

COURSE SYNTHESIS NO. 40

INTERNAL CHATTER REQUIREMENTS AND DEMANDS

In this Teaching, we must ally theory with practice, particularly the practice of self-observation. A spiritual path leads us to a choice: once we have observed to a sufficient extent, we learn to distinguish between what belongs to our superficial personality and what belongs to our essence, or possibly even our true I, and then we can decide who we want to be, that is to say, at which level we want to live.

Observation enables us to better see into the strategies used by our superficial personality (or “imaginary I”), such as negative emotions, justifications, and internal chatter, which prevent us from being present to ourselves.

Internal chatter is the perpetual conversation we are always having with ourselves, the thoughts we follow and allow to run on endlessly, and which succeed each other without break throughout the course of the day. They preoccupy us and prevent us from living our life in the present. This mechanical flow of thoughts becomes more apparent to us during meditation, but it already starts up in any situation the moment we are alone. It is sometimes a dialogue, but more often a monologue; in any case, inner silence is very rare.

What is all this chatter about? About the things we don’t like in the world and in other people, about our problems, what annoys us, or our requirements and demands, all the things we are owed but which we are not given, such as respect, attention, and understanding. In short, the principal theme is “me, me, and me.” The ego exists and reinforces itself constantly through internal chatter; the “me” is always present in its most positive light, and this justifies our behavior or excuses our failings.

Unfortunately, the enormous amount of energy spent on our internal chatter is going to be lacking for our inner evolution.

It is not possible to stop this chatter instantaneously. We become capable of doing so only when we observe this mechanism without becoming identified with it. Observation permits us to distance ourselves from our internal chatter, to create a space into which something capable of silence may enter, namely our True I.

In order to attain this inner silence, we must make efforts toward it, and for this much time is necessary. Passing from internal chatter to inner silence is obligatory if we hope for something higher to enter us. This silence can begin to appear during meditation, and then one day the chatter stops completely, our mind is empty, and we are capable of receiving true feelings.

The moment we do not direct our thoughts voluntarily toward a goal, toward a concentrated reflection, the moment we are not conscious, the chatter starts up again, with the occasional exception of artists or poets who are nonetheless capable at times of receiving inspiration.

Internal chatter consumes a great deal of our energy. With certain people, internal chatter manifests outwardly in the form of constant complaining. These people are always tired, their state of mind is negative, and there is a leakage of energy which often gives rise to chronic illnesses that are difficult to treat.

In order to one day stop this internal chatter, we must begin to observe it, to create an observer in ourselves that is capable of seeing it objectively, and then to stop it, once, ten times, even a hundred times each day. But it is true that months

and even years are necessary in order to attain a result, provided we practice this “stop” exercise regularly.

One way of accelerating this process consists in taking note of all our requirements and demands, everything we believe that life and other people owe to us. We demand good health, for example, or respect, comfort, or quiet; we demand that other people tolerate our behavior even when it is wrong, that they tolerate our way of seeing things even when it is unjust. We demand good weather, that things happen the way we expect them to, that life, God, or karma treat us well.

And when these demands, which are often unconscious, are not met, the chatter starts up: complaints, self-pity, jealousy, irritation, depression...

In the Fourth Way, we decide what we want and mobilise the means of obtaining it, but naturally according to our real possibilities, which self-observation permits us to discover. We do not expect everything to be handed over to us on a plate.

The remedy for our requirements and demands is to reduce them; the less we expect of other people or of life, the less we run the risk of being disappointed. On the contrary, we then learn to be pleasantly surprised, and grateful.

The path consists in reducing our requirements of life and other people, and in becoming demanding toward ourselves, with respect to our inner and outer goals.

A person’s level of evolution can be recognised by the amount of requirements and demands he has; an evolved person demands less and less of other people and of life. He does not constantly complain of other people, but tries to understand the other person’s behavior. As a consequence he has more energy. And when other people do not do what they ought to do, he makes the effort to do it in their place, according to his capacities.

“Rather than complaining about the darkness, light a candle.”