

The Room Before Paradise

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There is nothing in this world but the profound simplicity of our attachment to God; there is only our inborn capacity to grow from within ourselves. But we continually complicate our lives with our minds with what we think is right or wrong. We don't really open ourselves. When we take in a breath, we don't feel it to the core of our Being. Our seed doesn't have a connection to our breathing and to this energy coming in from the atmosphere or from God. We don't really grow because we allow the energy to go in all the different layers and levels of tensions around us.

The real requirement for having a spiritual life is simply to stop creating tensions - to stop all the thinking and to feel deeply within yourself. Feel the great peace that exists below the surface. It doesn't matter whether something is right or wrong, or whether somebody said something that offended you. That is all part of the illusion or the superficial quantity that you occupy yourself with. When you are very tight and tense, every little thing is magnified so that all the superficial reasons for getting upset take on a completely unreal proportion. But when you go in to your real depth and drink in the energy that is needed to nourish you, all of these other things become extraneous - they have absolutely no meaning or value. You can just shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, it really doesn't matter."

This life force is tremendously simple. When you feel the connection with your inner Being, you let this energy seep in deeper and deeper. When you are established in this energy, you can look at all the external circumstances of your life and know that they don't really matter because you have this connection to God. When you take this energy with your mind and with your breath and go deeply in to your inner core, you can feel the tremendous calm and great sweetness.

This is a complete connection to the life force - to God; it is a connection to this great simplicity. In other words, we are part of the state of creation. All external things have no value. They exist in the tension of the outer portion of our being. Having this connection doesn't require thinking - it only requires feeling. It's a complete quiet, a great sense of joy. You can bring it all down to your relationship to your Self and your connection to the energy that exists in every single moment. You know that you are growing. You can really feel, in your chemistry, the rightness and the simplicity of the connection. And all of these external situations become laughable because you are not caught in the tension of your mind and emotions. It requires nothing. In its simplicity and completeness it has the capacity to fulfill itself. It is like trying to tempt a man who lives in paradise with a tray of food. There is nothing to talk about. Only a fool would come in front of a person like that and suggest more was needed.

Everyone has the capacity at every moment to attain this very, very simple condition. Everyone has reached it from time to time. Unfortunately, when you reach it, you are

unaware that you are there, so you walk in and out of it. It's like a small room that you pass through on your way to other places. This is really the fundamental mistake. You have to be conscious and aware of connecting with and appreciating it. When you sit down to your meditation, try to feel this connection. You don't have to tear yourself apart; you don't even have to breathe. You just have to relax and sense it. It will perpetuate itself as long as you allow yourself to be consciously aware that it exists. It is a very simple and complete state; it requires nothing. While you are there, all of your chemistry will react and work in perfection. You can feel that it is a state of well-being. It is a deep, deep, quiet inside.

Unfortunately, to most people, enlightenment is like an old MGM production. They think it has to have all kinds of drama, stage settings, and a million other things. This is ridiculous. In reality, it is a great, great simplicity. It has to do with sitting inside of yourself and sensing the peace, quiet, and simplicity of a situation. It doesn't mean you don't see and experience life; it doesn't mean that you can't be alive, but you don't act out of your need for anything - you are free. And as you remain in this state, quietly, without drama, it becomes a fine flow - a very rich and simple flow.

I think a great deal is lost in all of us because we come to this state by chance rather than by consciousness. If you become aware during your meditation or during your day, you should really stay there and become more familiar with it. When you find inside yourself this great state of peace and quiet, don't work yourself out of it or around it. Don't try in any way to identify with it.

Sensitivity and the capacity to understand this condition enables you to move into this state and stay there, without allowing external circumstances to carry you from it. This peace doesn't require great intellectual or emotional activity. It is devoid of all the tensions that exist in your ordinary day. It defies definition. You have to feel it or sense it. It's like holding a child that is just a few weeks old. You feel a tremendous state of bliss and contentment. The child is endowed by God with a state of being that represents what you seek to attain in your spiritual life.

The capacity to understand and accept anything is, of course, limited in every human being. So the next time you have that experience - whether it is holding a child or just being simple and content in yourself - understand that it is like a plus one and minus one condition. It is identifiable only in the sense that your chemistry is flowing and functioning in a harmonious way.

It is not dramatic, but extraordinarily simple. You can feel that your chemistry is, in a sense, flowing in and flowing out. This is the plus one and minus one condition. It is a wonderful, quiet state of being. But until you can accept it in yourself and stay there without feeling the compulsion to move in and out and jump up and down, you will never have a chance to fully understand it.

As your experience rises in its dimension, it brings you closer and closer to God, and you'll have a chance to have your enlightenment. You have to taste it, understand it, and feel the chemical balance from it. Breathe deeply, and as you relax more and more into

that state, it will open to a greater depth of the Self. Its consistency really allows you, over a period of time, to rise and to have the experience of rising higher. You will feel the connection with the extraordinary quality of spiritual capacity that is within you.

Finding this simple and profound truth is like finding a fresh vegetable that doesn't have a particularly strong fragrance or taste, but satisfies all appetites. One of the difficulties of human beings is that we find it almost intolerable to accept anything in its original state. We are always garnishing it - putting on salt and pepper, mayonnaise, dressing. When we can accept the quality, the quantity, and the simplicity of this remarkable internal source, we experience a great state of quiet and total simplicity.

It is the inability of the mind to say "This is wonderful!" that propels us to busily chop and mutilate our lives. In reality, there is nothing to identify with. It is a state of acceptance. It's like getting in a bathtub filled with pleasantly warm water and immediately turning on the hot, and then the cold, until you're not even enjoying the bath. You're too busy thinking about what is not instead of what is. You are involved in everything else except surrendering to a simple state and allowing it to express itself. You feel the flow within your own Being and you feel this thing open up. It feels like something delicious - subtle in its flavor and texture. It has an absolutely remarkable consistency.

The hardest thing for a human being is to accept what is. When you become quiet, the first thing that happens is that your mind starts asking "How can I make it more? How can I make it this or that?" Just leave it alone. It's like watching a lovely child playing with a toy and you say, "Why don't you play with this instead?" Just leave it alone. The child is enjoying itself, it has a perfect equilibrium, and it is expressing from within its core peace and tranquility - God quality. This quality is happiness.

But you want to poke and push it because of your insecurity. It is not different than if an absolutely new exquisite fruit appeared. It would take a few years for people to mash, boil, french fry, and do everything in the world to it except simply take it and say, "You just slice it up and eat it." It's not in the nature of people.

Spiritual growth is learning to accept and enjoy life as it is. God is pouring his presence and his energy around every human being. This state of being is absolutely constant. We are not constant in our awareness of it. We want this and we want that. We are continually moving around instead of opening to what is. It's a nourishing and simple condition. It is not different from sitting in front of anything that is wonderful and simple. As you look at it, it magnetizes your condition, and brings you to its level. You have to open to take in that quality. While you relate to this quality, you drop your superficial tensions and drink in this constant nourishment.

You take in a completely consistent quantity. When you begin to understand this, as you take in this quieter energy, you flush out all your nervous tensions. They have to fall away. This is the only way I survive the enormity of a day. Every evening I take a shower, drop all the tensions of my business day, and try to be grateful for what is. Through the quietest and most nourishing moments of your day, you can make your connection with

this state of being. And then you find that you can make the effort to keep your connection. You continue to draw in your energy and you grow. You will become stronger within yourself.

This energy is vast and absolutely consistent. It is almost bland by our tastes. We gravitate to extremes; we eat things that are too salty, too spicy, and too rich. This is similar to the difference between a very heavily dressed salad and a plain piece of lettuce. You have to become conscious and reach inside yourself to strip away all the tensions. This is what we do while we work; we break down the superficial tensions while trying to increase your connection with this consistent and rich flow.

You should reach for this constant state of simplicity. When you attain it, you will understand that it doesn't think or have a personality. It is a simple and wonderful state of being. It doesn't have all the crackling tension that is on the surface of every human being. The nature of this condition is that it should quiet the atmosphere around you. How else can it perpetuate itself except by expressing from within itself the silence, sweetness, and consciousness that is its essential nature?

In a very real way you know when you have discovered it. When something happens - somebody makes a noise, or a tire blows - you don't jump four feet in the air. You are not living in the outer tensions of yourself where you pop and get nervous, you are inside and quiet. Those external events are of no consequence. This is very real and you have to try within yourself to tune in to that. It should be an increased part of your day.

We have no value for this state of being. It's like being a teenager: what is home? Home is the place where you change your clothes and run out; home is the place where you eat and then you run out; it's the place where you come in, go to sleep and, when you wake up, run out again. You're always doing it. This state is where you should go and stay. If you spent more time there, everything else would take on a different color and sense of value. This state of being is the place you have to go for all of the highest spiritual conditions; it's the room before paradise that is directly connected to the state of awareness that we aspire to. You have to have the consciousness to recognize, feel, and relate from this state.

It is a place where your heart is open. It's a place from which you love everybody. It is so simple that it is lost by most people. Because it's there all the time you fail to appreciate it until it's too late. Then you spend the rest of your life looking for it. For anyone this place can exist now. If you become aware of it and use it consciously, it will take you to the places you wish for in life.

The meditative state is a state of not feeling that you have something or don't have something. It's a state of having, a state of being. In your meditation, when you come to the place where you are deserving, stay there. Feel the depth and the expansion of the root system that connects you directly with God. Feel your God-consciousness, feel your growth. You don't have to struggle, because it exists for you right now. There is no reason to accept less than that. The grace and the consciousness of God is consistent.

Within this state of being you can feel more and more of these changes as they occur. All the outside things affect you tremendously. You feel them. Don't confuse feeling and being - they are different. You can feel the rain beating on your raincoat and your umbrella, but you don't get wet. Many people react as if it was really hitting them in their innermost heart of hearts. This is simply not true. They get tight, they get tense. It's beautiful to feel, but you have to understand that when you're secure within this state of being, you are protected. You bring yourself to a condition inside that is your protection; so there may be lightning, it may be snowing or raining but you are dressed for it. You should be able to handle anything and benefit from it. You can afford to make a change.

Last night I sat and tried to take in energy consistently and have the balance of seeing and enjoying. I didn't enjoy so much that I lost my connection with myself and with God. You can keep the connection consciously in flow while you do these things. But if you look at this and look at that, the first thing you know, you'll be outside yourself completely. Somebody once talked about this activity of mind in terms of identification and stream of consciousness - sun, moon, star, Gloria Swanson. That's how we think and lose track; once it starts going, we get completely lost. We think night, star - then we think movie star, and we are off in a completely unconscious train of thinking. We have to learn to control our minds in order to have this experience with God.

You have the connection to God all the time - while you do everything else. Your activity has to feed you while you are doing this. It has to be a continual relationship. Don't get caught in the drama, regardless of how well you are doing; because then you are working for people instead of working for your own growth and connection with God. This relationship has to be constant. Everything you do outside has to be internalized. You have to feel the flow within yourself. When people get involved in what they are doing on the outside, they forget that the outer world is simply a reflection of consciousness.

You have to understand your own condition. You have to understand that some situations you relate to in life have an extraordinary difference in content. From some situations you can only take out a miniscule amount of content for growth; others give an enormous quantity. It's the refining of the energy that we take in to ourselves that is essential. You have to keep this connection open, because what you are taking in needs a great deal of refinement. You need to feel the connection very strongly so that this flow within you is consistently refining the energy of life.

Everything in nature is consistent. Plants take in only poison and give off oxygen. They are in the process of refining energy. A human being is exactly the same, and you must realize this. Everything you are involved in on the outside requires that you take in a lesser and lower form of energy, and refine it by the consciousness of your connection to the Self. Feel your connection to the Self and feel this energy coming down in to you every minute of your day.