

THE TECHNIQUE OF SELF-ENQUIRY

(Compiled by Sri. Ulpiano Manlangit)

1. The Technique of Self Inquiry

a) The great void

Reflection on the sunlight that falls on the piece of mirror lying on the ground.

When the man finally reaches the piece of mirror by a longing to see its source, he can be said to have reached the very source of the reflected ray. This is similar to the aspirant diving within and reaching the source (Heart) whence he had risen. **This is also the state of the aspirant remaining in the Heart-space in the state of great void created through mere Self-attention, by the non-existence of the ego-'I'.**

When the place where you are now is nothing but the unlimited space of light, can a darkness come into existence because of the void created by the disappearance of the reflected ray? Can its disappearance itself be a loss? **Know that its disappearance itself is the true light; It is not darkness.**

Similarly, by the experience of the great void created by the annihilation of the ego, the aspirant is somewhat taken aback, "Alas! Even the 'I' consciousness (the ego), which was attending to in my *sadhana* till now as a beacon -light is lost! Then is there really no such thing at all as 'Self' (atman)?" At that very moment, the *Sadguru*, who is ever shining as the Heart, points out to him thus, "Can the destruction of the ego, which is only an infinitesimal reflected consciousness, be really a loss? Are you not clearly aware, not only of its former existence, but also of the present great void created by its disappearance? Therefore, know that you who know even the void, as 'this is a void', **alone is the true knowledge: you are not the void "I"**. In an instant as a direct experience of the shining of his own existence-consciousness by touching in the Heart as Heart! The aspirant who started the search 'whence am I? or 'Who am I?' now attains the non-dual Self-knowledge, the true knowledge '**I am that I am**' 'which is devoid of the limitations of a particular place or time'.

"O great God of all things, whose infinite light is darkness to me, whose immensity is to me as a void, you have called me forth out of yourself because you love me in yourself and I am a transient expression of your inexhaustible and eternal reality. I could not know you, I would be lost in this darkness, I would fall away from you into this void, if you did not hold me to yourself as the Heart." - Thomas Merton

This giving up of attention towards external sense-objects is desirelessness (*vairagya*) or inward renunciation. The eagerness to see *whence the reflected ray comes* into the room *corresponds to the eagerness to see whence the ego-'I', the mind-light, rises*. This eagerness is love for Self (*swatma-bhakti*).

b) The knot of attachment

The knot of attachment is a basic one, until and unless the destruction of attachment is effected by knowing the Self, even when the knot of bondage to the nerves is temporarily removed in sleep, swoon, death or by the use of anaesthetics, the knot of attachment remains unaffected in the form of tendencies (*vasanas*), which constitute the causal body, and hence rebirths are inescapable. Therefore the destruction of the knot of attachment is anyway indispensable for the attainment of the natural state (*sahaja sthiti*), the state of the destruction of the tendencies (*vasanakshaya*).

The nerves (*nadis*) are gross, but the consciousness-power (*chaitanya-sakti*) that courses through them is subtle. The connection of the 'I' -consciousness with the nerves is similar to that of the electrical power with the wires, that is, it is so unstable that it can be disconnected or connected in a second. Is it not an experience common to one and all that this connection is daily broken in sleep and effected in the waking

state? When this connection is effected, body consciousness rises and when it is broken, body-consciousness is lost. Here it is to be remembered what has already been stated, namely that the body-consciousness and world consciousness are one and the same.

So, like our clothes and ornaments, which are daily, removed and put on, this knot is alien to us, a transitory and false entity hanging loosely on us. This is what Sri Bhagavan referred to when He said; "We can detach ourselves from what we are not"! Disconnecting the knot in such a way that it will never again come into being is called by many names such as 'the cutting of the knot' (*granthi-bheda*), 'the destruction of the mind' (*mano-nasa*) and so on. 'In such a way that it will never again come into being' means this: by attending to it (the ego) through the enquiry 'Does it in truth exist at present? In order to find out whether it had ever really come into being, there takes place the dawn of knowledge (*jnana*), the real waking, where it is clearly and firmly known that no such knot has ever come into being, that no such ego has ever risen, that 'that which exists' alone ever exists, and that that, which was existing as 'I am' is ever existing as 'I am'! The attainment of this knowledge (Self-knowledge as *atma-jnana*), the knowledge that the knot or bondage is at all times non-existent and has never risen, is the permanent disconnecting of the knot.

The experience of the presence of the Self, which is present in my own presence is "Self-abidance" and is the true knowledge of the Self. If I am, then He is, and in knowing that I am, if I penetrate into the depths of my own existence and my own present reality, the indefinable "am" that is myself in its deepest roots, then through this deep centre I pass into the infinite "I Am" which is the very name of the Almighty.

The knowledge of myself in silence (not by reflection on myself, but by penetration into the mystery of my true Self, which is beyond words and concepts) opens out into the silence and the "subjectivity" of God's own self.

Since the eternal Self is non-dual and since there is no other path (to attain it) except (to attend to and thereby to abide as) Self, the goal to be attained is only Self and the path is only Self. **"Jesus Christ said: I am the way the truth and the life"** therefore our life is with the Self, our life is for the Self and our life is in the Self. Each one has to strive to live life in all its fullness and takes care to maintain our link with the divine source, the Heart.

2. The Parable of the Lost Son

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to him, 'Father, give me now my share of the property.' So the man divided the property between his two sons, after a few days the younger son sold his part of the property and left home with the money. He went to a country far away, where he wasted his money in reckless living. He spent everything he had. Then a severe famine spread over the country, and he was left without a thing. So he went to work for one of the citizens of the country, who sent him out to his farm to take care of the pigs. He wished he could fill himself with the bean pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything to eat. At last he came to his senses and said, 'All my father's hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am, about to starve! I will get up and go to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you, I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers."' So he got up and started back to his father.

"He was still a long way from home when his father saw him: his heart was filled with pity and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him. 'Father,' the son said, 'I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.' But the father called his servants; Hurry! He said, 'Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! Because this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.' And so the feasting began.

"The older son, in the mean time, was out in the field. On his way back, when he came close to the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked him, 'What's going on?' Your brother came back home,' the servant answered, 'and your father killed the prize calf, because he got him back safe and sound.' The older brother was so angry that he would not go into the house; so his father came out and begged him to come in. 'Look,' he answered back to his father, all this years I have worked like slave for you, and I never disobeyed you orders. What have you given to me? Not even a goat for me to have a feast with my friend! But this son of yours wasted all your property on prostitutes, and when he comes back home you kill the prize calf for him!' 'My son, the father answered. 'You are always here with me and everything I have is yours. But we had to have a feast and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.'