the mountains, rivers and seas, the volcanoes; in the cycle of seasons and the process of birth, growth, decay and death. We are surrounded by an ocean of movement of immense variety, by innumerable energies acting and interacting with one another. We ourselves are part of that cosmic dance of energy. We must learn to move with the movement of life and merge with the cosmos. It would be easy to learn this if there were only movement, the difficulty arises when we notice that, along with this incessant motion, there is another dimension to life which is motion-free stillness.

Motion and motionlessness, stillness and movement, together constitute, perhaps, the wholeness of life. When there is no wind or breeze dancing through the branches of the trees and there are no clouds in the skies, have you watched the stillness in the evening or early dawn - everything is still, and when you come to a place like Tauhara you feel an intense and deep peace. This peace, this motion-freeness, seems to be as equally an important dimension of life as movement is,

so one may have to learn how to be free of all movement and commune with the stillness in the universe.

There are now two things one has to discover in order to live in relationship with life - to be able to move when movement is warranted, and be relaxed, in motion-free stillness, when it is not warranted.

Speech is movement necessary for communication, for sharing. One has to learn to speak and to be in silence - sound and sound-free silence are dimensions of life - we spend so much of our vital energy in speaking. It is a most positive action to relax into uninhibited silence, to the emptiness within.

Life is thrilling - you open your eyes at dawn and you find a gift of another 24 hours with the whole universe to meet. It is an adventure to live, to meet the pain and the pleasure, the beauty and the ugliness, to encounter humiliation and honours and live through them without being contaminated by any of them.

In order that one may move with the movements of life one has to be free inwardly. Life is for living and living implies learning. Learning keeps you fresh, knowledge makes you stale.

Another aspect of life is its functional human relationship. You are born in a family, in the midst of a network of relationships, father, mother, sisters and brothers. When you grow up probably, also, wife or husband, girlfriend, boyfriend and many more.

That is one dimension - to live with another person without damaging that individual's freedom or succumbing to domination. Mankind has to learn to live with others in freedom, equality, love and co-operation.

As these functional relationships are an aspect of life, there is also the dimension of solitude. One is not talking about loneliness as when your partner dies or you move out of your family. There is a sense of being deprived in that loneliness and desire not to be alone. The aloneness of

solitude is when you enjoy being alone with life and in that you feel fulfilled.

So solitude and relationship, silence and speech, movement and stillness are not contradictory for together they constitute the composite wholeness of life, like birth and death.

We have looked at the wholeness of life from the perspectives of the visible and invisible, the known, the unknown; the infinite and the unknowable; have looked at relationship, solitude, speech, silence, motion and motion-freeness, in the midst of which one has to live.

We begin our self education with the act of perception - do we know how to look, how to perceive non-subjectively? Have we ever troubled to look at something without becoming absorbed by it - as happens sometimes when you forget yourself in the beauty of a lake and clouds or birds on the wing. It is very easy to lose oneself in the beauty of music, nature, human beings, of thoughts, feelings and emotions. One can become very sentimental in subjective reactions to these things and lose the capacity to perceive and have communion with them.

It is worth observing what happens to us while we look or listen. Is there a non-subjective action, a communion? If one notices that subjective preferences, prejudices or emotions, obstruct perception, one becomes aware of the nature of those obstacles. They cannot be put aside physically, but as you become aware of them awareness will operate upon the process of perception. That is why it is necessary to learn and equip oneself with all these capacities before we discuss the problems of fear, jealousy, violence and other emotions. Unless the foundation is laid, unless perception of totality is there, unless the mind is willing and the senses equipped, it is useless to talk about the problems of the world, of peace or brotherhood.

Is anyone capable of living in relationship to life? Unless there are such people these problems cannot be discussed except academically or theoretically or, perhaps, as an escape from the issue of a religious life. There are so many

problems on the fringes of collective life, essentially because we are not equipped for life. We are playing havoc with things, there is a mess in personal life which spreads through our relationships and becomes a social, national, even international mess. In the next chapters we shall look at individual life.

Is living an end in itself for us or is it a means to an end? A means to breach the heavens, a means to attain transformation, to arrive at liberation or enlightenment? Is it that or is it something very sacred, every moment important for itself?

One can see that, for the majority of mankind, life is a means to an end - earning money, owning property and a bank balance, getting married, raising a family, living with boyfriend or girlfriend, having pleasure, having security. So the body, the brain and mind, are all instruments for obtaining those things, that economic power. Life is not sacred for them, it is not a benediction for them to be alive, they do not feel the sanctity of the life of the universe, the cosmos. They use the days and weeks, the hours and minutes as one spends money - for gaining pleasure and security. They are not interested in talk of spirituality, learning, purifying perception and equipping the senses. They say, "What nonsense. Why bother about these things? Go to school, have a degree, have a job, enter a business, television, videos, alcohol, dancing, music, sex, weapons, wars" - that is life for them.

A sustained seriousness is required to live a religious life and to feel concern about the quality of one's actions, feelings and thoughts. It is always a minority that feels this concern.

How do you purify the process of perception? In discussing this do not feel it a burden or ordeal. Consider it as something very interesting, as children who enjoy learning to play football and other games. Learning to live is just as interesting and just as much fun. If you feel that learning about God and the divine, about transformation, satiri and yoga is a burden, then there will be no charm or joy in it. Religion enriches the joy of life and there can be joyousness in seriousness so we ask "How does one purify perception?"

Religion exists in everything that we do and the foundation of a religious life is laid on the physical level. The body has to be healthy, alert and sensitive so that the senses can function. Life is totality, it cannot be fragmented, so there is religion in caring for the body, bathing it, feeding and clothing it, brushing the teeth. If there is no religion when you speak or walk, then where is it?

Impressions gained through the senses are the foundation of perception. You receive an impression and it creates a sensation in the body, the sensation is converted into an electric impulse which reaches the brain, where it is interpreted according to your conditioning and you say, "I understand this". All this is involved in perception and response. It takes time to put it into words, but in our daily life this electromagnetic apparatus functions so rapidly that we have to be very alert to receive the correct message.

Maintaining this state of alertness requires the body to have the proper diet and this depends very much on the individual, but it has to be looked into carefully. One must understand how much and what quality of food one needs and how often one takes it. In the same way one has to find out how much sleep is necessary for the body so that one does not sleep even a minute more than is necessary. Oversleeping or under-sleeping tax the neurological system. Those who do not provide the body with sufficient sleep have artificial heat stimulated in the body which affects the brain, disturbing their senses. In those who oversleep there is a sluggishness in the brain. The brain and stomach are closely related so if the stomach is overloaded there is a strain on the brain, affecting the pituitary gland and its functioning. If sleep is irregular it affects brain and stomach simultaneously. Exercise also is very necessary, it is a part of living. So proper exercise, proper sleep and correct diet are necessary to keep the active perception physically pure. It is fascinating to study this human organism.

We began by examining various implications of the words "totality" and "living" and we concluded by referring to the first step of self-education. People the world over believe that discipline and self-education are not necessary. They

think that you listen to words, you understand and then life changes. Would that it could happen that way. Unless there is an inner order established on the physical and the psychological level the feeling that one has understood evaporates before one is able even to say to oneself, "I have understood." The understanding has to be contained in this body and this mind, it is not like understanding the meaning of a word in the Oxford Dictionary. It has to be actually lived.

It is only when one is totally committed to life and living, only when life and living do not have an ulterior, material motive but provide their own fulfilment, that one can call oneself a religious person.

SILENCE

The brain contains conditioned energy, which we call the mind. As a very complex organ, incorporated in the body, the brain contains conditioned energy-consciousness which is used for contacting the known, looking at the known and relating with it.

The known is that which has been discovered, analysed and capitalised by our forebears. We have words that describe or define it, and what we call education introduces us to this vast area of the human known and human experience.

The brain gets in touch with a word which describes an object, then we search our memory and say, "I understand". It is the intellectual acquisition of a word describing objective reality, so it is only possible to get into touch with reality indirectly. The brain gets in touch with the symbol that represents a concept. We are trying to reach the unknown, psychological, invisible world in the same way.

This intellectual way of knowing is very useful. It would not be possible to handle such things as the physical sciences, technology or engineering without it. This kind of education and training is needed for the brain to recognise symbols for what they are; to recognise the conceptual world that mankind has built systematically upon perceptual reality.

As the totality of life is not limited to the visible, it is also not limited to the invisible. There seems to be a much vaster area of life which has neither been described nor defined, which, perhaps, cannot be defined nor measured by any of the symbols that mankind has created for his convenience.

If one desires to find out what is beyond the brain, beyond mind, what does one do? There is no authority that can tell one. Even if we designated an authority and accepted its version, then that would not be a personal discovery. When we accept an authority and try to approximate our actions to the experiences and descriptions of that authority, we are comparing ourselves all the time.

This temptation to conform to someone else's experiences prevents personal investigation, so one has to discover a non-authoritarian way of investigating and exploring for oneself. It is most important to see that no one can condition the totality of life.

Truth is greater than individuals, truth, love and freedom cannot be organised. If one mechanistically repeats what others have done and is consoled by that, grafting the experiences of other people onto one's psyche, one is living secondhand. Most of us do live secondhand lives, when we live according to Hindu, Islami, Christian or Buddhist scriptures. Is there an alternative way of enquiring and investigating which does not begin from the acceptance of authority at all?

If we are to use the mind, the brain, then it will be incumbent upon us to refer to some authority because the mind cannot work without a symbol, it cannot function without a concept or an idea. It always translates reality in terms of some ideas or evaluations.

If we enquire through the movement of mind, there is no possibility of freedom through mental movement. The movement of mind is the movement of the total human race; it is the movement of thought and knowledge. The mind is trained to qualify and modify the present, interpret it in terms of the past and project it towards the future, which is useful on the material level. If you have to drive a car or an aeroplane you must store in memory precise and accurate information, you must learn how to use it and you must practise. Retention of information in memory or the reproduction of it, elegantly and competently, are valuable. When we turn to relationships where we have to deal with human beings (who are most unpredictable creatures); when we have to deal with nature, which cannot be imprisoned by any logical mathematics; when we have to turn our attention towards that which is beyond form and name and shape and colour, even beyond the invisible, then this training has no relevance.

If we are concerned with the religious revolution within us, and with psychic transformation, if we are interested in

really coming into personal intimate touch with reality as it is, surely we do not want to indulge in any mechanistic repetitive behaviour.

If the mind cannot move in any other groove than that of the known, is it not clear that we might have to let the mind alone, to let it go into unconditional abeyance; go spontaneously into effortless non action. We are going to explore together whether this spontaneous non action or abeyance of the mind is possible. There is not a technique or a method, authority cannot show the way to freedom, but we can explore together how it may be possible.

It seems vitally necessary first to come into touch with the mechanism of mind, not hear about it only in discourses and lectures, or read about it in books, but to observe the movement of mind in ones own life.

Could we start by learning to observe? This is not taught in schools nor even at home. We have created a civilisation where we have to move with nearly inhuman speed, so there is no time to help ourselves or our children to become acquainted with their own being; to be introduced to the mechanism of mind, the chemistry of thought and emotion, to learn about mental health and such matters. We are so busy earning a livelihood, obtaining power, gaining experience, seeing the world, that these things are neglected.

We have to see the necessity for a personal encounter with the mechanism of mind. Mind is not located in any specific part of the body, it is not like a kidney, liver or pancreas gland. It is an energy contained in the brain as well as, perhaps, woven into the whole neurological system of the body. It is constituted of thought so has only a vibrational existence.

When we come into contact with an object outside of ourselves the sensation immediately stimulates the memory from which there is a response. Thoughts, feelings, sentiments and emotions seem to be responses of memory. One must watch how those responses come out of habit patterns, evaluations and codes of conduct that one has accepted, see how they repeat day after day. In order that this does not remain as

information or an idea, one has to work upon oneself arduously. While one walks and talks, cooks a meal, works at the office, plays games, just observe what happens to the quality of consciousness and how it reacts to the action and interaction?

We saw yesterday that this observation is a reaction-free perception and that it is difficult for us. To sustain reaction-free attentiveness is quite an austere task.

When we just observe and the contents of the mind are exposed, the images that we have gathered about ourselves begin to shatter. We have accepted the images formulated by our parents, teachers and friends, and every day we continue to build on our own image, which preoccupies most of us. In this way, we perhaps find that we are a very religious or spiritual or gentle people.

Everyone has an image. When observation discloses something contrary to the images that we have built or accepted about ourselves, there is pain. The ego feels hurt. The ego finds the exposure to reality so unpleasant that it resists the facts exposed by the observation and coils back in its shell.

While learning to observe we stumble upon this very important fact, that we deal with images. As well as building our own images we go on and build images about others. Perhaps you do something that pleases me and immediately I create an image about you as a very pleasant person and expect you to act very pleasantly towards me always. If your behaviour changes next day there is a pain in my heart because the image that I built has shattered. If your behaviour is unpleasant, then there will be another image which will also be shattered. Such images cause us to expect people to continue behaving in the same way from one day to the next, but that does not happen. We like or dislike someone, the like crystallises and becomes a preference, another image, and we insist that the other person conform to our image. When that does not happen there is the misery and pain of disappointment, disillusionment, as we call it.

If one is interested in observing the movement of mind, or of life, there must be no preoccupation with this image making. To enquire in a non authoritative way, one has to learn not only to observe but also to stop building images. What does that imply? Where does that lead us?

Can I meet you or live with the objects surrounding me in such a way that the action and interaction do not leave a residue in the mind?

An object gives me pleasure and I have the sensitivity to register that pleasure quite normally, but, do I step beyond this and say I would like to have the pleasure tomorrow also? Is it the thought of morrow that clings to the experience of pleasure and wants to continue it?

Why are segments of experience gathered in memory to become a burden which inhibits further movement. Is it possible to go through the pain and pleasure at the moment of experience and finish with them there and then? Feel the pain, feel the pleasure, live through it thoroughly with the wholeness of one's being, with all the energy at one's command, and finish it, so that there is no residue which would culminate in an image.

A religious enquiry is quite an adventure, like climbing the mountains. As you climb and you take one more step the view changes. You take one more step in religious enquiry and you see the light, you understand and with that understanding you proceed. Every step results in inner growth. That is the beauty of non authoritative investigation and enquiry.

While learning to observe we came across the hurdle of image making and discovered that it is the attachment to the sensation of pleasure and pain which obliges us to build an image. If there is not that attachment and if there is the vitality to live every moment thoroughly and richly, whether it be pain, humiliation, honour, sorrow, joy, bliss, love, whatever it is, then no residue is left.

How does one live so thoroughly and with the wholeness of one's being? One has to be totally present in each moment,

in each relationship, not partially there, partially elsewhere. If you are preoccupied or upset you cannot live with the wholeness of your being. If we go absent mindedly through events and experiences, certain undigested, unnoticed impressions are left behind which move into the subconscious and lie there to be projected in dreams, intimations and so on.

One has to be attentive, alert and sensitive in order to pour one's whole being into each movement of life, at each moment of life. One needs to do that because what we call the present may be the only eternity, it may be the totality of life condensed in "the moment". Either you meet the moment in what you call the present or you miss the opportunity of meeting it altogether. It cannot be repeated. Life does not repeat itself. That is the only opportunity to meet life, to let it lift its veil and reveal itself to us. It can reveal itself if there is receptivity, alertness and sensitivity.

I started learning to observe, learning to be in a state of reaction-free attentiveness and I came across these hurdles, one by one. When I am just sitting with myself and looking at the movement of life, life itself begins to teach. I wish I could share with you the beauty of such an encounter, the dialogue with life and the beauty of the virgin revelations that occur.

If and when one goes through such hurdles and observes the movement of mind, one notices at once that it is mechanistic and repetitive. It is tethered to the past. There is no freedom through the mental movement and thought.

The movement of mind is really the effort of the past to perpetuate itself and manifest through you. This discovery of the repetitive and mechanistic movement of the mind, the organic built-in limitations of the mental movement, can bring a person to utter despair. Then one wonders whether, if the mental movement is of no use, one is doomed to live without freedom. For thousands of years it has been impressed on us that the divine can be reached through the mind, that transformation can be an experience of the mind and enlightenment an attainment of the mind.

Naively we believed this. On enquiring, however, we find that such experiences would be repetition and one is not interested in repetition, conformation or acceptance of authority, whether of Eastern and Western scriptures or anything else. Then one realises that it is no use moving through the mind. One has observed what the mind is and how it moves. One has seen the field of its utility and learned to use it there. One has to let mental activity go altogether and relax into an innocent non action in order to explore without the conditioned mind.

To let the mind go means to let go the whole of the known - and one trembles at the idea of letting go of the "I". If the "I" does not move, what will happen to me? If I allow the "me" to go into abeyance there will be no way of finding out where I am.

One wants security and thinks that there must be some teacher who will explain how to reach reality, how to understand what is beyond mind and brain - with the help of that very mind and brain. There must be some method, some technique.

The urge for security does not allow one to relax into the innocence of not knowing and say, "I don't know how to proceed. I only know of mental ways and they are not paths to freedom." Just to say to oneself, "I do not know where or how to move. I shall stay where I am, without mental effort in any direction, neither of knowledge and experience, nor of extra sensory perception, nor of transcendental, astral or occult experiences." One unconditionally refuses the network of traps for mental effort.

To let go that bondage of the known is very difficult. If we are attached to the known and feel secure in it, obviously we shall not let it go, even though there is an intellectual ambition to find out what is the unknown, or if there is any unknowable. You cannot be in the earth's orbit and land on the moon. The orbit of the earth has to be left behind in the same way as the security of the known - if it be security - has to be relinquished at some point for the discovery of the other, yet one hesitates to do that.

We would not be searching unless we felt that there is this other, the non-verbalised. We are sensitive enough to feel that there is something beyond the known, the verbalised and the experienced. There is a desire to find out what it is. One likes to stand at the frontiers of the mind and brain and sing hymns to that which is beyond, but to leap into the bottomless pit of silence and emptiness requires tremendous courage and vitality.

We go as far as words can take us and then we are held up with the fear of letting the mind go completely. There is no movement of the mind. Unconditional relaxation is absolutely necessary. People believe that sitting in silence for so many hours a day or going into a state of meditation or satori will, of themselves, achieve something, but these are a means to an end, one does not relax totally. In the depth of the mind is the waiting for something to happen, there is suspense. Silence becomes an experience of the mind, not a different dimension. When silence is free of verbalisation free of conditioning, there is a totally different dimension, something marvellous.

If there is no urge for security or fear of freedom, if there is no fear of life or of death, then one lets the mind go completely. We have to live on these two different dimensions.

Human beings are a very complex manifestation in the evolution of global or universal consciousness. We use consciousness when necessary but total, unconditional relaxation is the essence of enquiry. Thinking affects our whole being. If we observe the movement of thought and feelings we will notice how every thought creates attention, every feeling stimulates the chemistry of the body, affects the blood pressure and even the rhythm of breathing. Unconditional and total relaxation means there is no pressure on the body chemistry, no tension on the neurological system. That is the substance of relaxation or silence.

You can simulate that state of relaxation through drugs or by using certain techniques like the multitude of yogas, but total relaxation of the mind means that you are no longer operating from a fragment or part of your being, you are back

in the wholeness of your being. To be relaxed is to be back home, you are the whole.

We set out to learn to observe. While we observed we were helped or induced to relax by the understanding of the inbuilt limitations of the mind. One sees here that a non authoritative way can itself become a teacher and help us to take one step after another. It will not happen in the life of everyone in the same order as I describe it but I am trying to share how a non authoritative enquiry can take place.

The wholeness is very holy, fragmentation is unholy. That wholeness has concealed in it innumerable healing forces.

When one allows that relaxation to occur, the healing forces contained in the earth and sky, the trees, the sunrays and moonrays, the healing forces in our own bodies, are released. As the body is rejuvenated in deep sleep so it is re-vitalised in that state of relaxation. Unconditioned energies, which have no past whatever, are activated and released in the state of silence. Not "me", the brain, but the other, the unconditioned, begins to operate and gives quite a different perspective of life.

It seems vitally necessary that a non mental, non cerebral exploration be undertaken in order to find out if there is anything beyond the known and the unknown. To be in that state of total relaxation could be called being in meditation. Meditation is a state of being where the individual conditioned mind goes into abeyance. There is total relaxation in the whole being and it is then only the wholeness that operates through the eyes, the ears, through words. It is quite a different dimension, a state of being rather than a psycho-physical activity.

It is in that state of meditation, of unconditional emptiness that the other, the unnameable, the immeasurable, the infinite, the eternal, the divine reveals itself.

It is not for us to conquer it, to dictate terms to it. When the conditioned mind ceases to move and the unconditioned energies are released then there is the perception of the

other, the infinite, through an awareness which is intelligence - an awareness that perception itself is contact and the understanding resulting from such a perception is relationship.

Yesterday, we saw how one equips one's senses to perceive the visible and move into proper relationship with it. We also saw that it was possible to relate with the unknown, the invisible, through the mind and the brain.

This morning we have proceeded further. We have seen that in order to find out what is beyond the visible, beyond the brain, the known and experienced, it is absolutely necessary first to observe the mechanism of the mind and then to let it go. In the vulnerability and insecurity of that unconditional silence, revelations take place.

FEAR AND ISOLATION

In travelling around the world one sees that huge waves of revolt against the present civilisation are breaking on the shores of human consciousness, in every country, affluent or poor, theocratic or secular.

We are living in one of the most important periods of human history, which seems to be a transitional one. For the last two centuries mankind has been busy organising everything, creating a civilisation and culture where the organisation of life, knowledge and leisure is of tremendous importance. Now has come revolt.

After the industrial revolution in Europe and the emergence of mass production in agriculture and industry, the trend was to have everything on a mass scale, even thought, emotion, patterns of reaction and behaviour. Human beings were reduced to mere passive consumers in a civilisation where the creative energies of an individual had little relevance.

All this was done in the name of security. In a welfare state, the state looks after everything, production, distribution, education, juvenile delinquency, physical and psychological health and so on. One lives in a protective atmosphere. If it is a dictatorship, there, also, the citizen has very little say. Again everything is taken care of, not with the consent of the people as in so-called democracies, but by the force of the bullet.

This centralisation and organisation appealed to mankind for a century or so, but freedom was being lost in the name of security. This deprivation went so far that people started to believe that freedom was something fearful. It had become frightening to stand alone, to think independently for oneself and to act according to one's understanding - so the revolt has come.

This morning we shall consider the meaning of fear and isolation. Why is there fear at all? Why are we afraid to live our own understanding? What is the difference between isolation and solitude.

We have already discussed the fact that society is not a tribe or group, not a herd of human beings crowding together, but has an inner order created by the people with mutual consent. It is society into which we are born.

When you live together there have to be certain restrictions on the physical level, the very living together brings this about. On that level one has to have laws and regulations and obey them.

When Socrates was imprisoned, his friends wanted to help him escape, but he said, "Though I stand for freedom of speech and action I am still a law-abiding citizen. Were it not so, society could not exist." From this one can understand that the citizen does not succumb to pressure in order to be law-abiding, he is a willing participant in the maintenance of law and order. He voluntarily abides by the laws and cooperates with the collective in creating an atmosphere where all can live freely. He does not conform out of fear and isolation.

Let us now ask, "What is fear?" Not the word "fear" for the word is not the thing, but what actually happens to the mind and consciousness when one says that one is afraid of something.

In a strange country you would be careful not to eat anything before enquiring about it, you would not drink water in Asia without boiling it, nor would you walk in jungles where there might be wild animals unless you had information about them. That instinct of self-preservation which puts you on guard and stimulates caution is a very healthy feeling, whether the jungle you enter is one of trees or of human beings. Alert and sensitive caution is wisdom rather than fear.

To know how and when to use the word "fear" is extremely important, we may be using it incorrectly. The word itself stimulates an association of emotions and ideas which create negativity and generate inhibitions. Thus one causes misery and suffering for oneself.

Can there be fear of death? Do we know what death is, what dying is?

Is it the idea of death that frightens us, the word and its associations? One knows intellectually that death is as necessary a part of life as is birth. How can one fear it? Is it fear of leaving the known, not actually fear of death? Fear of being suddenly cut off from those we have loved, from home, the dogs, cats, furniture, the knowledge and experiences?

This really implies that fear of death is an emotional resistance to a natural law - and this also is not fear. There is an intellectual understanding of the fact and an emotional resistance to that fact. To understand intellectually is one thing, to totally accept what is understood is quite another. Without that wholehearted acceptance there can be no peace or relaxation.

Death is the unknown. How can there be fear of the unknown? There might even be adventure in it, adventure such as Socrates felt when the cup of poison was administered to him. He carefully observed the effects of the poison because he wanted to learn what it was to die.

To learn to live and to learn to die, that is the privilege of human beings.

Let us look into fear in human relationships. We cannot live without each other, we feel lonely, yet when we are together we are afraid of one another. What is that fear?

If a child has been brought up with one or both parents of an extremely dominating nature, dictating everything, constantly scolding, condemning and criticising, the child may lack self-confidence feeling that nothing he does is ever right. He may lack assurance at school and when he is grown that inhibition is biological. He will be afraid to meet people and expect to be rejected. That could be called fear, created by the atmosphere in which the child grew up.

It could be pre-natal, even from the moment of conception. If one parent enters the sexual relationship desiring to dominate or possess the other, then the metabolism and psychology of that other person begins to shrink. The quality of a child's consciousness is determined, to a great

extent, at the moment of conception. An inhibition so instilled could be called fear, the child is really frightened, not naturally but with a kind of sickness for which others are responsible.

There may not be this handicap, but ambitious people are also afraid to displease. Such a person manipulates his behaviour to ensure the goodwill of another - is always afraid, cannot meet people spontaneously, is always busy calculating what the reaction of the other may be. That would be fear, although he would not see it as such. Ambition makes you aggressive on one hand and a coward on the other.

Do we trust ourselves only when others approve what we are doing, do we fear their disapproval? "I do not want their disapproval, therefore I follow them". Is that it? Acknowledgment, agreement, approval are not bad things, but if, for the sake of these, I manipulate my behaviour, then I am losing freedom.

Living in this consumer civilisation with everything organised, standardised, even regimented from childhood, one does not trust one's own sensitivity, sensibility, intellect or decisions because everything comes as a finished product, like instant coffee. Clothes are ready made, food is ready made, we can buy anything. We even have ready made meditations and enlightenments, all the nonsense we have created in the name of religion and spirituality. One has not even had the education to reason things out for oneself, to take questions to their logical conclusions, understand them and then live that understanding.

To reason things out for oneself and to hold fast to that understanding, that is life, that is living. Yet one is afraid to do that because of one's upbringing in this society. If one lived one's understanding quite naturally, choicelessly, not as a sacrifice or sign of martyrdom, where then is isolation? You may be alone, but you are not lonely because you are surrounded by life. The trees are as important as human beings. Are they not fellow beings who share life with us? Are not the lakes, the hills and mountains fellow inhabitants of this planet? Even if you want to be lonely you cannot for there is life everywhere.

You carry the knowledge and experience of all humanity, all the energies existing in the cosmos are within you. You are a condensed cosmos yourself, so how can you be lonely and isolated?

You create isolation when you withdraw intentionally for some selfish purpose. Perhaps I do not like to meet people so I withdraw. When there is intentional, systematic, organized withdrawal, due to religious, political, economic or ethnic preferences and prejudices, then that withdrawal results in isolation. But when you stand up for the understanding that has taken place in you, then there is no isolation, though there may be solitude or aloneness.

Isolation seems to be intentionally brought about by emotional idiosyncrasies. "I want to do these things as I want and when I want, therefore I cannot live with others." One does not like to have the austerity of order in daily living so, "I shall sleep when I want to sleep and as long as I want to sleep. I shall eat whenever I feel like eating, without discipline or order. I am afraid of living with other people because living together might mean I have to discipline myself and I do not want that."

Because of the fear of discipline or order, which are part of social life, one withdraws into isolation. But, in isolation there is no life at all. Such a withdrawal may be an escape but is not living.

In the name of religion and spirituality thousands withdraw from social responsibilities and take refuge in the Himalayas in India, but the quality of their consciousness is not changed. They still suffer from anger and jealousy. Escaping into isolation is one thing, aloneness is quite another.

Aloneness is when you are among people but you do not depend on anyone, either emotionally or intellectually. You live with them, share your life with them without any dependency. You cling to no one nor create an authority out of anyone. This is renunciation - living and sharing with others, yet free of dependency.

Dependency has two forms. One is domination. Unless you have someone to dominate you feel restless. If there are no humans around you can have cats or dogs to cuddle or banish to a corner when you feel like it. The need for attachment is gratified through animals. The speaker once witnessed a fight between a husband and wife over a dog. The couple later divorced and the issue was the dog. There is so much sorrow in the heart about the miserable plight of human beings that there is no time to criticise or condemn.

Another form of dependency is the chronic disease of expectation. You expect that the other person or partners will behave according to your wishes, your norms and criteria. You do not dominate overtly but inwardly, psychologically, expecting them to fulfill your desires and meet your standards. You bind them with your expectations. Surely relationship is not putting fetters on the feet of another? Relationship is the joint adventure of living together in full freedom and love, meeting life's every moment, sharing the pain and the pleasure. This is what we have to learn. Dependency spoils the joy of love and sharing.

If I should disagree with someone in the family or organisation, honesty and courtesy demand that I say to them, "Look, this is the point where I seem to disagree with you. Let us talk it over." This is an acceptable way of sharing differences. We may still conclude that we disagree on, perhaps, one point out of ten, so we decide to ignore that one point and co-operate in the areas of agreement. The disagreement may then wither away. If we were to emphasise that single disagreement to the point where we could not work together, then, I think, human society would become impossible.

Should the disagreement really be fundamental with no compromise possible, we must decorously agree to the parting of the ways. This can take place with goodwill and affection, without any bickering, bitterness or insulting one another. I turn away, and that is not isolation. Am I afraid to turn away from one person or ten or ten thousand?

Life is too precious to waste a single moment in the luxury of nourishing fear. We have barely a hundred years to live. Out of that, eight hours a day, one third of our life, has to be spent in sleep. The first ten years are in childhood play, the last ten or fifteen basking in old age. There is no time to waste in pampering the reactions of the ego.

What we generally call fear is the reaction of the ego and it's unwillingness to accept facts as they are. Life is not made to order, it is what it is, what it has been, what it shall be. It is the cosmic dance of movement, innumerable energies acting upon one another, interacting with each other. Yet in spite of that complexity, it is a benediction to be alive.

We have seen that the industrial revolution created a society, a culture in which things were organised. It was looked upon as a sign of progress, as welfare-ism which took away initiative and the reasoning-out of things from the individual.

It is not only in affluent countries that this has happened. In schools and colleges in a poor country like India you will find that the students do not study the full twelve months. For one month only they take published books, guides and notes so that they can answer the question papers. They think going to school is just for passing examinations, not for studying and learning. They come out of universities intellectually ill-equipped. They just cannot reason things out, let alone have the understanding we have been talking about. They cannot even think academically or theoretically. They want to run away from reason, rationality, and go back to some primitive way, back to impulsiveness in the name of freedom.

The human race has handicapped itself by too much organization on the psychological level; by capitalism, socialism, communism, organized religions and the ever-widening powers of the state. Because, in a way, we are crippled, there is a revolt against this whole civilisation and culture.

As a race we are proceeding towards a post-industrial culture where organization for its own sake will have no value. Human beings will rise up for their freedom, none coming between them and the divine. No one, no middleman or agent between producer and consumer. No one, not even the state, between teacher and student. We are moving towards a new era of society based on freedom and friendship, not on comparison, competition, aggression and violence. The motivations are going to change. The dynamics of relationship will change along with revolution in consciousness.

MEDITATION

Words are born of cultures and lifestyles. If they are uprooted from the soil of the culture in which they are born, they are likely to become distorted and fail to convey their original meaning.

Before exploring meditation it is important to look at the word itself. The word "meditation" is the equivalent of the Sanskrit term Dhyana. It was introduced by Patanjali who codified the yoga sutras and gave the world the science of yoga. According to this ancient science a state of Dhyana, or meditation, is a dimension in which one can live and from which one can move and function. It also asserts that the purpose of human life is to grow into a state of inner equipoise, which is not disturbed by the movement of relationships. It has the capacity to function in a balanced way on the sensual level, in any situation.

We shall not go further into the science of yoga just now, but we had to look at the word Dhyana, which is part of it. It has been translated in English as "meditation", derived from the root "to meditate" with the dictionary meaning "to contemplate" or "reflect on". For the purpose of this dialogue we shall use the term "meditation", although it does not convey the real essence of "Dhyana".

Dharana, meaning to concentrate, hold or contain, is another term used in the science of yoga. We have to look at Dharana, as concentration, before turning to the word Dhyana, meditation, which is being misused. People from India have been travelling the world for many years and, unfortunately, using the word meditation in the wrong way. They have been teaching techniques of concentration and calling them techniques for meditation.

To concentrate is to gather all your energies together and focus them on some form, an idol, image or photograph, or you may concentrate on a mantra.

This concentration is very useful. When your energies are focused thus for a period, many latent powers are stimulated,

biological as well as psychological. Experiments have shown that if the study of concentration were introduced in schools for the age group, say, seven to fifteen, the powers of reception and retention would be increased considerably. It is a way to develop latent mental powers and, if practised for long enough, can stimulate many psycho-physical experiences. Through the practice of concentration mental powers do develop, but that has nothing to do with meditation.

This has to be also discovered from personal experience. You cannot borrow experiences from other people. It is no use grafting the experiences of others on your psyche and become a secondhand or even thirdhand person. One has to experiment and explore for oneself.

Chanting mantras is also used to induce concentration. The word mantra comes from Sanskrit and the religious literature of India. It is a selected word or combination of words which you repeat over and over. Mantra yoga is its science, which is sound-metaphysics. Sound is energy which has been employed from ancient times by the Indians for curing mental and physical sicknesses. Sound-energy and the energy of light contained in sound are used in many ways.

When you chant a mantra or fix your gaze on some object, you are making an effort. Every effort stimulates experience and every experience conditions you. Thus, concentration through the development of psycho-physical powers stimulates experiences and continues conditioning you. We humans cannot escape this, living, as we do, on the sensual level and continuously undergoing sensual experiences. It is no use adding to the conditioning process by creating a new field of experiences and indulging in experiencing in the name of religion.

Many Indian teachers are travelling abroad, giving mantras and asking people to chant them and to concentrate upon their guru or master. That has nothing to do with meditation and experiences stimulated by those techniques have nothing religious or spiritual about them. They may quieten the surface consciousness, stimulate the unconscious, and expose the contents of the sub-conscious to the awareness of the person who is concentrating.

These attract people but mislead when called meditation. If investigated for their own sake by one who is interested in the occult and wants to stimulate certain powers, that is a different matter, but what has it to do with religion? As some want political power or to become rich others turn to the astral and become ambitious. People who feel that they will have new experiences by attending discourses on religion or participating in spiritual gatherings, are rather naive.

Because meditation has been misunderstood in this way, there are many young people in Europe and America who have turned to psychedelic drugs. A generation or two has indulged in the use of consciousness-expanding drugs, most without medical help or someone to supervise them. The drugs stimulated experiences which so disturbed their nervous balance they were unable to return to normal life. They were totally uprooted and, even long after, are leading miserable lives. Drug-taking has dulled their brains, benumbed their sensitivity and they have become addicts. Thousands have grafted the Indian ritualism onto their psyche and on their way of living, going through that circus of Hare Krishna Hare Ram, doing all those rituals and believing that they are doing meditation or becoming spiritual.

It is vitally necessary to understand that concentration is not meditation. Meditation is totally allowing the conditioned mind to go into abeyance. This does not attract people because we are so concerned with becoming something different from what we are. The whole of civilisation is based on this process of becoming. Studying to become a lawyer or doctor, an engineer, farmer or administrator, is becoming different in a functional role and is understandable - but do we have to become like someone, like Christ or like Buddha? Why are we not content to be what we are and let the potential flower of it's own accord.

This obsession to be different involves us in the processes of change instead of being ourselves. The moment I want to become like someone else, what happens to me? I run away from the fact of my being. I do not even look at myself to observe how the body operates, how the mind functions and what happens while I move through relationships. I have no time to watch and observe because I have set a goal of

becoming like a Christ or a Buddha, I am busy running away from what I am towards what I would like to be or what, according to other people, I ought to become.

First, one runs away without respect for what one is, with no love for oneself. You are this and you want to become that. Through wishful thinking one imagines that changes are taking place or one struggles with oneself in constant conflict with what is. Every aim, ideal and goal create this conflict and that is disastrous.

You like to imitate someone's way of living, their diction, the food they eat, yet every imitation denies your own being. Every struggle to approximate to the ideal denies the beauty of what you are yourself.

When there is talk of letting the mind go into abeyance or silence, or mention of the emptiness of mind, it rouses no interest for one wants to use that mind, with all its knowledge and experience, just for becoming.

A religious enquiry is not at all concerned with the process of becoming, it is concerned only with the act of learning. You learn and you grow, you are not in a hurry to change but you allow total growth to take place through learning. Learning is not an acquisitive activity but knowledge is acquired and stored in memory to be used later. It has no validity in a religious enquiry. There you learn, you discover, you understand and - you do nothing. It is the understanding that operates.

Can we see the poisonous effects of this temptation to become something different from what we are? Why not accept what one is, and face that fact? Why not stay with what one is without justification or ambition to change? To remain with a fact is a tremendous thing, for when you expose yourself to the fact as it is, just innocently, the fact itself operates.

The pathless path of meditation, which is the ending of time, the ending of the movement of thought, does not interest people. If, however, we do let go the mental activity, allow the mind to go into abeyance, or non-action, willingly, with the ending of that activity itself what we call time comes to a standstill.

Very slowly, step by step, we would like to see how meditation is "be-ing" in the timelessness. When the mind ceases to move can there be a movement of time, as we know it and as we use it?

We have seen that psychological time is a very useful creation but it is the creation of the human mind. As we have formulated words and languages, we have created other symbols to use as we use currency, for collective living. Mathematical numbers are man-made but in reality there is no one, two, three, four or nine. It is human genius that invented those numbers and arbitrarily decided their relationship for the convenience of society.

Reality is number-free, there is neither the one, nor the many, it is just an infinity. We created the idea of space and we measure it into kilometres or miles, but reality is kilometre-free. As the word is not the thing, the symbol is not the reality. We have to use symbols in their own fields of utility without losing the awareness that reality is completely independent of them.

We have also created notes in music. There is sound and there is silence. Sound is reality and sound-free silence is also a reality, but what we have created is a measurement. We want to relate to the infinity of life so we create a concept of space and create symbols to measure it. We would like to relate to the eternity of life and we create the measurement of time, as year, century, month or week. They have no factual reality at all.

While using these symbols and becoming conversant with the concepts, we forget that they are not the essence of life or substance of reality, and we are haunted by them. Anxiety about tomorrow does not allow me to live today as it comes. The memory of what happened yesterday tortures me and does not allow me to meet the present and look at it as it is. I look at today through what happened yesterday. It is memory that looks, evaluates and judges, so the present cannot be met. We are unable to listen because we are haunted by the concepts of yesterdays and ideas of tomorrows, but when the mind ceases to move there is neither tomorrow, nor yesterday. You are alone with the timeless present. It is most urgent

that the religious enquirer meets the timeless present, or eternity, courageously.

We have seen that the release of unconditioned energies is one aspect of what happens in silence . Now we shall look at the same phenomenon from a different angle. Meditation is a vast subject which transports your whole being from the limited areas of experience, from the security and enclosure of your own knowledge into measure-free, symbol-free, concept-free "is-ness" of life. There is neither the me nor the not me. No perception can be born of the duality of me and not me, the me looking at and dealing with the not me.

There is quite a different dimension of consciousness and of life in silence. Only then is there the immensity, immeasurability of life of which you are an expression, as the ray of sun is an expression of the totality of the sun. No identity, no separate existence from the life surrounding you, you are of it, you are in it, you are back at your beingness.

You may wonder what is the relevance of living in that timeless present, how relevant to our daily living is such a state of no-personness, nobody-ness? The mind asks what is it that it has listened to, is it of any use?

It has tremendous relevance. While you look upon yourself as somebody you react to the behaviour of other people. You are hurt, wounded, you carry a burden of pain and pleasure, suffering and misery, you know no peace. The strain and stress of memory weary you. There is either an effort to avoid occasions of pain and displeasure, or to discover pleasing situations - we become pleasure-mongering individuals.

In the state of meditation, however, there is no possibility of being hurt, wounded, but that does not mean there is no intelligence or that a painful experience is not registered at the sensual level. There is passion, vigour, vitality, and the minutest thing is observed and registered at that level. The pain is still called pain but there is no one at the centre to store it in memory and carry it from one moment to another.

There is beauty in the state of meditation that keeps you fresh, vigorous and vital. You still go through pain, humiliation, sickness of the body, agony, misery, suffering, you cannot avoid it in this society, yet your being is not affected. You notice the pain, the agony, and it is still called agony, but there is the vitality to live through it as it comes and finish with it at that very moment. You die to experiences as they take place so that you are innocent and fresh again, free to move further. We cannot move the memory of pleasure and pain, from the resentment of yesterday's hurts or the desire to repeat the pleasures so it becomes impossible to live freely and fearlessly. On the mental level there is no freedom. You may adjust, you may compromise, use a sense of discretion or, be expert at etiquette but inwardly there is no relaxation, no inner equipoise. You may compel your senses to behave in a balanced way, but they do not behave so spontaneously.

Dhyana, or meditation, is an inner equipoise undisturbed by the movement of relationship and balanced sensual behaviour. Anger, annoyance, short temper, jealousy and other imbalances are temporary mental sicknesses that visit us every day and drain our energy. Imbalance is the only impurity. Equipoise is purity in which love blossoms and compassion is born of an inner invincible peace. An uneasy, worried, brooding mind may make all sorts of efforts yet there would be no love, which is the sunshine of life, no compassion.

Meditation is of the utmost importance for modern human beings in a society lived at such a stressful speed. It may be possible to retain one's sanity if one learns to be in that state of total emptiness, that inner space uncluttered by the movement of thoughts, and move into relationships out of that silence. It is that state of emptiness that brings about transformation. You do not have to worry about changing yourself, or hunt for new patterns of life.

Thousands of years ago the ancient Indians saw the human potential of growing into a dimension of consciousness quite different from that of self-conscious consciousness. Long after that, at the end of the twentieth century, we see the futility of spending a lifetime working through the mechanistic, repetitive movement of the mind. Where science

and technology are concerned we cannot go back to a primitive way of life, but we shall have to find a way out of this complexity and strengthen ourselves in order to retain our sanity.

No one is able to do that for us, no state, no political or religious leaders. They may feed and clothe the body, give it shelter and even educate the brain, but the bliss of inner peace and grandeur, of spontaneous equipoise cannot be taught. They can teach tantra, mantra, hatha yoga and many more such techniques, they can offer patterns of behaviour, techniques and methods, but the ecstasy of spontaneous equipoise and peace cannot be conferred upon us by anyone. It is something into which one has to grow.

The relevance of meditation to daily living is that it transports you beyond the scratches and scars of hurts and wounds, beyond the corruption of imbalances.

Exploring the possibility of enquiry that does not require accepting the authority of any person whatsoever does not mean that we do not read books, attend talks or participate in retreats. Reading a book to learn and reading to acquire information are two different things. As you eat food, digest it and it becomes the substance of your being, so when you read and learn, the learning also becomes the substance of your being.

Understanding becomes part of you but knowledge does not. The content of religion is a personal discovery of the meaning, the truth of life. In that discovery is freedom but in the acquisition of knowledge and expertise lies the misery of bondage.

We have looked at the words concentration and meditation, Dharana and Dhyana. We said that Dharana, the study of concentration, is necessary, at school age, to develop the mental powers of children, to sharpen their memory, their capacity to receive at the sensual and the cerebral level.

Dhyana, or meditation, is another matter. It is an inner revolution in the content of your consciousness, a centre-free consciousness in which you grow. Our whole

relationship is based on the duality of the tension between the me and the not me, but meditation is a state of being where you grow into a consciousness without the centre as the me. Then your totality moves through your eyes and looks at the world and there is a relationship, or communion, between the totality around and within. It is not a fragmentary movement of the brain taking in an idea about the objective reality.

Meditation takes one into the timeless present when psychological time, which haunts us in our waking consciousness, comes to a standstill and one is in the eternal present. Inwardly there is that total emptiness, and outwardly there is the timeless present. The grandeur and the majesty of the state of meditation are indescribable. One could continue for another hour and there would still be more unsaid about it than had been said.

The final point is that the dimension of meditation is a material, historical, psychological necessity for this nuclear age. This psychic mutation, or the religious revolution, of growing from self-consciousness to trans-self-consciousness, from the conceptual to the trans-conceptual level, is the challenge we are facing. Meditation is not for a handful of self-centered persons who want to have petty little experiences and powers and use them. That is juvenile. We are facing a challenge, and meditation says there is an alternative way of living, there is another dimension. The challenge is for personal exploration. If the human race does not want to put an end to itself psychic mutation is urgently needed.

MASTERS AND DISCIPLES

What is a guru, master; what is a disciple, a chela? Can there be any relationship between the two?

We need, first, to understand the origins of the words if we are to grasp their present meaning. Thus, throughout Indian history one finds that education had quite a different meaning for the ancient Indians. It was much more than learning to read and write or learning mathematics, the free arts, geography or physical sciences. These were considered necessary but the essence of education was in learning to discover one's own nature, that is, "self-realisation". It was said that all the knowledge about matter, the world and the cosmos would amount to the total darkness of ignorance if one did not understand one's own nature.

The educators, or "rishis", lived in forests far away from the cities and towns. "Rishi" is a Sanskrit word for seer or sage, one who can see into the totality of life.

The rishis lived with their families and the students became as family members. As soon as a student accepted learning through living with the teacher, he became a "disciple" or "chela". Willingness to learn in this way constitutes the essence of discipleship, to discipline oneself in order to learn and to learn in order to live.

The student would be taken as an apprentice for a couple of weeks and if he and his parents liked the place and the way of living the student would then be admitted to the "rishi-kulet", the school of the rishi. Only then would the teacher allow the student to call him a guru or a master. Master and student would live and work together for years, chop the wood, do agriculture, look after the animals, learn together.

There is a fascinating story, historically verified, about the life of Shankaradsharia, the exponent of Vedanta, who was eight years old when he went to his prospective teacher. The teacher was living in a cave on the banks of a river in central India. The boy walked up to the cave and said "OM",

as one would knock on the door in Western countries. The teacher asked, "Who is there?" The boy replied "Your reflection." "Why have you come here?" "I have come to see the origin of the reflection." The teacher came out and prostrated himself before the boy saying, "Welcome, you have come here to honour me with the privilege of teaching you. Be it so."

Do you see the relationship of perfect equality between the two, the mutual acceptance and respect? A person becomes a teacher when the learner is willing to learn from the life and the teachings in this way. The teachings are more important than the teacher, learning is more than a so-called relationship. That was a way of life and of education in India, living and education were not separate.

There were no schools apart from the centres, or ashrams, where the rishis lived. The word "ashrama" comes from "shrama" meaning labour, hard work, and ashrama is a place for relaxation from every kind of labour. Learning was not an intellectual or fragmented activity and was concerned with much more than the acquisition of knowledge. It was to enable a person to manifest his or her potential.

A teacher of sciences like Hatha Yoga or Mantra Yoga or other techniques was not called a guru. In Sanskrit a guru was one who could share understanding about the nature of reality, that ultimate reality contained in the human form as well as all other forms in the universe. In other words a guru was a person who had transcended the centre of the "me", who had transcended duality and all its tensions. There was no commercialism about it, no sale-purchase business, no charging fees.

If you read the Upanishads or the Vedas, you will see the important implications of the dozens of instances where a student, after spending a couple of years with the teacher, said, "I am very sorry, sir, I do not agree with what you have been teaching us, so may I take your leave now?" The teacher would bless the student saying, "Please do go and discover places where you can learn and, after learning, come back and teach me." It was a very flexible and beautiful relationship, without owning or possessing.

The words have travelled through the centuries gathering the dust of misinterpretation, misunderstanding, credulity, beliefs and tradition, and have come to mean something quite different from the original. Now that there are no forests and no such teachers allowing students of life to live with them, what are we to do, how shall we learn with nobody to tell us? How do we become disciples, learners?

We have been talking about learning by oneself and to begin learning by watching our own lives. We have found out that we are bundles of conditioning, of knowledge and experience, patterns of behaviour, fears, jealousies and violence.

What shall we do about that conditioning? We are anxious to learn so shall we reject it? Yet both attachment and rejection are ways of relating oneself to conditioning. Will revolting against it uncondition consciousness? Do we just go on negating everything? Can conditioning be destroyed, can it be wished away, explained away? Would you want to kick the earth because the law of gravity is a bondage to your feet or would you use the law of gravity in order to walk, run and climb? The earth is what it has been and that it shall be. To negate, deny or reject it does not change the substance of the earth, in the same way denying or rejecting conditioning is not going to change its nature. Conditioning will still be there, as is the colour of my skin, right within me in the form of various vibrations.

What one can do is not accept its authority or allow the past to condition one's perception. Once you discover the past as past, conditioning as conditioning, and attach no importance to it, you do not pamper and worship it, then, maybe, awareness of conditioning and its nature will liberate you from its clutches. Conditioning is still there, like burnt out ashes, harmless once you do not accept its authority.

Not to accept the authority of conditioning is a serious matter. The world accepts the authority of the past, all the divisions and fragmentations of nations, races, religions, all the ideological, political and economic divisions. It accepts the authority of sciences like ethics, morality, organised religions, the authority of violence and hatred.

When we say we do not accept the authority of conditioning we imply that we do not accept the authority of violence, of untruth, divisions, fragmentations, of money, power or pleasure. Having seen how affluence, political power and violence corrupt the being, is there a willingness in us not to accept the authority of any of these whatsoever?

When you are no more an Indian or a New Zealander, no more a Catholic, a Hindu, Buddhist or Christian, when you drop all the labels formulated by the human mind and remain in the glory of the nudity of consciousness, then you begin to live. Do you see how austere it is to be religious?

Renunciation is really not accepting the authority of the mind, of thought. Renunciation is not in giving up homes, clothes, wives or children and running away to the mountains. That is all very juvenile. The world does not exist outside of you, you are the world. You are society because in your consciousness are all the value structures organised and standardised by society, the world is right there within you.

When there is a willingness not to accept the authority of the mind we begin to learn. The mind asks how it can learn alone, it feels that is a very dangerous path. "I will find a teacher," it says, "then it will be safe for me to investigate and explore." There is the urge for freedom but as soon as the thought structure appreciates the intensity, the depth of that urge, it begins to play its tricks, it says, "Go ahead, if you want to find freedom seek out a safe place and some safe teacher for that." One wants to discover the essence of freedom yet begins by accepting authority. It is the trap of the mind which says that we will throw away all the old authorities - but give us some new ones.

Accepting authority is actually looking at reality through the words of someone else. We have to see what is implied in accepting authority, what it means not to accept authority, otherwise we may be misled. You read books, you attend talks and you learn without becoming emotionally attached to the person through whom the words come, but when you convert that person into an authority you hang on his words and cling to him, you weave a net of authority around the person. You begin to believe that the person himself is greater than reality.

When you discover the truth it is like lighting a candle from one already alight, then each burns on its own. There is a meeting between the learner and the one who has already learned - but there is no relationship.

Accepting an authority is imposing a relationship upon the enlightened person. When there is enlightenment or liberation there is no centre as the "me", no person in that body, there is the majesty of nobodiness, no-personness. The person has a physical body and the bodily functions continue spontaneously, but there is no identity as the "me" wanting to retain its separateness from the rest of life. It is the life universal that vibrates in that person. When there is no me in that person how can a relationship be established? To impose a psychological relationship on the enlightened person is creating an authority out of him or her. This is a very serious issue.

Not to accept authority implies that you learn, you discover the truth and in the elegance of freedom you live the truth that you have discovered. It may only be a tiny bit of truth but once you begin to live that tiny bit, in the light of your own understanding, then the rest happens. The tiny bit is an emanation of the totality, not a part of totality but an expression, an emanation of it. To be a disciple, therefore, is to focus all the energies on learning - not on learner nor teacher.

It is very difficult to come across a real teacher because that teacher does not put up signboards nor enter into the business of selling spirituality or religion. However, if life brings a learner across the path of a teacher, it is a happening; one can learn and move further, live one's own life, be a light unto oneself after learning, without converting the person into an authority. That is, there are people who could be called gurus or teachers but there cannot be a timebound psychological relationship with them.

When there is a genuine enquiry and a passion for the discovery of truth, when there is a divine dissatisfaction with everything except that enquiry and a person becomes a living flame of the enquiry, meetings do take place. The meeting of learner and teacher may be only a moment, but that

moment is eternity. Though physically they may be poles apart there is no separation thereafter.

However that is, apparently, not what we want. We want to learn from a person and say "That is my guru and my guru is greater than your guru". We want to compare, we want to own, to possess. We find out how many people are around that teacher and then that the master smiles at one and not at another, frowns at a third and there are fights and quarrels among the so-called disciples. Living in a country where there are hundreds, if not thousands, who claim to be baghwans and gurus, one sees credulous, naive people victimised by their advertisements and propaganda. There are ashrams everywhere in India and people willingly create a kind of slavery. They turn away from their civilisation, their parents and teachers, from everything, and go to India willingly accepting the slavery.

It seems, therefore, that there cannot be a relationship between a master or a teacher and a learner, only a meeting, a happening, not a relationship.

Someone who wants to discover the meaning of life and relationship has to trust his or her own understanding. When you read a book and understand, you trust the understanding, not the book. If, in living that understanding; it is shown that truth is not exactly as it was described in the book, a disciple of life has the courage to say that the book is wrong. The light of his own truth and understanding is much more important than what is written in the book. The books are not holy, it is understanding that is holy.

Of what use is the sermon on the mount for the Christian world when it says that if someone strikes you on one cheek then give him the other, or if someone asks for a shirt to give him the cloak? Has that any relevance without understanding? Christians may build churches and cathedrals, as the Hindus build their temples and Muslims their mosques, and glorify themselves by those constructions. But the magnificent communications of Jesus of Nazareth, where are they? Where are the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed, who was a messenger of peace and created peace among various tribes in the Middle East? Where are the teachings of

buddha? We are obsessed with the person and their personal details to such an extent that we forget the teachings. We create sects and dogmas and begin to fight again, find new weapons for jealousy, for ambition, fighting and violence. So much blood has been shed in the name of religion and spirituality, there has been so much hypocrisy in the name of the guru-chela master-disciple relationship.

Can we, then, find a new approach to religious enquiry where the disciples do not exploit the teacher by creating an authority out of him or her; where there is no exploitation of the learners by the teacher; where the relationship is just one of learning and sharing?

What is the relationship, for example, between this speaker and the listeners? We meet here as friends and will soon part. Life brought us together and we have shared a beautiful time. Is there any relationship between us, except that we are fellow-enquirers and fellow-residents of the planet. That, in itself, is a beautiful thing.

In industrially and technologically advanced countries modern civilization is not congenial to the human mind. In this mechanised, depersonalized and dehumanized way of life one feels lonely and would be pleased to find places where like-minded people were living, ashrams where there could be humane relationship. People gather together, live in a commune or ashram - which is beautiful - but it is to fulfil a psychological need not for spiritual enquiry, one need not feel selfrighteous or holy about it. Gratification of psychological needs is as important as gratification of physical needs.

However, enquiry about the ultimate nature of reality, the meaning of love, the mystery of relationship must be conducted in the sanctity, the sanctuary of aloneness. You enquire, you understand, you live that understanding, you take a step and living enriches your understanding, adds depth to it. If you find that your own understanding is inadequate, you falter and make a mistake. There is nothing wrong in that, in doing "wrong" things, for the wrong-doing becomes a teacher creating an inner compulsion to find out what went wrong and how it did so.

While I am enquiring, the momentum of conditioning comes back. I become aware of its return and I wait. I stop as soon as I see that conditioning, the past, is overwhelming me and I do not want to accept its authority. If you do not try to suppress or control the momentum or cover it up, then it subsides. The very act of controlling only adds more momentum.

When this is recognised, pause for a moment so that there is space between the momentum and oneself, then the darkness of unawareness or inattention is gone. You are attentive, alert, you see it and the seeing of it is the remedy.

You see the past as it comes up in the form of anger, jealousy, intolerance or violence and you do not run away from it or say, "Violence is coming, now I must become non-violent. What shall I do to become non-violent?" In that we are running away from the fact as it is, to its opposite. The opposite actually contains the fact from which we are running. When I notice the past as conditioning coming up, the upsurge of perceiving is a very great event. I see, I look at it and I stop. That perception, that total act of looking and the power of the fact act upon each other.

What would be the content of conditioning if I did not immediately imagine how the past may act upon me? What would happen if I did not construct an image but just stayed put when it came. Can you look at a sexual impulse, lust for power, greed or ambition, as you look at your hands and feet? The very perception of that, as the inner you, could liberate. It must be the action of the whole mind, not a mind dividing itself into the actor and conditioning,

Understanding is the master, the guru, the courage to stay with the fact is the disciple. There is a master and a disciple within us all.

THE NUCLEAR THREAT AND ME

Is there anything that an individual can do to prevent nuclear war? It is most important not to treat such issues superficially, but to go to the very roots of the problem.

Have we ever made it our concern to discover the roots of war and of violence in human life? Apparently the battles are fought between Russia and America; Iraq and Iran; Lebanon with Israel; India with Pakistan and the many others. Can we arrest these wars by persuading the presidents of America or Russia, the Ayotollah Khomeini of Iraq, Hussein of Jordan or Colonel Gadaffi of Libya that they should not fight? What is the power behind the decisions of these prime ministers and presidents? Whence are they sanctioned in strengthening the defence departments and maintaining an industry of war? Where is the sanction for the proliferation of nuclear weapons? Is it only with a handful of politicians and the administrators of states?

A century and half ago there was a pious desire to root out exploitation, which was looked upon as the root of violence and wars. The workers of the world were called on to unite in an explicit desire to wipe out state boundaries. People felt that capitalism caused war and the inner contradictions of that system brought about exploitation. With the coming popularity of the Socialist ideology and its various branches - and, later, communism with the worship of Marx, Engels, Lenin and others - people began to believe that there would be an end to exploitation, that there would be real equality, fraternity and liberty.

Communist ideology, however, carried within it the same rot as Capitalism. As a reaction to private ownership, it created state ownership of land and the means of production. Instead of laissez-faire and free economy it started planned economy, centralised production and distribution with everything owned and managed by the state. This vision of the rule of the proletariat has not materialised, exploitation did not end nor could a classless society be established.

While travelling through Yugoslavia and after discussion with the leaders it became apparent that the attitude of man towards money and ownership had not changed there. The ratio of remuneration between unskilled and skilled labour was still very great. Why could not a classless society be created even in the nearly 18 or 20 years since the Yugoslav revolution and its freedom from Russia? The country's leaders candidly agreed that they could change the socio-economic, political and administrative structures but not the quality of human consciousness; they could not change the minds of the people.

It would seem that the root of violence and exploitation is not only in the systems and structures but becomes incorporated into them because it is already there in the human psyche. To change outward structures may postpone wars but it is naive to believe that such changes will end war.

There have been demonstrations and peace marches everywhere, all over the world thousands have marched through the streets to register their protest against nuclear weapons and nuclear war. This does impose some non-violent moral pressure on the leaders of the respective countries, but it is like opting for patchwork reforms without touching the texture of human relationship - just piecemeal reforms here and there and a feeling of satisfaction at having done something.

Wars are related to our total way of living, not just to the decisions of a handful of people. Although the decisions seem to be in their hands, the sanction for those decisions comes from you and me. We are the world because we sanction the existing structures in dozens of ways. If we like the present way of living, the present perspective of life, if we want to continue being pleasure-mongers, craving for security to be provided by the state, then we can do little to prevent nuclear wars.

Every country on earth now wants nuclear weapons. Some unhappy developing countries are devoting a lion's share of their budgets to them, which has created a pathetic situation in some Asian and African countries. They want to enroll their names on the list of countries that have nuclear

weapons. What an illusion this is in the name of defence for they know that there is no defence against a nuclear weapon. Even in India, that country of Mahatma Gandhi and Buddha, members of the Federal Parliament can be seen vying with one another in argument about the necessity for nuclear weapons.

People want nuclear weapons; those involved in the war industry actually want proliferation of them. There is a huge industry of war in the United States. They sell weapons to Iraq and to Iran with which they fight each other; they provide weapons for Lebanon and Israel and let them fight. It is a ghastly industry. They talk about God, attend churches, temples and mosques, at the same time preparing to kill homo sapiens, our own species. Do you see the callousness and cruelty, the brutality that has contaminated the human psyche?

Do not think it is "out there", in "them" and not in us, not in me. It would be harbouring an expensive illusion to feel that we ourselves are free while the violence, injustice, the exploitation and wars are "somewhere outside", while we are not responsible for them. It is very easy to feel that is so, easy to indulge in a martyr complex.

We must ask whether we do or do not want wars. Do we want violence? Is there violence in us and in our daily relationships with one another? Do we sanction violence in our daily life? That is the crux of the matter.

It is unpleasant to feel one's own responsibility, it is preferable to feel that one is a victim. The roots of war and of violence are in the individual psyche, yours and mine. They appear on the fringes of collective life, social, economic, political and international, but they cannot be eliminated there.

Was there not once a League of Nations that wanted to create world peace and put an end to wars? When that lost its dynamism it was replaced by the United Nations - yet what has that done since the Second World War? It has postponed wars but postponement of war is not peace, there has been no peace in the last 40 years. When we consider the Berlin wall, Vietnam, Ireland and Great Britain, Israel and Lebanon, can

we show what problems the United Nations has solved? They have done marvellous work establishing such things as the World Health Organisation, The World Food Organisation, and in providing relief, medical help and food - but those are another matter.

Does the human race really want to put an end to war and have peace as a total way of life? If so, then we shall have to analyse the psychological, economic, political and cultural dimensions of peace, because peace is a total way of living. Peace cannot be artificially imposed, cannot be grafted on to existing structures, it is not just a nice feather to be worn in our caps.

Today there is the fear of nuclear war and tomorrow there will be the possibility of star wars, war from space, against which there will be no defence whatsoever. Even today innocent civilians are slaughtered and we have seen chemical warfare. What has happened in the last 25 years is enough to shock the sensitivity of any alert citizen of the world. Any imbalanced person can trigger a war today because of the massive quantity of arms stored in so many countries; France and England have them, even Pakistan and India seem to have them and, of course, the Super Powers.

An individual cannot persuade the world leaders - they are not going to listen to any voice of reason. They may show that they are influenced by it for a while but will only return to their old ways. Consider the reluctance of the President of America to meet Gorbachev in Geneva. It took Senate and Congress a real effort to persuade him to agree to that meeting. Yet unless we can persuade the leaders the whole human race could perish - although it is unlikely that humanity would be stupid enough to commit collective suicide like that, there is still that possibility.

Between the possible moment of perishing and today, here and now, what can you and I do while we meet here in New Zealand? Apart from demonstrations, peace marches, appeals, letters and articles, music, dance, drama, can we do anything to bring it to notice? Is there anything that we can do with ourselves so that, at that moment of final death, we shall at least be free of the inward battles and fights and wars; at

least we shall be able to die as a centre of peace. An intensity and depth of sorrow is vibrating through these words.

After wandering around the world and working for years in the World Peace Brigade with Martin Luther King, the Rev. Michael Scott, Donald Groom, and many others, one is today in a position to say that the roots of war are within the human psyche and have to be tackled there. You begin with yourself, I begin with myself irrespective of what is happening 'out there'.

Am I willing to let go the present evaluation of life and the value structure of society in which I am living and create an alternative way of living for myself; an entirely different way of relating to nature, to human beings, to thought, knowledge and experience - to myself? Am I willing to do that, to go to the roots and eliminate the cause of war, at least from the life of one individual? Through each individual the human race is taking the journey; through each individual the human consciousness is evolving and developing.

Transformation in the life of one person is of tremendous importance for it affects the consciousness of the whole human race. As I cannot do anything about the external symbols and manifestations I must turn inward and tackle the very roots of violence in my own psyche and set myself free. If it can happen in one individual it will indicate that it can happen in the lives of all, because we are not separate, we are all one. Is there that deep concern that will allow me to convert my whole life into a laboratory and conduct research there on behalf of the entire human race, to discover whether the elimination of violence is possible in words, in deeds and in thought?

I look to my behaviour from morning until night and notice that the I-consciousness, in its every movement, is acquisitive and therefore on the defensive. The I-consciousness has been trained to acquire and to store, like a squirrel which goes on collecting things. On the physical level, where it is concerned with acquiring food, shelter and clothes, there is comparison and competition; it

is afraid of losing what it has collected so it has to be on its guard.

Acquisitiveness and defensiveness go together as do comparison and competition. In that competition is the germ of assertion and aggression.

Can you understand that the moment of comparison is, really, the moment of potential aggression? The I-consciousness does not know how to move without an acquisitive motive, ready to protect itself from others - who are themselves behaving similarly. It then proceeds to transfer the acquisitiveness, the fear of deprivation and the desire to compare, from the physical to the psychological. Yet, on the psychological level the I-consciousness has been grabbing and acquiring knowledge since childhood. Knowledge is organised information and the collection of it brings a feeling of power. This would be relatively harmless if it were not for the temptation to deduce permanent conclusions and develop theories based on that knowledge.

It is valid to hold theories about such things as making a car, an aeroplane, a missile or a rocket. It is when theories are developed about human beings, human lives and relationships that problems arise. Theories are also developed about God, whether there is one God or many, is the god personal or impersonal - is it he, she or it? Something that is outwardly like the socio-economic, political structures is created, but, inwardly, the I-consciousness is creating structures about God, the Divine, then about human beings and relationships. Theories can be very rigid and have to be protected, as have the dogmas and sects created in the name of religion.

The war between Iraq and Iran is among Muslims. The Ayotollah Khomeini, leader of Iran, is convinced that the Iranian Muslims are superior to the Muslims living in Iraq. The racial government in South Africa feels superior to the blacks in that country. State terrorism is being justified there, where it is racist fundamentalism, as it is religious fundamentalism in the Middle East and caste-ist fundamentalism in that unfortunate India.

Do you see that the roots are in the human psyche? They create external structures, then vested interests in those structures, then inward structures and vested interest in those also. Then there comes propaganda to show how one structure or theory is superior to the other. It may be Hinduism is superior to Islam or Islam to Hinduism, or the Catholic denomination is superior to Presbyterians, Methodists or Protestants. This type of comparison, this competition, are the same thing that we do from morning till night in our daily life, making these collective deductions, theories, dogmas, sects - and that is how war comes about.

As if that was not sufficient people turn to spirituality, acquire occult or transcendental experiences and build theories around them, wanting to organise the truth they have found. In the name of politics, political and economic ideology, religious and then transcendental or spiritual ideologies, we create structures and vested interests. Then, in the guise of protecting them, we fight against one another.

It is crucial that we understand how wars are born. When you feel superior to others you have a sense of self-righteousness and become callous. That is where exploitation begins. The moment you feel superior to another human being the seeds of exploitation are sown. Whether verbal, psychological or through action, it is exploitation nevertheless. The amount of psychological exploitation and warfare within the four walls of every house, every organisation and institution, are the unwritten battles. No one writes a history of the psychological warfare that goes on, so we are not aware of it. Wars are wars whether they are fought with words or weapons. The destruction and mutilation of the psyche is perhaps, much more devastating than the destruction of material property.

Using words we are taking a journey together, not spreading information but looking at psychological facts. In themselves the words are not of much importance but the facts they point out and the truth behind the facts, that we feel with sensitivity, are of the greatest importance.

Do we see that it is the acquisitiveness incorporated in the I-consciousness that is the root of violence and wars? We may watch to see whether the "I" can ever move without being urged by the need for acquiring pleasure, goodwill, recognition, or prestige; wanting some gratification of ambition or of the image of oneself. Even if we watch for the fun of it we shall notice that there is an acquisitive motive behind I-consciousness, whenever it moves and in whichever direction. You may sublimate the motives - many techniques have been developed for this - but the "I", that identity which sublimates the motives and looks at those sublimations, remains there, it is static.

The challenge facing humanity to find is an alternative way of functioning psychologically. Is it possible to dodge the centre of the "Me", not to function from this I-consciousness but from a different dimension? As long as we retain the I-consciousness there will be no end to exploitation and violence. Whether we like it or not, this is true and there is an urgency in this truth.

What can I do to prevent nuclear war? This question is reduced to: "What can I do to explore whether there is an alternative way of functioning through consciousness, which does not suffer from I-consciousness - from the 'me', the self, the ego." It is certainly very difficult to accept that this 'me', this self, is at the root of all war, of all violence.

Mankind has tried to feed different ideologies and thought structures into this I-consciousness; instead of Capitalism, Communism; instead of Communism, Gandhi-ism; in place of Atheism, Agnosticism and other 'isms, but it has not helped.

Feeding new thought patterns into the brain will not end war. The I-consciousness will find new weapons; instead of a bow and arrow, a sword; instead of a sword, a gun, then nuclear and chemical weapons, perhaps even more sophisticated weapons than these. That is how we are using natural sciences.

It is a question of a radical revolution in the psyche - to empty the consciousness of the total human past so that there is no trace of 'me' left behind. It is only in the ending of

the I-consciousness and its movement that peace is possible. That is why one talks about meditation as a way of life, operating from a consciousness that has no centre and no circumference, one that has no past, is unconditioned, unsullied by the touch of thought.

In the realm of that non-duality there will be a different perspective of total life, a different way of relating with one another, not out of fear but from mutual trust and respect. Then we shall be able to see human beings as expressions of life and not label them by race, religion or creed; then we shall not be proud of theories like national sovereignty - which is one of the many political and economic myths we nourish. We have discarded many religious superstitions - are we also willing to throw away political and economic myths, which have no relevance to the present context of our life? If we want to remain divided as nations and believe in what is called nationalism (which is, after all, only sophisticated tribalism) if we want to preserve national interests and economic, political, ideological and racial imperialism at the expense of global and planetary interests, are we not hypocrites to talk about preventing nuclear war?

Can nuclear war be prevented? Is there any compatibility between peace and those divisive and separative loyalties mentioned above? If we are dedicated to those how can we establish peace? Acquisitiveness, comparison and competition are the same on the individual or national level, they do not become virtues when used in the name of nation, religion or race. Do we see that these traits are obnoxious, or do we really believe that only America and Russia are responsible for this terror of nuclear warfare? Are we so naive as to believe that?

I am the world and I wage war inside myself. Are we not aware that Man is violent, in spite of all his culture, civilisation, religion and philosophy? We are on the verge of a crisis which will be fought on the psychological front. There is an urgency about this psychic mutation; we have our backs to the wall; there is no choice. However much the self, the 'me', that illusory centre of the thought structure, may be useful at the material, physical and

sensual level, its mode of operation is proving disastrous. On the psychological level of human relationships both individually and collectively it is calamitous.

Let us be aware of this truth so that we may explore the challenge in our own lives as to whether there is any other way of operating. Can there be freedom from this prison-house of thought or is mankind doomed to live forever a prisoner of the thought structure?

Do you see what the problem really is? It is freedom from the thought structure, from the fear, jealousy and competition, from acquisitive motivations and so on. It is all there. It has the momentum of thousands of years behind it so you cannot change it, control or reform it, it will defy all your efforts - it already has.

The challenge is to explore if there can be freedom from thought, explore those horizons beyond the 'me' - which requires great vitality, energy and fearlessness. If I do that in my own life, then in my humble way I am contributing to the evolution of human consciousness and to the peace of the planet.

THE REALITY OF LIFE

What have we been doing while these talks were being given? Have we explored what it is to listen to a communication that is neither narrative nor descriptive? Have we looked at communication that has no academic or theoretical aspect whatsoever but is heart to heart? How do we listen to such a communication?

What have we been doing with ourselves while listening to these talks? A friend has come from a distant land to share her perceptions, her understanding, even her own flesh and blood. There was and there is no authority but there has been the authenticity of life behind every word that has been communicated here.

We are accustomed to academic lectures and courses and to propaganda talks, based on some ideology intended to convert or to convince. From these we can gather ideas that are woven into the talk or the lecture, take them home, compare them with other ideas, other narrations, descriptions or definitions and store them in memory. It is very easy to decorate the memory with an assorted collection of philosophical and theological ideas. While listening to such talks one does not have to observe what is happening to oneself. One can easily become busy acquiring ideas and information with the usual cerebral activity.

What happens to our listening, however, when we are with a speaker who is not interested in theories and conclusions, perhaps has no conclusions but is just sharing life? What do we do when a speaker shares life with us and does not hand out theories? If the talk is about the invisible, intangible human consciousness and psychological facts, then how do we listen with only the help of words, without ideas to indicate facts in the invisible realm of consciousness. Do you see the responsibility the act of listening involves?

Listening and seeing have to go together. With the help of the words of the speaker, one looks at the psychological realm within oneself, which is the human realm. The psyche is not entirely an individual affair, it is the common

psyche, shared by the whole of mankind. It seems that perceiving or seeing is also necessary while listening. You listen to the words and look within, observing the psychological facts indicated by the words. Perception is thus an integral part of audition. If that does not happen, then one could return empty-handed, could convert the communications about life into theories and ideas, collect them and go back to the old game of approximating one's life to some new communication, trying to adapt, to carve a pattern out of what one heard.

Truth has no pattern, no chiselled-out path; the path has to be carved within and by ourselves. We are the path as we are those who have to march on that path.

Listening then, involves seeing. You use the spoken words to aid self-observation as you use a mirror to look at yourself. The essence of religion is self-discovery and self-understanding, not self-knowing. Does the listening involve perception of the movement within, for if it does not it will just end as an emotional, intellectual entertainment. Surely, we did not come here for that, we are serious-minded persons. These gatherings have value only if self-observation or perception take place through dialogue and discussion, through quiet hours and communion with nature.

A second important issue is a daily experience of every one of us; that is, the immediacy of response to physical perception. When someone points out a physical fact like, for instance, a door or a wall you will walk through the door but do not try to walk through the wall. That is an immediate response to physical perception, so nobody bangs their head against the wall and easily walks through the door.

It is a different matter, however, when someone mentions a psychological fact. Suppose it is pointed out that the brain, through which we function during our waking consciousness, is heavily conditioned. The nature of conditioning, which is repetitive and mechanistic, may be considered. It may be stated that anger or jealousy, pettiness or charity, thought, emotion and feelings are not personal but the product of collective, organized efforts.

We hear from the words that thought is a response of memory, organized by the collective human race and fed into the brain, so the movement of thought is mechanistic and repetitive. We listen to those words but do we look at that fact of the brain being conditioned? Do the words enable us to look at the heavy conditioning systematically fed into the brain by society, by religious priests, by so-called spiritual teachers for generation after generation?

It is the perception of a fact which will create a movement within, not just listening to words. The words have a value only when they are used as sign-posts to look at the facts - then one moves ahead.

We shall consider why there is not the immediacy of response to psychological facts as there is to physical facts, when they are pointed out. Someone might suggest that we "look at the movement of anger when it arises," how it creates tension in the stomach and in the optical nerves, how it generates tension and heat throughout the body, how it creates an inner compulsion causing you to shout, scream, hit. What happens when the harm it does to your body-chemistry and neurological system is pointed out, apart from the harm you might cause to others. What happens when attention is drawn to the many times a day your whole neurological and chemical systems receive shocks, draining your vitality so that there is no intensity or depth in your being and you become susceptible to every disturbance?

This is not very difficult to understand when it is pointed out in words. If we see that, then what is it that keeps us clinging to those habits of anger, of smoking or any other addiction or habit pattern? It is we who cling to them, not the habits that cling to us; so why is there not an immediacy of response? If you see a snake, you immediately jump away. If you see a fire, you do not wait and say: "Well, the house may be on fire, but I have built it with such great love and I have all the beautiful furniture inside, I have lived in it for forty years, how can I leave it?" When we are relating to physical facts the truth of the fact immediately percolates through every layer of our being.

What prevents us from seeing the truth behind psychological facts when they are logically, sanely and compassionately pointed out? This is not a master talking to disciples but is said in a friendly way as these things are very valuable. We do suffer from habits and conditioning so why is it that there is not that quantum leap away from them? Why is the conditioning not dropped completely, unconditionally? We argue to ourselves: "Well that is human nature, people have been getting angry and there has been violence for thousands of years, how can it go now?"

Why is there not that intensity, that passion which result in the dropping of cerebral, psychological conditioning as there is in the dropping of physical action? You jump out of the window, leaving everything behind, when the house is on fire. Yet is not the fire now in the psychological world, which mankind has created, with all its misery and suffering, in the name of relationships?

Could it be that we never lived by our own understanding since childhood. We have been nourished on other people's thoughts, encouraged to impose upon ourselves the experiences of others, urged to become someone different from what we are rather than allow ourselves to blossom and flower in our own uniqueness. No two human beings are carbon copies of each other or even comparable, everyone is unique, that is the beauty of life. We have never learned not to borrow thoughts and ideas, which we arrange beautifully and have an assorted collection to use when necessary.

Have we become second-hand, third-hand people by imitating, aping and approximating so that we can never trust our own understanding or perception? We insist on looking at facts as a Hindu, a Christian or Moslem, as a New-Zealander or a Dutchman. One has never trusted oneself, perhaps never looked at nor respected oneself. All the respect and reverence has been reserved for the scriptures, the priests, churches and temples and one's life has become a field of sensual and psychological pleasure.

It seems vitally necessary that the religious enquirer has respect for his or her own perception and understanding, and the courage to live that understanding. To live in the light

of one's own understanding is much more valuable than living by the borrowed light of other people's experiences and authority. You may be able to take only one step, but that is much more important than being whipped into running by others. There is dignity and privilege in being born in a human body with its marvellously complex, conditioned brain. As one has to blend the perception of psychological facts while listening to heart-to-heart communications, one also has to trust one's perception and understanding in every relationship and take the risk of living by one's own judgment, not by impulses, wishes and desires. Impulses are fluctuating, wishes and desires have no stability whatsoever. There can be desires which are contradictory to one another, ambitions which are mutually incompatible. You cannot run after them in one direction one day and in another the next. One has to be attentive to watch and sift out emotions and sentiments from the non-subjective understanding of a fact.

To observe, to exercise one's attention is hard work. You need tremendous energy to look, to listen and understand. Although there is an infinite source of energy in each human body and brain, we do not have the energy to look thoroughly because we are not committed to life and living. We look at an object, the brain supplies the name, there is an association of emotions and we judge the object through those emotions.

Seeing itself becomes a habit. We have been in this serenely beautiful place for a few days and one says, "Well, I have become used to it." It requires tremendous energy not to be corrupted by proximity. We allow ourselves to become accustomed to something and it becomes a habit. It is the growth of such habits around us that makes us stale. You look at each other out of habit; a husband at a wife, a wife at a husband, a mother at children and they at their parents according to the norms and standards of society or the images one has formulated about them. You are looking at your images, at traditions and criteria out of books, never at the individual or the object. In order that there may be freshness and energy to look first-hand and understand the meaning of the fact, it is essential not to have a single habit around the psychological structure. It must be kept vibrant with vitality without habits gathering like moss around a stone.

Never do anything out of habit. Do not to go to bed and sleep because it is a habit but move from the waking consciousness, full of stress and strain, into the marvellous relaxation of sleep, from one dimension into another. Is there not a grandeur about profound, dreamless sleep from which you awake fresh as the morning dew, bathed in the ocean of some new energy, revitalized and rejuvenated. This is the miracle of sleep every night. Is it a habit to wake up, to go to sleep, or is it an adventure? You open your eyes and look at the dawn, as a child looks at the world. You are vulnerable and do not know what the day will offer you.

Is it a habit to cook a meal and wash clothes, or is it a fresh action, a fresh movement whenever you do it? When you bathe your body are you in communion with the water and the body, or do you say, "I have to go to the office, I have no time for this luxury. What is important is to go to work and earn money". To go through every action afresh each day is not important to you. Saturday and Sunday come and we are so tired because of the week that the weekend is for laziness and sluggishness with too much sleep and too much food. Again there is no time. Have we time to live or do we drag the days behind the nights and the nights behind the days?

It is possible to look at the fact with the wholeness of your being, if and when you do not allow the moss of habit patterns to grow around you. See the austerity of a religious life without images of other people and oneself, with no habits about one's movements. Then, perhaps, that total action of perception will bring about the immediacy of response which did not occur today. Begin with respect and trust for oneself, become acquainted with oneself. One may have much book-knowledge about physiology, hygiene and anatomy, but might not have observed how one's own body moves in relation to diet, exercise, sleep or speech.

Understanding takes place in communion, not in coexistence. For communion to happen one has to be alert and attentive, never relying upon the darkness of mechanistic habit patterns. The impediment to transformation is not outside us, it is within us.

It is equally important to realise that we have to live our own lives, nobody else can do that for us or teach us how to do it. Humility cannot be taught and there are no techniques for love. As love, silence and humility, are the movements of your whole being, neither they nor perception can be taught. Understanding also cannot be taught, however great the teacher may be. The teacher can at best communicate or live as an example, but it is for us to receive and to understand. No one will ever be able to teach us that and no one else can live for us. If we see this, then there will be no fear of the reaction of society or the consequences of our actions. Immediately there will be an inner freedom to live whatever we have understood.

We postpone actions and decisions many times because we are afraid that they may not be acknowledged or accepted. Postponement is gradual suicide, whether it is of a decision or a specific action. The person might say, "I'll do it tomorrow, next week, next year". The next year, the next week, the tomorrow never come.

One must live understanding that life and death cannot be separated, that while you live the breath of death is upon your shoulder every day. If you miss today - the here and now which is the only eternity - you miss the opportunity to live. Life is not in tomorrow; eternity is not out there somewhere in imagination or abstraction. This moment, the so-called "present", is the only eternity to commune with, to live with and live in. Tomorrows are in human imagination, so one does not postpone.

It is important to see why there is no immediacy of response to the truth behind the psychological fact, because we go on postponing decisions and actions and try to avoid crises. Postponement creates a time-lag between decision and action which causes decision to lose its vitality and understanding its dynamism. One can find many reasons and excuses for postponement but every time-lag between understanding and action allows the past to continue and ferment in one.

The very moment of understanding is the moment to allow it to flow into action. It is not the moment to prevent it from acting for extraneous reasons, such as that it is not

profitable or agreeable now, although it might be so after half a dozen months or years. The whole nervous system is educated to respond immediately, as it responds to physical facts so it does to psychological facts and truths.

It is very painful to move from comfortable, repetitive habits to free understanding and action every moment, because you have to be alert. To give in to the momentum of impulses is easy; to give in to the power and intoxication of thought is easy; to slide back into mechanistic movements of habits is easy but to be totally alert throughout your waking consciousness, sensitive, looking, listening, watching and acting - that is painful.

Psychological growth is painful. Someone may say it is more comfortable and easier to act out of habit. They may ask how you meet life if there are no safeguards or defence mechanisms and you are alone with life, vulnerable to its movement. We have become technique and theory-minded, plunged in psychological lethargy, preparing responses for every situation.

If interested in living, a religious enquirer has to shed this fear of life. It is marvellous to meet life as it comes, whether it brings death, pain and sorrow or success and honour. There will be an immediacy of response to the perception of psychological truths if we are interested in living and willing to shed all this imaginery fear of life - the unknown, the unknowable, the mysterious.

It has been impressed on the human brain for centuries that such uninhibited living, out of personal understanding, is not possible for the masses but is the privilege of the chosen few; that because we are the common people we must have patterns to follow, techniques to adopt and habit structures to fall back on, otherwise we will be helpless. Is it the belief that psychic transformation, samadhi, yoga, satori, nirvana and similar states are not for all, that prevents us from having this vitality of immediate response to psychological truths? It has been impressed on us that we must be told, the priest or guru will tell us what to do and when to do it for we have not the capacity to understand for ourselves.

It has been implanted in us that psychic mutation, enlightenment or liberation are only for the privileged few, who are then admired and adored by the masses. Is that what creates this lack of self-confidence and trust in one's own understanding and judgment. Does it not hurt the sense of self-dignity to believe that it is only for a handful of privileged people. It is like the Middle Ages when it was believed that culture was for a few favoured ones, not for the masses.

Is it because we love to relegate responsibility to so-called enlightened persons, that we set them apart as special authorities and worship them? In that case we are not behaving like responsible human beings but are waiting for someone to confer grace on us or carry us on their shoulders, like the simile of the sheep and shepherd.

As you have to take meals to satisfy your appetite, so you have to grow totally, physically and psychologically, to be in the dimension free of the centre of the "Me". Enlightenment cannot be conferred, it is not something to be given by one to another but is the birthright of every human being. Let us not humiliate ourselves in the belief that it is only for a privileged few, not for you and me. It is there for those who want it.

What is called enlightenment, transformation or mutation is not a personal achievement for anyone. It is an inner growth of the total being because the person allows that growth to take place. It is the birthright of every human being to grow into that transconceptual, trans-selfconscious dimension. It is the historical and material need of the day that we grow into it.

We started by looking at the issue of "What is listening?" Listening to heart-to-heart communication is not admiring the diction, the logical flawlessness or eloquence, but is using the words to look at the psychological facts within us. That was the first important point.

Secondly, we looked at why there is not the immediacy of response to the understanding of psychological truth as there is on the physical level and we queried obstacles to this.

We went into details of those hurdles and concluded by saying that what they call enlightenment - that ever-fresh communion with the divine, the other, the unconditioned, ever-vibrant awareness of the totality - is the natural consummation of human growth, it is not a personal achievement.

Humanity regards the thought structure as the totality of its life. It is struggling to free itself from this prison-house of thought which is worn out by repetition, distortion, perversion and abuse whereas other religious enquiry, personal enquiry, is a contribution towards the freedom of the whole human race.

If it has no awareness of this tremendous challenge facing the human race, a religious enquiry will be just a self-centred, selfish activity. Because people are affluent and they can afford to entertain themselves, intellectually or emotionally, they will create a fashion of organising gatherings, camps or retreats and feel holy by participating in them, only to return to those worn out, age-old patterns. That is meaningless, we have no time to waste our energies in that.

Faced with the threat of nuclear war, we have our backs against the wall. There is an urgency for this psychic mutation, which is the consummation of self discovery.

LIVING ONE'S UNDERSTANDING

Life has an all-pervading intelligence which is sensitive to the needs of each individual. When individuals are honest with themselves and aware of their needs, life has a mysterious way of bringing them together.

We have been together at this retreat for some time. Now we go back to our homes, to the daily round, the responsibilities, commitments, jobs, families and the whole travail of life. You may ask, "What shall I do when I get home? There may not be like-minded persons around me, there will not be the discipline and schedule of a retreat. Is there an inner order or discipline that will oblige me to live as alertly and sensitively as I have done for the last few days?"

In only a very short time you may notice that the intensity, the depth and vigour of attentiveness begin to fade and one returns to the old pattern of repetitive behaviour. Why does this happen, why is the seriousness not sustained?

It seems that what we look upon as living is only a process of reactions. We have been trained to react to compulsion from outside as well as from inside. Organised religions, the science of ethics, norms of society and economic structures create compulsions to which we have been trained to react. If you have an inner compulsion religion and morality tell you what to do, they have ready terms of reference. You look into them and react accordingly.

Perhaps we have never lived first-hand. We have mistaken reacting as the act of life. Can we go back to our homes and tasks with this new awareness, that reaction is not living? You may go on reacting to such compulsions for sixty, seventy, eighty years and in the evening of life there will be empty ashes - just words that have lost their meaning and their fire of intensity.

So that we are not left with those ashes of worn-out words and exhausted sentiments, let us be aware, here and now, that reaction is not living. Could we begin to observe whether we

are reacting according to some authority, book or scripture, or are we acting spontaneously out of our own understanding? Let that be the beginning of a scientific enquiry. The enquiry must correlate to the whole of life, not be limited to observing verbal silence, which would be creating new rituals. None of us wants this, a new church, a new ritual or a new authority. If one likes to sit in silence, one may do so, but the important thing is to be watchful that one does not react. Reactions mean wasting precious time and energy. They are second-hand, part of the conditioning fed into us. Surely we do not want to be instruments in the hands of the past, so that it can project itself and graft on to the present.

We would like to live whatever little light of understanding we have. That light is our life. When we move away from this retreat, could we begin the sacred inquiry of being spontaneous, living first-hand, come what may?

Secondly, let us be aware that relationship is not bondage. Outside ourselves there is no bondage that can arrest our growth or prevent us from living. The bondage and hurdles are within us. The source of all obstacles is the sense of "me", the I-consciousness, which wants to preserve its separateness at all cost.

Relationships with the home, the family, children, husband or wife, are very sacred, because self-discovery cannot take place apart from the movement of relationship. It is an opportunity to watch the quality of your actions and your words, the state of your mind while you talk and walk, while you look at your wife or husband, play with your child, do your work, scrub the floor, wash the clothes - that is life.

Let us not harbour an illusion that relationships at home or work are obstacles in the path of enquiry or self-discovery. They are opportunities, the mirrors in which we are reflected. The actual "I", not the image about myself but the very fact of my being, is reflected in everything that I do or do not. Let us not use relationships as pegs on which to hang the responsibility for our lack of growth or of transformation.

There is no life in isolation. There is existence, physical survival, but no life. Life is in togetherness, in sharing, life is in interaction. When we fail to interact with nature, fellow beings and the human species there is no life. Vegetating, mere physical survival, that is not what we want. We want joy that can blossom only in the soil of relationship.

Thirdly, it is not possible for every member of a family simultaneously to have the same urge of enquiry and with the same intensity. Very rarely does that happen. So you may find yourself alone. Others in the family, organisation, community or wherever you are may not be supportive. They may laugh, they will laugh at you. While we are engaged in this enquiry or self-discovery let us not expect too much from the family. Non-cooperation, opposition and criticism can be of great help if they can be received without feelings of hurt and are used for deeper probing. Disapproval from anyone in the family can then never deter you.

By putting difficulty in your path, life is urging you to tap the creative energies in order to meet the challenge. However, let us not convert the challenges of life into problems.

To differentiate between a challenge and a problem is another important point. Action and interaction between various expressions of life create a "challenge". For instance I may say something and the listener does not understand, perhaps misunderstands or misinterprets it. It is a challenge for me to discover how to express it differently. Instead of blaming the person for not understanding, turn the search-light within and you will see more clearly.

What we need is the light of clarity within our hearts. The understanding becomes clearer by the hour as you live it. It becomes the substance of your being, as food digested by the body becomes the substance of the body, marrow of the bones, plasma in your blood, the muscles, tissues, nerves - it does not remain as separate food. In the same way words that are understood or digested become part and parcel of your being, your consciousness. It is you. You cannot claim to "possess" understanding when it has become the very substance of your being.

Challenges are the nature of life. Would you say there should be no ripples on the breast of the ocean or river? Ripples or waves, even stormy waves are an integral part of waters. Life is an ocean of relationships and every interaction releases a challenge. If you do not accept authority in any field of life, you become surrounded by these magnificent challenges. I call them "love-letters from God", to be decoded, understood and responded to.

A challenge becomes a problem when I try to capture it within the framework of some past experience. I question myself, "Is this like something that happened a couple of years ago or like something in the life of Ramakrishna, Krishnamurti, Buddha, Christ, XYZ?" We refer the challenge to the past so we can measure, categorise and evaluate it. The beautiful fresh challenge then becomes a stale problem that many have faced before. Your consciousness becomes heavy with the thought of facing a problem, not something natural but as an obstacle, an ordeal. One does not stop there but begins to measure oneself, "Can I face it adequately, successfully?"

You create expectations about yourself, that you must rise to the standard you have set, building up an image of yourself. On the one hand you measure the challenge, on the other you measure your own adequacy or inadequacy. All this ferments in the mind, troubling it, torturing the nerves, and you say, "I cannot do it alone, let me go and ask someone else how to do it." It is not necessary to indulge in this vicious measuring and evaluating. Why not understand it with whatever intelligence one has, and face it, here and now.

Why be concerned so much with success, not in the physical or material sense of a business or the problems of income tax, insurance and such things, but success in the field of psychological relationships.

It is important not to convert challenges into problems but to look at them, understand them with whatever intelligence we have, for intelligence grows when it is used. Let there be no time lag between the awareness of a challenge and the act of responding to it.

There is one more area where most of us waste time and energy - and we need all the intensity and depth of energy at our command for self-discovery and mutation. We cannot afford to waste energy, we have to plug all leakages so that we have tremendous energy whenever it is required. The leakage we are presently concerned with is the habit of justifying and defending what we have done.

Perhaps you feel lazy and you lie in bed, though sleep is over. To justify that laziness you say, "Oh, well, last night such and such happened, therefore I am lying here". One pleads one's actions before one's own intelligence to avoid feeling guilty. Perhaps angry words escape you, a sharp glance and you say, "Well I was not really angry, such and such a person, by crooked behaviour, made me angry. I am not angry by nature". You know the juvenile game we play with ourselves wasting our time in self-defence. If I was angry then I was angry; why not accept it? If I felt jealous I was jealous. Those moments and anger are not excuses for self-defence but opportunities for self-understanding. It was not that I was angry, the anger was me, the jealousy was me. Every effort of justification dissipates the energy we need for perception. This is not the place to talk about an individual as condensed cosmos, but all energy in the cosmos is actually available in a single human body.

These are just a few important, friendly hints, for those who want to dedicate their lives and energy to enquiry and discovery, so they may contribute to the evolution of human consciousness by living what they have understood.

It is only the quality of dedication that makes the difference between an enlightened and an unenlightened person.

We witness so much suffering and misery, illness, sickness and death, which do not disturb us very deeply. But seeing such things created a turmoil in the heart of a young man, Siddhartha, who, at the age of eighteen, had never seen a sick person. Out driving one day he saw a man being carried and he wondered what was happening. It was explained that the man was ill, something that could happen to everyone. As they proceeded the prince saw an old man and asked, "Why is

that person stooped?" He was told that it was through old age and learned that everyone had to become old. Later they came across a dead body and Siddhartha discovered also that everybody dies.

The prince returned to his palace and fell into contemplation: "What is human life? Is there any way of avoiding this misery? If old age and death is the end of physical life, is there anything more to life?" He left the palace as one who had awakened - that is, Buddha. Siddhartha, the prince, became Buddha because he dedicated himself to the enquiry.

That was two thousand five hundred years ago, but more recently there was a boy, aged twelve, who faced the same questions. He did not go to school and asked his older brother whether education in school would enable him to understand what God is, what life is, what is he himself. When told that such things were not taught at school he ran away and remained in a cave for six years. We know him as Ramana Maharshi who also dedicated himself to the enquiry.

We cannot go to caves and we cannot leave our homes. Can we then seriously engage in such an enquiry as a necessity of life, but not sadly, or looking on it as an ordeal? Can we do this while still discharging our responsibilities? Can our hearts become the caves where we make our own abode, where we correlate everything to the needs of freedom, truth, love.

These talks concluded with this translation of a mantra from the Vedas:

"Cosmic consciousness, cosmic intelligence, waits upon those who are in the deep slumber of self-ignorance. It waits upon them so that it may help them when they awaken. It co-operates with those who are already awake, in order that they may enjoy the bliss of peace and love and freedom. Oh my mind! Wake up to the presence of that divine intelligence surrounding you, so that you will be able to receive it in your being".

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