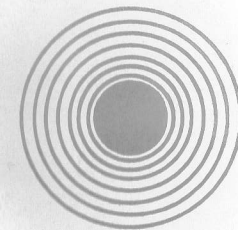


Contact
with
Vimala Thakar



Nr. 8 October 1980



This photo has been taken in California in 1979 by Neha Shah, a 10 year old girl.

RENUNCIATION

I have watched with interest
how I grew into maturity.
From ignorantly blissful girlhood
how I grew into womanhood.

I have watched likewise
how I grew into sanity.
From ignorantly blissful complexity
how I grew into simplicity.

When the spring of understanding
whispered the tunes of sanity.
The lotus of love blossomed
transforming every marrow of my being.

The perfume of understanding
was called simplicity.
The fragrance of simplicity
was called renunciation.

CONTACT with Vimala Thakar

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ESSENCE OF RENUNCIATION

Understanding purifies, not knowledge. Knowledge never purifies a person. Nor has it any dynamism. It is sterile, because it is information gathered from books or individuals; but still it is something acquired intellectually. It can become your intellectual property. It can decorate your brain. It does not transform the quality of your being. Understanding purifies; observation leads to understanding, if I am not attached to my weaknesses. People love their weaknesses, people are attached to their defects, shortcomings. They have lived with them for such a long time that they like to justify, to explain, to defend. Unless you are attached to a habit, the habit does not last. Observation opens the way of understanding when one is not attached to one's own image, one's shortcomings. All the images that one has constructed about oneself break down completely. And understanding collects all these pieces and throws them away. They are unnecessary. The image making business has no room in the life of a person who lives by understanding and not by knowledge. So he collects whatever broken pieces of the images he has constructed about himself in his life and puts them away, not making a bonfire and inviting other people to see it. He does it quietly. That is renunciation, not having a single image of oneself. That is the essence of renunciation.

VIMALA

Out of the book: "Blossoms of Friendship".

RELATIONSHIP AND RELATEDNESS¹⁾

Unitarian Church, Kensington, October 12, 1979

Human beings are born into society with responsibility for relating, relating physically, psychologically and with their wholeness of being. Born into society, there is a psychological relationship with society at large and with the community. Born in a family, there is a relationship with the parents. Born in the midst of innumerable human beings, there is responsibility for entering into relationship, but it seems that we have not yet discovered a way of living in which relationship is not a burden, in which entering into relationship is not an ordeal.

There was a time when organized religions provided a frame of reference, a code of conduct, and a value structure that regulated relationship. If one lived by the code of conduct, one was called a virtuous person, a religious person, and if one did not obey the scriptures, the commandments, then one was not virtuous but sinful. That's how organized religions the world over controlled the behavior patterns of human beings, collectively and individually. But by the late Middle Ages the situation changed. Reason as the goddess of a cultural renaissance began to dominate, and economic and political theories took over the role of regulating and controlling patterns of behavior. Still later there was a capitalist pattern, a socialist pattern, a communist pattern, and some felt very enthusiastic about following these ideologies and giving in to their demands. With the industrial revolution, new regulating factors came into play—natural sciences, applied sciences, technology—and these new factors began to regulate the relationships between human beings.

Now, however, idealisms, ideologies, theories have lost their prestige and power, their grip over the human psyche. Organized religion has also lost its grip. Relationships everywhere are in turmoil. The human mind is no longer willing to give in, to surrender its so-called sense of freedom, to obey religious commandments or to approximate behavior to some ideologies. Even the idea of nation and of belonging to a nation has lost its significance. Today people seem to be floating on waves of emotions, sentiments, thoughts, and one feels that collectively we have lost the sense of direction of human life.

We seem to be left with only those relationships that arise out of biological and economic necessity. When we are very young, there is the relationship with our parents. We live our early lives with our father and mother, but the moment we can, we live on our own, meeting our parents occasionally or calling long-distance to find out how they are, to say little more than "hi"!

There are relationships based on youthful emotional and physical urgings – those teenage attractions, infatuations, rejections, sometimes called puppy or calf love, that most of us grow out of. And there are the romantic relationships that arise from a desire to be loved and to love and to share. We enter into such relationships

¹⁾ We were glad to receive the following talks by Vimala Thakar edited by friends in California.

when we feel the urge to share our lives with some other person, to give ourselves completely to another. We want to believe that these relationships will last, that they are founded on the rock of mutual esteem and understanding, that we will abide in our private seventh heaven. Sooner or later the world over, however, mutual resistances, jealousies, frustrations arise from the ego and dreams fade.

There are also functional relationships with colleagues and with bosses. These relationships are born out of economic necessity. We live in a framework of these relationships, spending eight hours a day in what is essentially a superficial relationship, even though there may be some affection, some care and concern.

Somehow none of these relationships – biological, functional or romantic – satisfies us fully. People all over the world enter into such relationships and inevitably find that they are fragmentary, partial. We were not satisfied with the relationships imposed by organized religions or by economic or political ideologies. We are not satisfied with the few remaining relationships we establish ourselves. But what relationships will satisfy us? And why is relationship so important to us? We sometimes try to pretend that we don't care about the rest of the world, that we have no responsibility for relationship. We will have things our way. But inevitably we are isolated because of our self-centeredness, and then become unhappy. Our intellectual belief that we don't care is shattered, and we feel lonely. It seems clear that the urge to be related is a powerful one that arises within each of us. Our lives cannot be fulfilled without sharing our humanness, sharing the inner content of our being with others.

Why is there this urge to share? When you see some beautiful painting, you like to share it with a friend. You come across a piece of music which stimulates ecstasy, and you like to share it with your friends. At the deepest layer of being, at the marrow of one's bones and being, why is there an urge to live with others, to share with others? Why is it that without love, life feels meaningless and everything that one does loses its grace and charm, feeling and warmth? This yearning for love, for sharing, for being understood, for mutuality, for reciprocity, why is it there in the human heart? Obviously it is there. We find it in the pages of literature everywhere. It is not an abstraction, not a theory. Rather it is, I think, individual experience. You must have seen it, just as I have seen it in my life.

I would like to go into the issue, probe a little further and deeper, to discover the foundation, the root cause of this urge. Why isn't man, a human being, satisfied with having wealth, having a beautiful house, a car, all the pleasures – the intellectual, the sensual, the psychological pleasures – and why doesn't he say, "Well, there's an end to it!"? Why is it in an affluent country like America, or other affluent countries, the young people travel around the world trying to find ways of transcending sensual pleasure, and exploring other avenues of being together with other human beings.

It is somehow auspicious, isn't it, that the human race is not satisfied with affluence. With all the discoveries and inventions of science and technology we feel incomplete and want to explore a

little further. It seems to me that this urge for sharing, this urge to be in relation with others operates not only at the superficial level of your need and my need, your ambition and my ambition, not only at the level of sensual need or intellectual need, but also at the level where the whole being is involved, not merely the body or the mind, but the totality, the whole. Since this urge to meet the wholeness of your being with the wholeness of my being – this urge to meet with my wholeness you and your wholeness – is there spontaneously, naturally, maybe we are not after all separate. Maybe relatedness is a fact of life, and we have not comprehended the nature of this relatedness. If we were completely separate from one another and could sustain at all levels of our being independence of one another, then this urge for sharing, this urge for exchange, for a participation in each other's lives wouldn't be there.

Certainly beyond the human world there is relatedness. In the human form we are an expression of cosmic life. All the currents of energy contained in the cosmos function in the human body in a condensed form. So there is a relatedness with nature, with the earth. The bones in my body contain the earth. My body contains water which has a very deep relatedness to water outside, be it a lake, be it a river, be it the rain, be it the ocean. We go near them, we even mention them, and we feel a non-rational affinity. And if we are physically near a river or a lake or an ocean, the whole being – the body, the mind, the brain – relaxes completely. It's the oneness with the waters. It's the oneness with the vast skies. It's the oneness with the fire element in the sunshine. We feel it non-verbally.

When you get a chance to live that oneness, that relatedness with the skies, with the sun, with the waters, with the earth, with the trees, living that fact of relatedness gives a sense of total relaxation. You get rejuvenated. You spend four hours by the sea, a couple of hours in the woods, and you come back nearly a new person. It is not that your physical exhaustion is over, but that something has been transmitted to you in the woods. The woods were there, and you were perhaps under some trees. It is not simply the co-existence of the woods and the human being, but that the relatedness had an opportunity to function there. You open up to the woods, you open up to the sea, to the skies, and the relatedness operates upon you on a non-verbal level. When we are aware of that relatedness with the five principles of life, we not only are rejuvenated, but also enriched by that awareness of the unity. Most of us are not aware of the fact of relatedness. When we are with nature, rejuvenation takes place. Relaxation takes place. The relatedness occurs on a non-verbal level, and we are not aware of it. But when a person who is aware of this relatedness goes to the woods, or the sea or the lake, the awareness enables him to enter into a conscious relationship with nature. If he is not a passive recipient, but a partner in the relationship, a partner with the plants, with the flowers, with the trees, there will be a different kind of joy.

There is a relatedness with the mineral world, with the plant world, with the animal world. And, of course, the relatedness with the human world. This relatedness is a fact of life, and the

awareness of that fact enables you to enter into a relationship and live it fully and thoroughly. Then your attitude towards the trees, the mountains, the wood changes. The quality of your perception changes. Your contact with nature goes through a qualitative change, and then the exchange takes place at a different level. It seems to me that this fact of relatedness is the root cause behind the urge with which we are born. We are born with the urge for love, born with the urge to see beauty and to unfold the beauty that is contained within us. We are born with an urge to see harmony around us, to live in harmony with ourselves and others. This urge is not the result of an intellectually worked-out theory. It is not merely a concept. If there were no spontaneous urge for love or beauty or peace or joy, no amount of intellectual argument or theorizing would give us the spontaneity. Relatedness is a fact. All existence is interrelated, and we live as interrelated phenomena. Being interrelated does not mean dependency of one upon the other. In interrelatedness there is a mutuality, there is a reciprocity, but not a dependency. Everything that exists, that lives and moves, is interrelated. This interrelatedness is what the ancient people in the Orient called the Cosmic Dance, the Cosmic Dance of Life. You can see this fact of interrelatedness, not grasp it as an idea or a theory, but see it in your own life, if you care to observe. In your daily life, you can observe your relationship with food, with sunshine, with the darkness of the night, with light. When your body is exposed to light, what happens to it? What happens to the mind? When your body is exposed to moonlight, what happens? See the relatedness, the interrelatedness, as a fact. Let it be a personal discovery. Investigate the relatedness with the plant world. What happens if you touch a flower or a leaf of a plant when you are angry, when you are frustrated, when you are suffering from jealousy, bitterness, cynicism or depression? Notice that the response of the flower to you in these moods is different than if you touch it when you are at peace. Everything that you touch is affected by your mood. Notice that your thoughts, your emotions affect the things around you. With a little observation, with a little sensitivity, you can see this for yourself. Though we know well that in relatedness there is life and in isolation there is only existence, we are incapable of relating because we are preoccupied with ourselves or because we have images of ourselves and other people. When I meet you, I may not listen to you carefully, I may not be totally available to you, totally present with you. When I am absent-minded, distracted, the interrelatedness cannot be expressed. Or when I meet you, I may have an image of you as an unpleasant person, and the image comes between us. Often my idea about what you should do becomes so important that I would like to impose it on you, to capture you in the framework of that idea. And when you escape, I am sad. People try to dominate not because they consciously like to dominate, but because they have such insistent ideas and theories, norms and criteria, that they cannot but impose these on others. Then the basic togetherness or the fundamental interrelatedness is blocked. And the game of adjustments, compromises, resistances and manipulations begins another round. Our relationships today are games of suppression, repression, covering up, evading and

manipulating.

Though we live in society, live in families, we hardly meet each other. We hardly look at each other. Without perception there cannot be contact. Without contact, there cannot be exchange. And without exchange there is no sharing, no relationship, no partaking of each other's lives.

If and when I see that life is interrelatedness, a gigantic complexity of interrelatedness, then in being attentive to you, in looking at you fully, in listening to you thoroughly, I am not putting you under any obligation; I instead am taking advantage of the opportunity that you are creating for me to live the fact of our relatedness. Then I do not care for others out of an ideology or a theory, but because awareness of the interrelatedness leaves no other choice. The awareness of the oneness of life creates a choicelessness in relationship.

At every moment, whatever the situation, whatever the object before me or whoever the human being that I am confronted with, that situation, that object, or that person is a manifestation of eternity, of Cosmic Life. Then I avail myself of that opportunity and meet eternity in that moment, meet the whole human life in that encounter. How can we meet Cosmic Life otherwise but through one another? How are we going to meet the Cosmic Life but through the manifestations around us?

If you are interested in living and relating, then every object and every individual has a new meaning, a new significance, and you are alert, attentive and open. (If you are not alert and attentive, you are depriving yourself of the opportunity of living.) If you are interested in discovering how to relate with other human beings or the whole world, deeply and with the totality of the being, you would do well to observe the content of life as interrelatedness. Then living will be great fun. If someone insults you, hurts you, it causes some pain and you weep. But even in the spontaneous weeping there is the grace of life. You go through the tears, the weeping, the hurt, live through those wounds so thoroughly that no segment is left behind to pollute the next moment and the next opportunity to live. If someone comes to you affectionately, cares for you, pleases your whole being, the pleasure comes upon your lips in the form of a smile, and your face lights up. You go through the sunshine of the smile and become enriched by it, but you don't convert it into an investment. You don't create an image of the person who has been kind to you and look again tomorrow to see whether the person will be as kind to you as he or she was yesterday.

Life is in the movement of today in the here and now. And relationship is not something that you live half today and half tomorrow. It's not something that can be postponed. If you miss an opportunity, you have missed it. Life hardly repeats itself. Relationships need not feel like problems or ordeals on a battlefield. They may not be pleasant all the time; there may be pain, hurts, wounds, but you do not cherish these pains and create a storehouse of them. When pleasure is lived, it is something vibrating, something dynamic. But when you cherish the memory of the pleasure, it is something dead. When you go through pain and agony, it hits you like an arrow. It has life in it. Then pain and

agony and sorrow can give an edge to your personality, a sharpness to you. But if you cherish the memory of the wound caused yesterday or ten yesterdays ago, then it has no dynamism left in it. To be pliable in relationship is to be aware of the fact of interrelatedness, is to see that there is no choice, that human beings have the responsibility for responding to things and beings that come their way. You cannot control life and say "I will meet only those people who are pleasant and I will avoid those who are unpleasant." You cannot select. The unpredictability of life is its beauty.

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

I live in life.
Ideas cannot hold me.

I move with life.
Ideals cannot contain me.

I breathe in life.
Knowledge cannot arrest me.

I am the rhythm of life.
Time cannot bind me.

I am the perfume of life.
Duality cannot catch me.

I am one with life.
Death cannot kill me.

RELATIONSHIP AND RELATEDNESS

Discussion October 13, 1979

Question: You spoke of meeting another person not only on one level - intellectual or physical - but on all levels. I have not found this possible. In trying to understand why, what comes to mind are the very great differences between myself and others: the whole consciousness, the whole value system, how we perceive a situation, how we respond to a situation. Even the intellectual and the physical capacities vary greatly between two people. Is an union between two people with such great differences possible?

Vimala: There are cultural, occupational, temperamental differences among persons. And these differences can, and generally do, become barriers. So the question arises how can one understand another totally, meeting on all levels, meeting the wholeness of the other person out of the wholeness of one's being, meeting through awareness which is all permeating. We see that if we meet the other person through thought, comparing values, norms and criteria, the process will be unending and fragmentary; if we meet the other person through impulses, which like instincts are incorporated in the biological structure, the meeting will also be fragmentary. So, what does one do?

We need to recognize first of all, that the thought structure moves in you or me in the same way. The impulses move in us in a similar way. Only the expressions differ. The way you express feelings or thoughts, or the way I express them, differs because of different upbringing. You have been brought up in America or in some European country, and I have been brought up in India, so the manifestations are different. But the content of thought, the content of feelings, emotions, impulses is not so very different. The difference is in the form of expression. But when one looks to the content, then it seems to me that we are individual expressions of collective thought. The cultural differences are revealed in the expression - the physical, the mental, the verbal expression of the content. But the differences are not deep-rooted. If we meet each other on the level of the I-consciousness, the differences become exaggerated. The person before me speaks to me, or behaves with me from the source of the I, the ego, and if I respond from the same level, then the differences - the differences in likes and dislikes, preferences and prejudices, conclusions and ideologies - will be emphasized. The I, the ego, is trained to be on the defensive. The moment you are with another human being it goes on the defensive, becomes alert/active, as if one has to protect oneself from other human beings. So the urge for security and the desire to use the defense mechanism given by culture and education will become terribly active. And this defensive activity is divisive. It divides you and me. I go on the defensive and so do you.

Is it possible to meet without the defense mechanism coming into play? If there is no fear, no psychological fear, in a relationship; if there is no urge for security released by the fear in relationship, then there will be no divisive process. The processes that divide go

into abeyance, and there is openness to look and listen and respond. You cannot say consciously to yourself, I will meet the other person on all levels of my being. That will be the I trying to meet through the effort of the will, taking into its compass the physical, the psychological and so on. The I is a fragment, and the fragment cannot take into its embrace the whole, the total. But if the ego goes into abeyance, then we meet. If the sensitivity which is the non-egoistic faculty in us is in operation, is open, receptive, willing to look at the other and to listen to the other, then wholeness moves. It's not the ego that moves the whole or the total being. When the ego with its fear and urge for security is not at the center, then the total opens up.

We have been trained to meet through the I, through the me. Here I am, my identity, my personality, my capacities, my shortcomings, my talents, my intellectual acquisitions, my wealth of experiences, and with these I am going out to meet you. However vast my knowledge may be, however rich my experiences, I am still fragmented. At the point of meeting, in space and time with another individual, can one be rooted in the wholeness of one's being rather than in the I, the me, with its divisive processes? The perception born of the I-consciousness, with all its fears and desires and urge for security is bound to divide. The perception of the me, the ego, is born of division and brings out a fragmentary response. That's how we have been trained to meet people and to respond to them. If you are working in an office, working in a factory where thought has to be exercised, and you, along with your colleagues, have to produce certain calculated results, then the I-consciousness with its memory, imagination, knowledge, experience, has to be very active. But we are talking about relationship throughout the day. The meeting with the wholeness of one's being becomes possible when it takes place through the inner space of silence, uncluttered by projections, ideas, memories and so on.

Question: When I feel anger or fear come up in relationship, and I do not wish to subject another person to that anger or fear, I run away from that person and hide within myself. I go back and forth. Will you suggest something to help me get out of this syndrome?

Vimala: Why does fear come up? Is it the fear of not being accepted by the other? Is it the fear of falling short of the expectations about oneself? If I do not set any idea or an ideal of a perfect human being, if I do not set the goal of reaching perfection according to Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or whatever it may be, then there won't be any fear of being exposed. If in relationship, I act out of my own understanding – however little and limited that be – such understanding brings me to a state of choiceless action.

Then being accepted by others or not being accepted by others is not so important in my life, because I feel fulfilled in manifesting my understanding in my actions, in my relationships. Life is fulfilled when the inner understanding flows through activity. I am simply what I am. There's nothing to conceal, nothing to hide, no pretensions to be otherwise than I am. There is a kind of simplicity, a naturalness.

Now in addition to fear, there is also anger. Why does anger arise? We know that anger arises in those who are very touchy, hypersensitive. Then the slightest provocation may stimulate irritation, annoyance, sharp temperedness, anger. Obviously I cannot control the behavior of other people. I cannot command that they act according to my wish, my desire, or my expectation. But there are other sources of anger. Our consciousness is cluttered with so many ideologies, so many theories, and norms of behavior have been fed into the brain. But without being conscious of it, we approximate everything we do to the ideal. Doesn't that happen? There's the authority of the ideals and ideologies. Authority of religious norms, ethical norms, social norms is tremendously great, and we are in the grip of such authority.

Why do I accept the authority of ideals laid down by others? If the mind is a slave to the authority of ideologies, theories, then a comparison of the actual with the ideal is bound to take place. Then when I get angry, and I find myself in the state of anger time and again, I call myself a bad person and act as if it is a crime or a sin to be angry. Then I am adding complications to an already difficult situation.

If a person has gone through childhood with parents who were dominating and was frightened in very young days, or even in the prenatal period, then the reaction can be the habit of getting angry or irritated without much provocation. So is getting angry a pathological condition with me? If it's a pathological condition then one can go through certain therapies and get rid of it. If it's not a pathological condition but due to the acceptance of authority, then it is possible to set one's mind free of all manner of ideology. If you were in the Orient one would say retire to solitude for a year. Retire completely into solitude for a year where you will be left to yourself, with no one else to provoke anger or fear in you. You'll be thrown back upon yourself completely. And then you will be faced with the inner world. If your mind has become anemic or extremely weak due to unwarranted wear and tear of the life that you have lived through, your mind gets back its strength, its health. There is healing power within each human being. So if this anger I feel is due to physical or mental fatigue, then solitude heals the mind. If it is due to neurological weakness, then in solitude the neurological system also gets strong, strong as steel.

Question: What if someone has crystallized an image about you and has expectations of you. And there is a part where you are involved with this, too. How can you both get free of it? How can you have a relationship if one person is aware and the other person is not aware of what is happening?

Vimala: If I am aware, then image-making discontinues. And when the other person living in daily relationship sees that there is no image-making and no authority, either it makes the other person very angry, or the other person sees the magnificence of what has happened, and begins to question his or her way of living. Either of the two can happen.

If a person is very proud, and is psychologically dependent upon me, and I am not dependent upon the other person, my

independence makes the other person angry, irritable, that she needs me and I don't need her, that he depends upon me, but I don't depend upon him.

Then if the other person gets angry, and you love the other person, love and sorrow go together. You don't turn away from the person saying, I am aware, you are not, therefore I am going away. Awareness doesn't function negatively. Awareness makes you tremendously tender. The awareness expressing itself in relationship becomes compassion. So there is no negative attitude. You don't compromise the awareness and the behaviour flowing out of awareness. You do not condemn the other person for not being aware, but you do suffer with him or with her.

The deep compassion, the intensity will touch the other heart. It will not touch collectively, and may not bring about a change in the collective, but it does move individuals that are the concrete reality. If something has moved me, and made me aware, why should I not trust life? That same thing might happen in the other person. The awareness has happened in me, something has touched me; I am not the doer of the awareness. The awareness as the movement of intelligence is a benediction that has taken place in my life. It may take place in the life of other persons any day, any moment.

Question: Is there a middle ground, a proper balance between attachment and detachment?

Vimala: What is it that is wrong in attachment or detachment? You like someone – you enjoy the company of the other – and the person likes you. There is a tender affection or love. In this love and affection, concern and care, at what point does attachment begin? Where does love get converted into attachment? I get attached to you, you get attached to me. We can't get physically attached so we get psychologically attached to each other. What does that mean? Does it mean that I begin to depend upon you? And what is dependency? Whenever I don't like to be with myself, then I try to run towards you.

See this: the beginning of attachment is in the unwillingness to be with oneself. It's a very strange thing; when one doesn't like being with oneself, one feels lonely. And then one wants to run away from that loneliness. If you can be with yourself and enjoy your own company, you see that it's tremendous company, for the total humanity peeps through you. When you are alone you are with the totality of the human race. But one is afraid, one doesn't like it, so when one doesn't like one's own company one says "I am lonely." And to run away from that loneliness, I begin to use you. I would like to have you, to see that you are available to me, at least psychologically, whenever I need you. Dependency begins the moment I am afraid to be with myself, unwilling to be with myself. And you do the same with me. I write you letters; I ring you up, enter into half an hour's talk on the telephone. And when we become mutually indispensable, that is attachment. If I get attached to you, I am depriving you of your freedom. I'm insulting you. When there is love, you enjoy one another's company, you meet one another. When there are problems you come together for

discussion, or you just come together for the fun and joy of being together.

But when I tell you are indispensable to me, that I can't do without you, that I depend on you, I'm depriving you of the freedom to be you and to live your life. That I'm afraid of myself, that I'm trying to run away from myself, is one unfair thing, and that I am preventing the other person from being free to meet life as it comes to him or her is another.

Attachment is an abuse of two lives. And how do we fight attachment? We run away physically, get away, snap the context of our lives completely. We don't see the person we are attached to; we don't see the house, the furniture to which we are attached, we get out. We cultivate indifference to the house, to the person; we cultivate detachment.

One point of duality is attachment. To counteract attachment one cultivates detachment, which has been given tremendous importance in the Hindu religion. But detachment is again an act of the I-consciousness, the me. It's an imposition. In order to suppress attachment, to conceal from one's own intelligence one cultivates an intentional indifference. It's such an unholy thing. Well now, what is in the middle, asks the questioner. I am neither attached to nor detached from anyone or anything. I enjoy company or pleasure when I get it. When life brings to my doorstep sensual, intellectual, psychological pleasure, joy, companionship, I enjoy them, but when I don't get them, I don't yearn and pray for them. I don't try to manipulate the behaviour and the lives of other people in order to suck pleasure out of their lives.

There is sensitivity to receive, and strength to do without. In between attachment and detachment seems to be the world of ever alert attentive sensitivity.

Question: In many spiritual traditions, detachment seems to be the goal. I have never heard anyone say what you said about detachment. Do you think that detachment also comes from fear?

Vimala: Detachment comes out of the fear of one's own attachment. You see I am attached already, and I am afraid of it. I would like to cover it up. I can't. Then I would like to run away. I am afraid of myself; I am afraid of my own attachment. Therefore, I try to run away. Detachment seems to be the point where I crystallize or harden, for detachment hardens the human mind. One loses the tenderness of affection. People who practice detachment in the name of renunciation, in the name of religion, or whatever it be, become very hardhearted. Then they can be witness unto the suffering of the human race, saying that the people are responsible for their suffering – it is their karma, it is their law. They don't feel responsible for what is happening to the human race. Detachment is a very hardening force.

Question: How can we grow to recognize the seed of humanity, of the cosmos, within ourselves so that we can feel comfortable with ourselves and not become caught up in attachment and detachment?

Vimala: How can I grow to recognize the total humanity travelling through me – the evolution of man in me, so that I feel comfortable with myself and do not feel any necessity to get attached to someone or remain detached from someone or from things.

Now I think we can watch, we can observe, our own behaviour, can't we? I hope everyone of us knows what it is to watch and observe. It's a lovely faculty. To watch, not in order to compare nor to evaluate, but to observe without emanating a reaction, without comparing, without judging. A non-evaluatory, non-reactional attentiveness is the state of observation.

And it's not very difficult, though it may sound so. When you look at the sky or the open sea, or watch the movement of a breeze through the branches of a tree, the thinking process inside doesn't move, unless you are too much given to verbalization and chattering and the moment you see something you have to say, "Oh! how beautiful it is!"

You simply look; you observe the changing colours of an evening sky, or the graceful movement of a bird on the wing, or the morning light on tender leaves of a plant. You observe! You are in communion with a blade of grass, with the leaves of a plant, with the movement of a bird, with the movement of light. You are not conscious of yourself. You are not even conscious that you are observing. You are in the state of observation. Observation is a non-reactional, alert attentiveness. It's a perceptive sensitivity, if I may use the term.

When we learn to observe, we can watch the movement of the human animal as well as other animals. Then one notices that the human animal moves in a cultured way. The body has been trained, cultivated, to respond to its inner appetites, to its inner demands, in a different way from the animals. This difference of responses to the same instinctive needs and impulses in the body is due to civilization and culture. The human being is born with a vast inheritance, a tremendously rich and complex heritage. So much has been given unto us, the association of ideas, of emotions. These mental habits of behaviour travel through us inside the skin. The journey goes on – the human race travelling through our skins, through our bones. There is of course voluntary thinking which occurs when we sit down and consciously think, when we consciously acquire information, through scripture and schools and universities, through television and radio. There is conscious acquisition. But the conscious acquisition is a tiny little bit, a tiny little part. The content of our psyche, the content of our consciousness, has so much that has not been acquired by the individual, but given to it by the collective.

One watches the movements of the mind, and sees that suddenly there is a tendency, there is a memory of an experience, there is an inspiration, there is an instinctive urge that one has not cultivated. One may notice then that it is the collective content in us that is expressing itself.

Now please take one more step and notice another, seemingly unrelated thing. When we sleep innocently and profoundly, we come out of that profound sleep, rejuvenated. During such

profound sleep, the mind is not thinking. The I-consciousness is not holding the body together. Thought does not move, nor do the emotions stir. One comes out of profound sleep, in which the conscious mind had gone into abeyance, completely revitalized. What does this mean? This daily experience of profound sleep is trying to indicate something. There is a part of our consciousness which is heavy with the content of knowledge and experience, giving intimations of its content in our daily behaviour, and there is another part of the consciousness which is light, which does not contain anything – emptiness is the only content. In profound sleep one is in the emptiness of that empty dimension. There is no pressure of thought, no tension of emotions. It's a tension-free dimension, pressure-free dimension. Our psyche has a dimension entirely free from thought, from the past, from knowledge, from experience.

What happens to me in profound sleep can happen to me when I am awake. One begins to explore this dimension of thought-free, pressure-free, tension-free consciousness which contains only emptiness, which contains a space where there is no periphery, no circumference. It's a consciousness that has no periphery of you or it or thou, and has no center of the I, the me, the it.

If one explores through meditation this dimension, one comes across the unpolluted, uncontaminated potential within oneself. This pressure-free, tension-free, content-free emptiness is the essence of divinity. We come to that part of our being which has not been touched by thought or word, which has not been polluted by any definitions or descriptions. You come across it through personal discovery, personal exploration; you are there. And the discovery of that emptiness, that unconditional, total relaxation, fills your being.

I'm sorry to use words that are apparently contradictory. The confrontation or the encounter with the inner emptiness fills your being. I have no other words to communicate and to share with you.

One finds a fountain of energy in that inner space, in that inner emptiness. It's an unpolluted emptiness, something in us that is not touched by thought, not described, defined, not captured in the framework of ideologies and theories. Here one discovers the roots of being, the divinity that each human being contains. The encounter with divinity, not with an idea of the divine, not a definition, not a theory, not a speculation through argumentation, but a real personal encounter with that unpolluted, sacred, inner space gives a sense of self-assurance, gives a sense of fullness. Then when you meet others and you live with others, you enjoy expressing that fullness. You are meeting others out of the joy of fullness, the joy of inner relaxation and peace. You share with others, if others are agreeable and receptive. It's not a question of getting attached.

We acquire objects for physical comfort, the objects that are necessary for feeding, clothing, sheltering the body. We handle them with care and tenderness. And we live with others, share with others, because we are born among people, in society. Relatedness is the fact of life, and recognition of that relatedness enables us to enter into relationship. When we respond out of the joy of inner

peace, there is no need to get attached, and no need to remain away and take a posture of detachment. Then human beings and their relationships have a different significance altogether. That's how I visualize the future, a future in which people will meet, share with one another, learn from one another and contribute to one another's lives.

Question: Can the I-consciousness, the me, the ego, that is the center of our identity, be left behind permanently? Can we be forever free of this center and relate to one another out of freedom or must we return from time to time to the center of the me? Is this center a psychological illusion that we drop once we see that it is an illusion or does it have some use, some significance?

Vimala: The physical body-brain, bones, glands, muscles, chemicals – the whole of body is materialized thought that has taken a form. Now, the bodies appear to be separate and independent of each other; they are given names in order to distinguish one from the other. They have modes of operating – they have form, they have colour, they have mannerisms, and these can be described and defined. The name and the qualities of the form, their descriptions, their definitions, their evaluations are there. And the child is encouraged to identify itself with a name, with a form, with the qualities of the form. But the life inside me or you has no name – only the form has a name. The form has the qualities. The child is encouraged to identify itself, and it goes on identifying, with the name, the form, the qualities, the evaluations made by parents, society, school, college, and ultimately the child creates its own criteria and begins to judge itself. An amalgamation of all this creates a center which is the me.

This center, this me is a contrivance of the human race for communication, for living in society, just as psychological time is a contrivance. We have created time. We have been using the symbols of time, the concept of time, for thousands and thousands of years, so that if someone says reality is timeless, life is timeless, we look upon that as an idea, and on time as reality. But time remains a contrivance. We have created the minutes, the hours, the days, the years, the numerical figures and mathematics. They are concepts and symbols, very useful for collective life, but they are not absolute reality. Timelessness is the reality and on the canvas of that timelessness, time has been beautifully painted by the human mind. In the same way, the I-consciousness, the me, as a center for physical and psychological behaviour, is something that man has created and through usage it has become refined, sophisticated, very useful on the psychological and physical levels. It has to be used for science, for technology, for music, for literature. The whole content of civilization and culture is the flowering of this I-consciousness, of this ego structure. It has its own beauty. It is not to be annihilated; it is not to be destroyed, but its limitations need to be recognized. Thought cannot transcend its own center. Thought, consciousness, cannot transcend its own content. It cannot transcend its own past. It cannot transcend time and space.

If we can see this limitation, then the I, the me – which is time,

which is thought – can voluntarily go into silence, can go into abeyance or non-action. That's the only thing that the I can do. When it goes voluntarily into abeyance or non-action, we say it is left behind or brushed aside. In the man-made world, with man-made structures we have to live and exercise our thought, memories, knowledge, experience competently, efficiently, skilfully, harmoniously. But in psychological relationship, if thought as a measurement comes in, and pollutes perception, and modifies or qualifies responses, there is no harmony, there is no relationship worth the name, there is no order in human relationship. Whenever the exercise of thought is vitally necessary, it is exercised by the center – the me, the I, the you – created and sophisticated by the human race. Whenever the exercise of thought as measurement is not necessary, then we relax in non-action of the me. Relaxation in non-action, freedom from the me, the I-consciousness, is a fact that can be tested, not an idea or theory. The statement that the I-consciousness is only a contrivance created by the human race, useful on the psychological level, useful in society, can be tested by one's own observation and experimentation. One can observe for oneself what happens when the I, the me, goes into non-action. Each of us must experiment for ourselves and not accept anyone's authority.

What happens in the inner space of silence? Does everything become dead? Please notice that when I say "inner space" it is not a verbal description. It is a fact which can be observed. Space is within us, in the whole body. Every blood cell contains unexplored, untapped, unutilized space. And the secret of life is contained in that space. Or, out of the emptiness of inner space does a new non-cerebral energy move and perceive and respond?

In the non-action of the me, in the non-action of the ego, out of the emptiness of inner space, the non-cerebral energy which one might call sensitivity or intelligence is activated, released. One who is used to this release of intelligence or perceptive sensitivity lives in that dimension, and this intelligence uses the brain, the mind, the thought, with all its faculties whenever necessary.

RELATIONSHIP AND RELATEDNESS

October 14, 1979

Through each human being, life expresses itself in a tremendously rich, complex, and evolved form. The human is a field in which innumerable currents of energy meet and play. It's a privilege to be born a human being. And one says this after having gone around the world for the last fifteen years and shared the ugliness and the beauty, the starvation and the affluence, the callousness and the care, the violence and the tenderness displayed by human beings. You know what a wanderer's life can be. The human is a field in which universality and individualization dance together; the infinite and the limited, the eternal and the momentary dance together. Each of us has to discover this fact of one's life, this actuality of one's life, so that we can enter into relationships without getting polluted or damaged. The element of universality or eternity in us is not a theory, not an ideology. Every one of us has an experience of that, an encounter with that, within ourselves. Each one of us goes through moments of silence, however rare they may be in one's life, moments of unconditional, utter silence: silence that has not been measured and cannot be measured by thought, silence that cannot be described or defined by words. Silence is an expression of the immeasurableness which we contain. However rare may be the moment when love visits our hearts and minds, in those rare moments one experiences the unlimitedness of one's being. Love never measures when it gives. Love never experiences a sense of loss in giving. Love does not know what duality is. The moment it visits the heart, dawns upon the heart, it transports the person totally into a different dimension of consciousness where the center of I becomes absolutely unimportant. And the person or the circumstances – the beauty of nature, of music, or of a painting – which has aroused that love becomes terribly important.

When love visits, one is transported into a consciousness without a center. The psyche is set free in that moment of the I, the me, the ego; otherwise our perceptions, our thinking, our reactions are centered around the I – they are born of the I. But when love visits, then the perception and the responses are not born of the I. One is not even conscious of the I. It does happen. In every human being's life sometime, somewhere, this beautiful thing, the unlimitedness, happens.

When I say that universality is here, in this tiny human being, it's not a theory. The immeasurableness of eternity, the unlimitedness of the infinity, is here and now within us. Without anybody's telling me or teaching me, I feel the vibration of life. As children each of us feels, "I am," and that feel remains spontaneous and fresh, as the body grows from childhood into youth, and from youth into old age. The "I am" does not experience aging, never feels old, though it feels that the body is old, the body is in pain. It is as if there is an eternal witness, nameless, formless, watching the movements taking place in the body, the pleasure and pain taking place in the mind. A perceptive intelligence is there permeating the whole. Intelligence doesn't have to make an effort to witness,

doesn't have to make an effort to see. One need not elaborate on this element of eternity, where the dust of years doesn't gather as it gathers over the body and shows its wrinkles. The sense of eternity is there, free from the touch of growth or decay.

Each of us contains the eternal, the impersonal. Unless we come face to face with this impersonal, this universal within, we don't have the foundation from which to enter into relationships. This discovery of the universal within ourselves creates a foundation. I call it a foundation because even if the whole world misunderstands you, you will feel there is an intelligence within you that understands what you are doing. Then the misunderstanding of the people around you may give you pain, but it will not damage your wholeness. The lack of understanding on the part of people around you may cause agony, but it cannot wound the mind.

There is a whole, there is a whole of universality or eternity within us – where we live – and we reach out to other human beings from there. We talk, we communicate, we share. If the sharing is received, it makes us happy, but if it's not received, if it's not accepted, there still is the joy of sharing. The act of sharing, the act of communication, becomes its own fulfilment.

Lack of understanding may cause pain, but one needn't worry and feel anxious, and need not crave that understanding. One goes back to the foundation, the source of being, and rests there. As flowers blossom, some are looked at, some are appreciated, some are admired and some are not. But the blossoming of the flower is its own fulfilment. In the same way, we live with human beings, willing to share, available to others, willing to respond whenever responses are called for, but there is a place within the heart where we can rest and relax.

One does not feel lonely when one is with the life inside oneself. The problem of loneliness has become such a tremendous problem the world over. And I for one don't understand why anyone feels lonely. There is a sanctity of aloneness, and the majesty of solitude. If and when life leaves a person alone, there is beauty. One need not enter into relationship out of the fear of loneliness; one need not bargain at the counter of relationships.

Relationships are necessary; we go through them with the wholeness of our being, but we don't crave them. We love to enter into relationships with others. The eagerness, the willingness is a quite natural thing, but when that becomes an obsession, when without that one cannot live, then the dependency, the attachments begin.

With the dependency and attachment comes the habit of getting hurt quickly and easily. If we allow other persons to hurt us deeply, and allow the behaviour of other people to inflict pain upon us, the initiative is in the hands of other people the world around us. There may be something that isn't pleasing. There may be something that is aesthetically unpleasant. But that is understandable because there are innumerable temperaments, idiosyncrasies, mental and physical. The expressions of all the people cannot develop at the same time and be at the same level. All the vegetables have different tastes and flavors, and the fruits have different flavors and tastes. We never complain because the

lemon is sour and the mango is sweet and the pepper sharp. The human race is a garden where so many patterns of conditionings have flowered and blossomed, and so many temperaments are blooming. So sometimes there is a confrontation with a sharp person, and sometimes with a sour person. Sometimes with a person in a bitter mood, and sometimes with a person who has grown into cynism. We can't avoid that. And it is unpleasant. One cannot cover it up with theories and say, no, it was not unpleasant. One cannot cover up the variety with the theory of unity. There is diversity. There is tremendous variety; no two human beings are alike. In every encounter you come across a new expression. Now, a confrontation may be unpleasant; it may even disturb me for a moment. That's quite natural; to get hurt is quite natural for a sensitive person. The hurt is not a problem. There is enough healing power inside – physical and psychological – if it is allowed to work, it will heal the wounds. But we nurse the hurt, we turn disturbances into grievances, and inwardly make a fuss: "she hurt me," and "he offended me," and "she ignored me," and "he..." you know. The thought gives the continuity to the hurt. And it's kept ever green.

When the thought gives continuity to the hurt, and we allow the thought to nurse the wounds, to nurse the agony, the hurts, then we are damaging our inner being. We are damaging our inner life. Relationships are an ordeal today, because thought is allowed to give continuity to the hurts that take place at a moment in time and at a place in space.

But if the hurt is gone through with the wholeness of your being, and you live through the pain at that moment and die to it, then it has no continuity. If thought is not allowed to give continuity to the pleasure and pain, the wounds and the hurts and the flattery and the insults, then relationships won't be a problem. You explore, develop a dynamic of relationship, so what the others do does not damage your inner peace and relaxation. You know at the end of the day you are so perturbed. Ten times during the day, you have been perturbed and disturbed, and whenever you were disturbed, you became irritated. But you covered up that irritation, and day after day it goes on gathering. Somewhere, someday it has to explode. And when it explodes you are surprised. You are astounded that a little thing caused so much anger in you. But it was the stored up irritation and annoyance, the friction.

I would like to submit with all humility that there is a way of living where you do not allow that irritation to gather, to store within. A way of living that allows you to go through it at that moment, and have finished with it. Then at the end of the day the mind is not disturbed, the mind is at peace, if a little tired, since the brain has to go through such wear and tear throughout the day. It seems necessary for learning about relationships that one discovers the immeasurable within oneself. Just as there is a measured, defined, and chiseled thought structure, there is also the immeasurable. Just as there is speech, there is also the silence within you. And as there is the thought, there is the infinity of love within you. We need to discover that, to come face to face with that so there is a foundation, a home, an abode in which one can live. Then psychologically one does not feel homeless, one does not

feel that one has no roots, does not feel uprooted. On the mental level one exercises all the faculties of the brain with a sense of responsibility, and does not allow the behaviour of others to ruin us in work. We are responsible for sustaining our sanity, our balance. Nobody is going to do it for us – we have to do it ourselves.

Finally, one must observe and discover that all the movements of the mind are mechanical and repetitive. One must see that the norms and criteria and values that one has, the definitions of pain and pleasure, the definitions of morality and immorality and so on – have all been handed down to us generation by generation. The movement of mind is a movement out of the past. The movement of mind is a mechanical, repetitive movement. The mind is not free. Thought is not free. When one sees all this, then one does not pamper one's reactions. Then one does not pamper one's likes and dislikes. There is no desire to impose one's values upon others because one has seen how mechanical the movement of the mind is. Then mind is cut down to its own size and put in its proper place. The understanding of the mental movement doesn't allow us to worship the ego, the I, the me. And the awareness of the inner foundation gives us the strength to withstand the crudities, the roughness, the callousness of the world around us, and the capacity to enter into relationships harmoniously. It is through such understanding and awareness we establish our relationship to human society and our relatedness with the whole universe.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Zeist - Holland June 24th and 25th 1978

Question: What is the significance and relevance of feeling ashamed of what we do in our life?

Vimala: We said the world situation is grim, the human species, the human race has arrived at a point where it is incapable of looking or listening. It is conditioned to know, to experience and to become. This conditioning of constant knowing, experiencing and becoming has benumbed the sensitivity, and therefore as a race we are losing relevance to the evolution of life. We said that we cannot relate ourselves to the life around us and within us, and now in the light of that context we are looking at the question. We do something or we omit doing something and we feel ashamed; what is the relevance of this and why? Do we remember something the parents have said; is it because as a child we were in a religious family and we have some very thin layer of religious conditioning; do we feel ashamed because we look at ourselves as a civilized cultured person and are doing something we would like to hide from others – we like to do it, we know it is wrong and yet it gives us some pleasure and when getting caught we feel ashamed – not of what we have done, but because others have come to know about it.

We must find out why we feel ashamed. It seems to me that 99 times out of 100 we feel ashamed when somebody sees us doing something which is not consistent with the image that we have been projecting in our relationship with that person. We have been pretending that we are non-violent and somebody sees us in a violent mood, so our image is shattered, the other person has discovered it and all our efforts for many years to project the image have gone.

Most of us feel ashamed when we are caught telling a lie, hiding something, pretending, being a hypocrite, being angry, being jealous. Please do see this with me, it is vitally important, that it is the fear and humiliation of being caught that makes us feel ashamed.

If we feel ashamed because we were caught doing something, next time we'll be careful, but the feeling of being ashamed will not go any deeper into us, it will remain on the mental level and teach us more carefulness, cautiousness, skill.

Or it will stimulate and develop a guilt-consciousness in us, another complication which leads to self-pity. This feeling ashamed will isolate us from further relationship and behaviour. We can't afford such isolation because then we will miss the opportunity of living.

Supposing we feel ashamed because it is not according to a certain ideology, as a communist, as a Christian, as a Hindu. Then the ideologies are important and we are feeling ashamed only because we have not come up to the mark, we have not been able to approximate our behaviour to the ideology. It is the ideology and identifying our behaviour with the ideology that becomes important; it could teach us hypocrisy and pretension – there will

be inner struggle, we will torture, mutilate and humiliate ourselves. Somehow we make a struggle and conform to the ideology which is up there: the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bible, the teachings of Buddha. We lift, we sublimate ourselves to reach there.

We are not living here and now with the factual being that we are, but our eyes are focussed upon the ideology, the values, the patterns, and our only concern is how to do and acquire that, how to adjust to it. The how, the method, the technique becomes important, but not the living of it, not the act of getting related. Whether it is a political or a religious ideology, the result is the same. It may push and pull us towards pretension, hypocrisy, a constant struggle with ourselves, it will not be possible for us to feel at home with what we are; to relax in it, and to live out of that relaxation doesn't happen.

Why do we feel ashamed if we discover that something in disharmony, in contradiction, something incompatible has taken place? Whether other people have noticed it or not is not our concern. It's a mistake that has taken place, it's a lack of harmony with our total way of living. We see that. That's all.

You know, life is simple but we like to make a fuss "oh poor me, I have committed a mistake, how could I do that?" Because we have an idea of ourselves and we have fallen short, then we can be very cruel and harsh with ourselves, we create an issue or a grudge or a friction against ourselves, and all the pleasures become like ashes in the mouth because the ego has been hurt. Why do we make such a fuss, there is no time to lose in life. We see something wrong which has happened. If it has happened in relation to others we walk over and say "my dear excuse me, I apologize, that is a mistake", and finish with it so that we are free to live the next moment. The ego somehow wants to play its tricks and to keep us away from the main stream of life by feeling ashamed, feeling guilty, carrying the memory of that guilt and mistake, torturing ourselves, entering into self-pity. It's a trap of the ego, of the thought process. When we go back to the memory, to the past and bite into it we are away from the present, we are inattentive. So while we are taking our meals, our baths, working in the office, talking to our husband or wife, the thought process is free to come and look at the present according to its conditionings, shape the present, prepare for the future, the thought process is safe. In our inattention is the continuity of the karma, in our inattention is the continuity of the past.

But the moment we are attentive and the authority of the past, of knowledge and experience is no more there as governing force in our preception and response, then there is a creative relationship with life – not a second-hand relationship through thought, through the theory, through the authority of memory and experience, but we are there in our wholeness.

Whatever we may be – we may be a very common ordinary individual, we may have our share of stupidity, dullness, we may be inefficient – but we are a part of life free to move in and with life. What is important is living.

It's not only that the brilliant and extraordinary people have the privilege and the right to live and not the common and ordinary people like you and me. What is important is living, and to live is

to be related. For getting related we have to be attentive, open and receptive, so that perceptions are unclouded and responses are uninhibited and there is fun in living. Then we take the pains and pleasures, honours, humiliations, insults and praises as they come, we live through the tears and smiles and finish with them – never get stuck up anywhere. That's the fun in living. Being ashamed is not a continuous activity in time. We may feel hurt and sad that some mistake has been committed, but that sadness gives an edge to our being and it gives a sharpness to our attention. Sorrow makes us terribly sensitive, sorrow sharpens all the sense-organs. But if we get stuck up in the personal misery and suffering "how could it happen to me, poor me, it has happened again", and if we go around and around the "me", the "I", then nothing happens; we become dull and insensitive. If misery and suffering, the guilt-conscious are allowed to ferment in the mind, then it makes us an arrogant person who is indifferent to the world and the people around us; so busy with our own misery and suffering that we have no time to taste the food, to look at the trees, the birds, the sky, because we are busy with our guilt conscious, our feeling of shame and so on, and so on. So we are with all and yet we are isolated from all. We begin to live on an island, in isolation; there is existence and survival – but no life.

Question: How can we live in silence in our daily living?

Vimala: Well there is no other living than whatever is here and now. In the so-called day, is the only time that we have an opportunity to relate ourselves to eternity, to infinity, to the is-ness, to the totality of life as it is here and now, in what we call the present, the today.

So daily living is the only living, is the only opportunity, a life with the travail of relationships that we find ourselves in, the compulsions of society, the cruelties of the social, economical, political structure and so on.

Life cannot be divided: here is the daily living and there is the religious, spiritual life: in a monastery, an ashrama, a church, a mosque, with a teacher. Life is whole. Wherever we move we will move in the wholeness of life: whether we are at our home, in an office, we are in India, in the States, or with our teacher or our children.

From behind the screen of those relationships, compulsions, objects, life is peeping at us. It is up to us whether to get into relationship with it or not, but life is there all the time.

The word "daily living", the undertones and overtones of that expression will have to be removed, we will have to disinfect the word "daily living". That is the only living which we have. There is no other living.

Now we can turn to the other part of the question: "how can I live in silence"? Why can't the I, the me, the ego respond to silence? It can respond to ideas, to words, to theories, to persons. It cannot respond to silence, to totality, to humility. We can see that the "me", the "ego" – the thought process – moves, looks at an object, and goes back to memory where so many images are: theories,

foregone conclusions, value structures. It has an image as a framework of reference. It refers to that image and judges the event, the person, the object according to that image. The thought brings out response from the memory of an image.

We have the authority of our experience, which provides an image, we take it out, compare it with the reality. If the reality fits in with the image we feel pleasure, and if not then we feel pain. The movement of the ego is a movement of the images.

There is no image of silence, of love, of wholeness. The me cannot respond to silence because there is no image behind in memory. A word, an idea or a value, a memory or an experience provides an image – and we immediately project and compare our own image with the image of the other.

Now I say "how will I live in silence?". Living in silence is having no image. If there are images in memory, then the images will jump upon the objective fact, compare, evaluate and tell us what to do with them. Is it possible that we live in relationship without forming an image of the persons around us? That is the crux of the whole issue: can we move into relationships, go through them, and after having gone through them there is no segment left in memory as an image.

If that is possible then perhaps living in silence could be possible for us, but if every relationship leaves a scar of memory behind, then the consciousness is full of scratches of memory; it is mutilated, it is a wounded psyche, so there can't be silence.

First of all we have to see that the movement of the ego is a movement of the image making; then we have to discover how we actually live, how our relationships are based on an image. We have to watch and find out how we work upon the authority of images that we have about ourselves and about others. Our relationships are movements of those images. The images come into contact, they clash, there is a friction between them, and then begins the movement to adjust, to compromise, to depend or to dominate, and when nothing succeeds we feel frustrated, we say "it doesn't work".

Is it possible that human beings learn to relate to one another without the authority of the image? The knowledge, the experience as the content of consciousness is something beautiful: the total human experience, the rich heritage, the images, the symbols cannot be destroyed; they are there, and yet they do not interfere with our perception and response. Can this happen? If we do not – having seen this whole happening – identify ourselves with the knowledge, if we do not have the sense of belonging, will our perception interfere? It is not difficult. The fact of being born in a Hindu, Brahmin or a Christian family cannot be wiped out. The conditioning on the psychological and physical level with its pattern of behaviour that has taken place in childhood in the family, etc., is there. But what gives the change that the psyche is free of the influence, the grip of these conditionings? They are interfering as long as there is an identifying ourselves with them. If you once see the whole human life and that the association with the thought Brahmin, Christian, etc. with the form is not the whole, you see how one gets conditioned and the sense of identification drops completely.

The perception is free of those conditionings, not because they are destroyed, but they have lost the grip over our perception. If you see the whole game you are out of it. You are an unlabelled human being because you have gone deeper into the source of life within you. The respectable Brahmin or Christian is there, let him be. It no more conditions the perception.

The knowledge, the experience may be there, but it may not condition the perception if we do not have a sense of belonging, do not tie ourselves to the value structure of the Hindu or Western approach to life.

"How can I live in silence in daily living"? Not by increasing the period of sitting in silence from one hour to twenty four hours. We may do it if we would like to get acquainted and get soaked in the dimension of silence, to see it, to feel it, to touch it, to be in it, as we can be with music if we want to learn.

But for living in silence no new cultivation or conditioning is necessary. What is necessary is to go back to the old conditionings and see that we grow into a new relationship with the known. It's a qualitatively new relationship with the conditionings, that might set us free. When I look at the people and the relationships, the challenges, I see them. And for seeing them I need no authority of the past, no theories, no values, no compulsions; I am entirely on my own, so I have to be tremendously attentive, alert and sensitive to look.

When I look at the situations, the challenges, the questions that you give me, I listen to them or look at them with all of my attention – no half-hearted attention, no absent-mindedness, no distractions, because if I am distracted or absent-minded I will miss an aspect of the reality.

Then how will we respond? We have nothing to go back to and get the response from. Uptill now it was our thought that brought back the response from memory, we conformed to it, we acted according to it, so there was the security. Now there is only emptiness, nothing to fall back upon, so we have to be alert and sensitive. We put all our energy into the looking: at you, at the object, the situation, the individuals, at one who hates us, one who criticizes us, one who loves or insults us, you know all situations.

We look at it with the wholeness, and so it happens to us that we are learning to live in silence. Daily life is the only life that we have and the people around us are the only beings who will cooperate with us in that adventure of living. I look at you or I listen to you, or you look at me or listen to me with total sensitivity, alertness, attention, and that totality of attention releases the energy of intelligence.

As long as we were busy with the thought going back to memory, intelligence was not necessary. It was a mechanical movement bringing out a response, and acting upon it, – our armour of defence mechanisms: knowledge, theories and so on – but all that armour is no more there, we are naked.

Naked in the presence of life we look, we listen – there is an openness, a receptivity, a sensitivity, there is attention, and that attention releases energy. We get related, we act, we move, there is pain, there is pleasure. Pleasure brings the smiles, pain brings tears, and we go through them. Once we totally have gone through, we

have seen, we have responded and lived the pain or the pleasure that the relationship brought in that moment – the pleasure or the pain is not going back to memory. If we allow it to travel back to memory as an experience, that experience is going to create a new content in the psyche, it's going to create a new karma, a new burden in the memory.

We are very attentive while perceiving, while responding, and while going through the pain and the pleasure that our action has brought. When the pain and pleasure comes, we don't say "oh I have pain because of someone else, something else". We don't try to throw our failure upon someone else, we don't try to hang our pain, agony, misery or suffering on somebody's shoulder.

With both our hands we take the pain and pleasure, and we go through them, we don't try to run away and save ourselves.

Attentiveness is not something that is there at one moment and the next moment we try to run away from it. We are running away from life when we run away from that suffering or from that pleasure, the tickling that it gives us. We don't try to cover up the sensation of tickling and pleasure by saying "oh it doesn't matter".

Why not? Pleasure is pleasure, and there is a vibration of pleasure, it pleases us. If somebody notices that we have been pleased by some pleasure – sensual, sexual, psychological – do we want to hide it behind some theories because we think it's not good that people notice that we have pleasure. Why? If it pleases us it does please us, and we live it. If we live it honestly, may be we grow out of the need of that pleasure, but if we try to hide, pretend and become a hypocrite, then we are losing an opportunity to grow.

Or it inflates our ego for that moment when we succeed, or there is a sensation of vanity or pride, because somebody praises us and we see that it is there, let us look at it.

Let us see the shallowness of ourselves being inflated or depressed by our feelings.

If we closely watch this inflated ego, and the ego that is depressed, watch what happens to us in both these movements, then may be the futility of repeating those movements dawns upon us and we are free of it.

But if we try to run away from them, then we may go on repeating them in one context after another, with one set of individuals after another, endlessly, till we are ready for our graves.

Once we have gone through it attentively, sensitively then nothing is carried over to the memory as an experience. We have finished with it. We have lived and we have died. We have died to the memory because we have lived so thoroughly that there is no need to continue it, there is no thought involved in carrying it to the memory and continue sucking its pleasure in brooding about the past.

But we like to play with memory and ruminate over the past and relive the memories of past pleasure and get some pleasure out of it again and again and again. That removes us from the actual main stream of life.

To live is to be in the main stream of events, of challenges, of relationships; every dawn brings new challenges and we look at the freshness of the challenge which calls upon the depth of our being to get stirred and work.

Could it be that if we learn to be sensitive, alert and attentive at every moment, and if we have no authority of the past experience and knowledge, our perception is free of that authority? Could it be that it becomes easy to live that one relationship, go through that one challenge so thoroughly, so richly, that we die to it the moment the event is over, and that pleasure in that relationship is completely over? There is emptiness again, and we are fresh to move to the next challenge, next ordeal, next relationship out of the innocence of that inner silence, inner emptiness.

It is our attitude to the relationship – that is to say our perception and response – that might enable us to live in silence. There are no images created by life as we grow through, and the authority of the old ones is lost, it is no more there and no new authority is created, so there is only a sheer, mere, pure emptiness within. Whether we are with people or not, the uncontaminated inner space remains there without a rigid centre. This is the religious life; a religious person has neither past nor future.

Please do not confuse it with the physical necessities – a religious person has a body, requires food, shelter, clothes and has to take care of that.

But in human relationship in the psychological world there is no centre. The me, the I, and its relevance to the known is understood so thoroughly that there is no more authority of that centre. Living in silence is living in the new dimension of awareness which is a sensitivity of our total being. Whenever it is necessary to move through the brain, through the mind, use the memory, the knowledge for physical, technological matters, then the awareness uses the knowledge, the heritage, but the awareness always uses the knowledge and experience in relation to the totality, and is not obsessed with the particular.

Living in silence is living in the austerity of humility when we want nothing whatsoever from any human being, nor from God. We feel blessed that we are alive and we feel a benediction – the opportunity to live itself is a benediction – the opportunity to unfold the inner space through relationships gives us the sense of fulfilment. The very living is its own fulfilment, and therefore there is no expectation of getting something in reward for that act of living. Our perception is not polluted with an expectation to get something back, because the very act of perceiving and responding gives us its sense of fulfilment. So living becomes a relaxed movement of fulfilment. That is the essence of religion.

Silence is not some romantic state that the I consciousness is going to create for itself, a new shell into which it can withdraw, avoid relationships, escape from them.

You know religions, meditations, samadhis, transformations have been made to appear very easy these days. A decade or so, people have been going around the world talking about this religious life, this freedom, liberation in a rather cheap, shallow way: "do this and you will attain liberation, do this and you will become free, do this and you will have an experience of God". May they be forgiven for the damage that they have caused to the human psyche, knowingly or unknowingly. Life and living is something sacred.

So living in silence is possible, it only requires that we let an inner

transformation take place where there will be a psyche without a centre, without an authority of the past; there will be an inner space which will open through the sense organs, there will be a dimension of openness, vulnerability, receptivity which is attention and spontaneity, which is the response of the wholeness.

In the next number CONTACT no. 9 (ca. March 1981) we hope to publish about Vimala's work during this year.

Many thanks for the payments for the subscriptions during 1980 and sometimes already including 1981.

Please send the administration (see page 2) the f 12,00 for 1980 at your earliest convenience and we also will be glad to receive f 12,50 for 1981, due to the increase of porto.

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