

Wisdom

A short series of short pieces (with questions and answers)

7. Ending

- (1) *The chicken or the egg; wisdom or a free and discerning mind: which shall we choose to put first?*
The first question is more than a question. It is intended as a kind of teaching. It teaches two things; firstly, by implication, that in this and other predicaments human beings have a choice; secondly, that although we have a choice (and to progress must make one), it does not really matter which of the alternatives we choose in this kind of situation. The one leads inevitably onwards to the other. There is no right and wrong here. Neither then is there any possibility of loss.

Where there is wisdom, all choices may be reduced to this. Thus the question teaches something subtle and mysterious by demonstrating how to experience, enjoy and benefit from a sense of freedom in a situation which from another (unenlightened) perspective could present just as a problem.

- (2) *The wise choice is the way of freedom. How may this be achieved?*
This may be achieved through mindful analysis at the moment of choice. Such a moment could and may have to be prolonged to allow for such a period of "one-pointed" analysis. During meditation hitherto unsuspected or unacknowledged attachments (such as to the idea of there being only one correct solution to a question) may come to light. When a problem resolves itself thus, into awareness of an attachment, it is an easier (and often joyful) matter simply to let go.
- (3) *Knowledge is what you know. How do we know what we know?*

One answer to this question is, by means of meditation and thereby through knowledge of the true self. Even the Buddha is reputed to have said to his followers, "Do not be led to reports or tradition or hearsay. Be not led by the authority of religious texts, nor by logic or inference, nor

by considering appearances, nor by the delight in speculative opinions, nor by seeming possibilities, nor by the idea: 'this is our teacher'. But when you know for yourselves that certain things are unwholesome and wrong, give them up. And when you know for yourselves that certain things are wholesome and good, accept them and follow them."

- (4) *Mystery is at the heart of things. How can mystery be fathomed?*
Through meditation and through virtue; good thoughts, good words, good deeds.
- (5) *How can thirst, how can craving, how can attachment be eliminated?*
Through mindful analysis and tranquility, thus through contemplation. Through meditation. Through wisdom. Through compassion. Through letting go.
- (6) *How can we discover whether what the teacher said (about meditation) is true?*

Be fearless. There are no venomous serpents to contend with, only what may prove useful. Why not put it to the test?

"Compassion is a sensitivity to the experience of suffering, a sensitivity of heart to the suffering of others. It is a *non-separation* from our own heart's response on sensing suffering in another. And because it is a kind of suffering in itself, it impels action. However, since it is not a suffering arising out of selfishness, from a sense of separateness, it does not impel blind action.

"In taking one beyond oneself, the experience of compassion is a very powerful opportunity for the arising and development of wisdom. Probably the easiest way to outgrow ourselves is through the response of compassionate action."

LARRY CULLIFORD

*Aldrington House
Hove Community Centre
Hove BN3 4AG*