



Short Courses

Leading to a Certificate of Professional Studies, accredited by CODE, Homerton College, Cambridge and The Gnostic Centre

THE seed idea behind beginning short courses was a growing realisation that unless there is a synthesis between matter and spirit, between the so-called academic approach and study and the spiritual or self-developmental one, knowledge would remain at the level of theory and information. We see the short courses as a starting point for a full-fledged curriculum and eventually towards a university of tomorrow.



POWER OF ATTITUDE

Course Guide: Ameeta Mehra
25th Oct-5th Dec'98

THE course had 9 students, from diverse professions - management, law, education, social work, writing and journalism - all with demanding work schedules. Yet the commitment they made to self-change was deep-seated and brought them together to explore, experience and practise the power of attitude. It was remarkable to see how each one integrated their professional and personal lives with the course of study and research that they undertook at the Centre.

The course was structured to provide a very clear core of essential concepts through the collective sessions (3 in all, totalling to two-and-a-half days) as well as draw upon the inputs from the group itself and enable an integration between their personal quest and the challenges or discrepancies they experienced in their area of work.

Session 1 (Sunday - full day): The core inputs on Power of Attitude, Inner and Outer Attitudes initiated a discussion and sharing from the group that carried on almost till 3pm - the keenness to delve deeper overcoming the need to have lunch. A lot of ground was covered on this day. The participants took back the Self-Awareness worksheet (on Attitudes) and the Planning Sheet (to chalk out their own aims, resources, activities and timetable) as assignments. The concept of self-observation and sensing the light and the shadow in one's attitudes during the day was introduced and they were asked to maintain a daily self-reflective journal to record their observations and progress.

Individual Session (45 minutes during the following week): This was a time when each student met the Course Guide individually (at a time mutually suitable), shared the journal, the self-awareness sheet and the planning and received a feedback, clarifications and further guidance. It also involved a prelim discussion on the monograph (essay) that each one planned to write as part of the course - related to an area of personal attitudinal change that they would undertake during these 6 weeks.

Session 2 (Sunday - full day): It was a week since the course began. Each one shared on a significant event/ attitude change during this time. The students worked in 3 sub-groups on the following themes, pertaining to their own needs and stated aims:

* Inner being as related to work, oneself and others - specifically in social/ community work.

Note: The first course taken up at the Centre was The Art of Healthy Living.
(Report in Sep-Oct'98 issue of *The Awakening Ray*.)



* How to develop the power of positive thinking in day to day problems, situations.

* How to do work as an instrument (divine worker) in a professional/ personal context.

This was followed by a full group sharing and discussion. The afternoon was focused on developing and submitting an outline for the intended monograph.

Individual Session (30 minutes during the following week): Individual sharing and discussion on the progress made and the monograph.



Session 3 (Saturday - half day): After a sharing on one's progress till that point, the attention was focused on the monograph. In sub-groups, each presented her theme and what she planned to write. The others in the group mirrored to her the gaps in concept or practice, helping each other to fine-tune, to deepen the whole exercise. From the beginning it was made clear that the monograph could not be a purely academic piece of writing - it had to base itself on actual practice of concepts studied and found significant for one's growth.

The self-reflective journal (daily, as well as weekly summaries) and the monograph provided a continuity to research and study that one undertook, as well as enabled the students to exert a constant demand on oneself - to practise what one read. The course was deliberately structured for self-study and self-help. There was an insistence on sincerity of endeavour.

From week 4 onwards the intensity of research was enhanced as each got down to actually writing out the monograph. At the end of the sixth week (Saturday - half day), the group came together once again, to make the final presentation on its journey through the course. The students gave in their coursework portfolios (containing the worksheets, the planning sheet, the journal summaries and the monograph) for evaluation.

The Monograph Titles

- Sincerity - A Key to Progress
- Working Consciously - The Right Spirit in Work
- Positive Thinking - a Tool for Inner and Outer Harmony
- Power of Attitude in Shaping Fictional Characters
- Surrender and its Importance in the Emergence of True Self
- Dealing with Conflict and Violence - The Power of Attitude
- Rejection as a Tool for Self-Purification
- The Self and Self-Realisation as the Basis for Social Change
- Spirit in Management

The nature of themes that the students undertook for their monographs reflects the intensity with which they took on this journey of self-mastery, as well as the endeavour at integrating the concepts with their own daily lives and work.

What did this course mean to the students? So simple on the outside, what did it achieve

for them? The near absence of any formal elements - whether lectures or facilitator controlled activities - what kind of space did it create for a deeper search? And how well could it meet its own aim of integration between theory and practice, academic study and spiritual self-development? The following reflections from the students themselves will provide the answers.

The Students' Reflections on the Course

From Interviews

Q: How has the course contributed to your growth - both at personal and professional levels?

Arvinder: It has helped me immensely at both the levels. Personally, it has helped in bringing my agitation down. I am a very intense person, I get too involved in things, especially relationships - making it difficult to be detached. It makes me fearful of certain people, and then I distance myself inwardly from them - keeping a polite front outside. This course has helped



me see that everything is in myself. At one level, the concept of aspiration, rejection and surrender and the attempt to apply it has helped me to deal with things over which I had no control. I had this immense need to control situations - this has come down, leading to a sense of relief. Also tremendous results in work, in trying situations. During this time there have been many times of difficult decisions. I saw that I could study the situation, go over my actions, analyse if what I had done was correct, check with other people as well, act systematically and take a decision. I did my best, after that it did not matter. The constant need to prove myself was gone.

At another level, my whole attitude of looking at things has changed. I was getting sceptical and cynical about people, things. I found that it is all within me - it is my attitude that counts. The same thing can be seen as divine grace or as a curse. This has been a major growth, a tremendous shift - depending on my attitude, the reality changes.

I have been able to do a lot more things in the same time [as the course]. Earlier when I heard about it [working faster and better, doing more in less time], I thought it was a big joke - too technical and theoretical. But I have seen that it is possible - in very tangible things. I have been able to put in a full day's work and then get down to writing the monograph [for the course], working till 2am and then having to snatch myself away as I thought that I must give my body some rest.

Professionally, I have been less anxious, doing much more and am able to reach out much more to my clients - even they are sensing the change.

Sumita: Personally - although I was familiar with some of the concepts, the course helped me to bring that learning down to a practical level. It also helped in getting more insights and a deeper understanding - but most importantly, to practise it at a day to day level, to be more conscious during the day also. It gave me a deeper understanding of the crisis I am going through and some ideas and light on how to come out of it, how to deal with it. Though I was coping with it, this gave some ideas of how to go beyond coping and live in a more pro-active way.

Professionally... my work is on how people move away from being victims of a situation to taking control over their lives. This course has given me an idea of what happens within a person - not just at the social, interactive level - but what is inside a person and how it affects the circumstances outside - that is very important.

Writing of the monograph - this came just at the right time - to go in-depth, read.

SELF-REFLECTIVE JOURNAL FORMAT

ACT/ INTERACTION	NATURE OF THE		ACT/INTERACTION	SOURCE IN MY BEING	THE IDEAL	THROUGH WHAT MEANS TO DEVELOP THE IDEAL
	Light	Shadow				
Examples: 1. Breakfast			Did not offer the food- but gobbled it up as a habit, then ate more cheese out of greed	Physical-Vital	Offer the food to the Divine - put the food in contact with the Divine. This will help in Transformation	Through a conscious act of offering before a meal
2. At the Office			When I got the work through, the feeling 'I did it'. Forgot the hand of The Mother. Wanted praise	Vital-Mental	Working as an offering and as an instrument of the Divine	By surrendering and offering
3. Leisure hours	Deep & meaning- ful interaction with friends		Still being judgmental about some people	Vital/Mental	Consider all people to be manifesta- tions of the Divine	Conscious effort



Q: Could you specify a distinctive feature of this course?

Arvinder: There are many. The collective meditation and the collective sharing were very reassuring and re-energising. Query into self is a big risk each person takes. It means confronting oneself over things you have been used to for years. It helped to see that I am not the only one. Also there was a safe environment to explore your issues in. There was an honesty with oneself.

Writing the self-reflective journal was another distinctive feature. Collecting one's thoughts everyday - it gives a sense of having led a full day.

The exercise of self-observation led to a major breakthrough for me; it showed me many things about myself. I could catch myself, my thoughts during the day.

Though outwardly people think I am a very calm person, but I found a lot of anger inside me. I found that the agitation, the anger was at myself, not with the world.

Earlier I had started with the fear - will I be able to maintain it [after the course is over]? Now, I am pretty happy with my small little victories. I know it is a process - 4 or 6 weeks cannot see its completion. But you get into a discipline. I have the confidence that it will carry on, in some form or another. I only wish there had been more collective sessions - one or two more - for more things to happen.



Sumita: The methodology used was very effective - combining group learning and individual - one-to-one sessions, personal study, reflections, maintaining a journal. It was tough, one had to stretch, to push oneself - it was very effective. A lot of courses get caught too much in the theory or too much of personal sharing which does not culminate in a linking of the two - here, there is a scope for that.

Even the group activities - especially, the group meditations were very useful. Even during the day when there was a lot of discussion - everything can't be made clear through discussions - but the meditation sessions gave the space to make clear to oneself what was left unsaid.

In many workshops, people often say things which are not necessary, which have already been said in a different way - but one says it because one feels one has to say something - meditation helped in saying it without words - no unnecessary discussions. I would like to do the same with large groups - in my own work.

Arvinder Singh, Counsellor and Trainer
Sumita Ghose, Development Worker

From a student's self-reflective journal summary

"Since the main area of my effort is directed at working out the right attitude at work I have begun to start the day with a short meditation concentrating on visualising myself as being calm and detached. Every time I fail in this attempt at work I make a written note of it. This exercise has made me more conscious and I realise that with each passing day I can see myself becoming disturbed a split second before it happens. This helps me see more clearly where the reaction is coming from.

Each evening as I meditate and look back at the day's events I am able to recall more clearly the negative quality in myself that needs to be brought into the light to be resolved.

The first thing I realised was that the reflection was not sincere enough. As I meditated one evening the answer that came to me was to enter silence. With this came an immediate quietness.

Each day has brought a new insight. I see the smug self-satisfied reaction when there is some small success, the mental idea I have of myself as being reasonably detached, a fair person and able to keep personal likes and dislikes out of my dealings and interactions have



all been visible as being a moralistic stance. True equality has a different quality. One of goodwill, peace and trust. These I feel intermittently and realise that the only attitude one can have is one of surrender to the divine. A surrender built on complete trust.”

Jyoti Saikia, Business Manager



Teacher Education - a New Beginning

Self-development Workshops with Teacher-Students at Jesus and Mary College

DESPITE the apparent mess the education system is in - or because of it - there is an awakening in some circles to the need for strengthening the most crucial element involved in education - the teacher. An innovative programme in teacher education began a few years ago under the aegis of Central Institute of Education, Delhi - known as B.El.Ed - a 4-year integrated B.Ed. after school. The programme is still in its infancy, with a foothold in 5 colleges of Delhi and 1 of Haryana, but it is making ripples already. This



year, the Gnostic Centre received an invitation to be on its panel of resource persons for self-development workshops for the students of this course. In November, we began with the first of these workshops for the teacher-students at Jesus and Mary College of Delhi.

This is an important step forward in the Centre's vision of making an intervention in the mainstream education with the philosophy and practice of Integral Education.

AWARENESS OF SELF

Facilitator: Anuradha; 28th Nov. 9am-4.30pm

The main features were:

- * Sharing personal expectations of growth - a cohesiveness of aspiration - each one wanted to know their own selves better, to overcome weaknesses.
- * Narrating one's Inner Story to a partner - a reassuring experience for most as they discovered that not only were their quests similar, their difficulties too were not unique to them.
- * Inner and Outer Attitudes - through reading and discussion a preliminary understanding on what is a human being composed of, what levels of motivations operate in her and how do these reflect in daily action.
- * Concentrate on What you Want to Be - through a road map depicting one's highest aspiration and what blocks it.
- * Exercises for Self-growth and Mastery - a first introduction to concepts and tools for overcoming one's weaknesses - Using Life as a Mirror, Discovering a Hidden Treasure, Establishing Peace in the Mind, writing a self-reflective journal.

