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Professor Vernon Katz
c/o Maharishi International University

Dear Professor Katz,

I enjoyed your first lecture in the Brahma Sutras series very much, and I look forward with pleasure to the next three sessions. I'm delighted you've come to talk to the Fairfield community about what I believe to be the most important subject of all.

I would like to take this opportunity to express a few observations and concerns. I'm doing this at the start of the course in case they relate to points you're planning to address in the upcoming lectures.

I believe that the attitudes, expectations, and doubts a great many of us harbor towards the prospect of our own enlightenment are preventing large numbers of advanced practitioners of Maharishi's Vedic Science from living the full potential of what Maharishi has given and from enjoying fully the fruits of long years of devoted practice.

I've observed a number of ways this manifests itself.

1) Many people seem to assume that enlightenment is far in the future and only for exceptional people, despite all the assurances Maharishi has given us right from the early days. For example, on my TTC at La Antilla, someone referred to "five to eight years to gain enlightenment." Maharishi said "No, no. There's no reason it has to take that long." Brahman Consciousness, after all, is everyone's natural state, the only state that is truly and completely normal.

Maharishi repeatedly tries to coax us out of doubting. When the Sidhis came out, people said, "but these techniques are for people in Unity Consciousness." Maharishi said, "Right. U.C. You are living 90% U.C., so these techniques are for you." (How long ago was that ?)

For many years, in every birthday ceremony, Maharishi has said "for the already enlightened...." When he does this, people seem to assume he's giving encouragement but that he can't really mean the person's enlightened.

When we were given the project a few years ago of underlining our experiences as we found them in the Vedic literature, people

said, "but these are the cognitions of Vedic seers." Maharishi said "Yes! You are now almost at the level of Vyasa, Parashara, and Kashyapa."

And I heard from someone who had been in a meeting with Maharishi two or three years ago where he asked all in U.C. to raise their hands. A few people hesitantly did so. Then Maharishi said, "O.K. now everyone raise your hand."

I believe we have locked onto an image of ourselves as seekers on the path, and I wonder if, by sheer habit, we may be locking ourselves out of the goal.

2) I sense that most people have built a set of mental images about the various experiences of higher states of consciousness. They wait for their experiences to match the mental images, but they never do, because enlightenment isn't a "thing" that can be imagined.

There are many forms this takes.

--Despite experiences of unboundedness, wholeness, seeing the environment as self, etc. people often assume that because they continue to experience change, negativity, boundaries, physical "imperfections" or because they continue to evolve, therefore the experiences are invalid. They imagine enlightenment to be a static finality and interpret the continuance of change in their lives as a symptom of ignorance. "Ever-expanding universe," Maharishi says.

--The alternating predominance of wholeness and point value-- "A" endlessly collapsing to "Ka" and returning to "A" again-- throws people off. They interpret the "A" stage to be an experience and the "Ka" stage to be a return to ignorance. They wait for the "A" stage to remain forever and judge themselves unenlightened.

Understanding the dynamics of transformation (especially the four stages--pradvamsabhava, etc.) as they relate to their own experience and seeing the dynamics of consciousness endlessly flowing in the same familiar patterns, the memory of wholeness can string the parts of wholeness together. Unfortunately, so many of us haven't yet found the connections of Maharishi's expositions of "Agnim," etc. to our own lives. (Why should he keep telling us these things? Only because they're profoundly relevant to us in the most personal way.)

--People assume that because they have a small ego and still desire, they're unenlightened. But Krishna refers to his eightfold nature--which includes ahankara. The key is that the small ego becomes part of the large Self, part of the structure of diversity within Unity, whereas in ignorance it was perceived as the whole self.

This misunderstanding leads people to try to kill the small self

or to feel guilty when, in its turn, it plays its natural role of leading consciousness towards diversity. When the small ego is quiet (corresponding to atyantabhava and anyonyabhava) they think, "This is an experience. When this becomes permanent I'll be enlightened." Then when the small ego is active again (corresponding to pragabhava and pradvamsabhava) they think, "I lost the experience. I let myself get attached...."

--People remember experiences of the past that seemed powerful and want to be swept away to consider an experience valid, or they expect experiences to be phenomenal, as in seeing or hearing something. In fact, true experiences of Brahman are characterized by how normal they seem.

We may never have such "powerful" experiences again, because the intensity was borne of contrast. When all is dark, a small light dazzles. Experiences of a phenomenal kind may be, but they're part of the diversity aspect. They're not enlightenment itself.

--People compare their experiences to experiences they've heard or read about and discredit their own because they're not "flashy" enough, or just because they haven't had every experience on their list. They also tend to select descriptions that fit their preconceptions and screen out all that would give credence to their present level of enlightenment.

Brahman has nothing to do with experiences anyway. It's pure experience, so that no piece can be sliced out and viewed as "an experience" against a background of "not an experience." Many people also seem to think that the dynamics of consciousness are experienced only during program, and that the rest of the time nothing's happening.

--For all the reasons listed here, people miss the fact that they're experiencing higher states, and so they miss the milestones along the way. Thus, they continue to wait for the onset of C.C., when in fact, they're at a completely different place on the map. "How can I be in Unity when I haven't yet experienced C.C.?"

This misunderstanding is abetted by the fact that Unity is a state where self and nonself are not cognised as separate. People assume they're still experiencing the deep identification of ignorance, where self and nonself are also not separate. The difference would be obvious if they could go back in time and compare. (Maharishi talked about this similarity between the structures of ignorance and unity in a lecture recorded at Humboldt.)

So, those are my observations. I hope you'll forgive me if I've belabored my point.

One or two last comments. I think we may be carrying on a pattern from the past that sends subtle signals among us tending to

prolong the transformation. Out of modesty or respect for Maharishi, we may refer to ourselves in ways that have a flavor of "little old ignorant me," or "ignorant little us." And we "bless" one another with phrases like "soon to be enlightened."

Triguna, in his keynote address to the World Assembly on Vedic Science in DC a few years back said, "My advice to you is, never think of anyone as bigger than you are and never think of anyone as smaller than you are. Always think of everyone as just the same as you."

Obviously, the territory is subtle and delicate. We can't hit each other over the head and say "Wake up! You're in Brahman Consciousness." But somehow, we have to do whatever we can to foster the awakening--and to be sure we're fostering the real thing, and not a self-hypnosis.

Again, let me express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to you for coming to speak to us. As the length of this letter surely reveals, the subject you've come to tell us about is closest to my heart.

With my warmest regards,

JAI GURU DEV