

## BRIEF NOTES ON WORK IN ESOTERIC GROUPS

The criterion whether groups are esoteric or not is not to be sought in the matter aspect, not even in the consciousness aspect, but in the will aspect. What does that mean? The matter aspect has to do with the object, the subject-matter, of the study and of the activity. Thus the mere fact that you are studying “esoteric stuff” is not what settles it, because that may be done on any level of consciousness, even on a low one: astrology of weekly magazines, fascination for previous lives driven by curiosity and self-importance. However, even if the level of consciousness in the group is fairly high, and the studies pursued by the group consequently are on an impeccable level intellectually, this is nevertheless not the criterion of an esoteric group. But, as said, the will aspect alone. This means that the group members ask themselves, as a group: Do we strive after, do we work at, improving our being? Do we try to overcome our weaknesses? Do we try to realize our dormant potentials? Is the work we do expedient according to the plan for the evolution of all life?

What do you bring into the group, into the group meetings? What do you leave outside?

Observe yourself in group work. Do you help or do you hinder the work?

Are you prepared to leave self-love and vanity outside? Your craving for attention or craving for non-attention? Look at me! Or: Don't look at me! Wrong settings of the personality make me display such mechanical reaction patterns.

### *The Five Virtues and the Five Vices of Group Activity*

Inefficient groups are characterized by their members:

- 1) not being prepared to work above all;
- 2) showing up at group meetings not duly prepared, if they show up at all;
- 3) allowing social needs to dominate;
- 4) demanding consideration;
- 5) bringing false personality into the group;

Such groups are soon disbanded, as members willing to shoulder responsibility leave it.

The five virtues of the efficient group consist in its members:

- 1) putting work at the centre;
- 2) viewing group activity, meetings included, as a commitment;
- 3) making constant efforts from within their being;
- 4) showing each other due consideration;
- 5) leaving false personality outside the group.

The President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, famously exhorted: “My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” With the necessary modifications this can be applied to group work: “My fellow group members, ask not what your group can do for you, ask what you can do for your group.”

Create space for work and service. It is not so much about creating time for work and service as creating space for it. Create space within yourself. Start by visualizing a space that gradually expands, where work personality is the sole ruler. As you create such a space, there will also be time for work and service, as an effect of this cause, through the elimination of everything unnecessary, everything that disturbs and disrupts. As work personality grows it eliminates everything unnecessary in a natural manner.

### *Wrong Motives for Joining a Group*

- 1) Need for company and social contacts.
- 2) Desire to find people who can help me, understand me, make me work.
- 3) Need for therapy.
- 4) Delight and pleasure in esoteric study.
- 5) Desire of attention, being seen, appreciated, rewarded, desire of asserting oneself.

### *Right Motives for Joining a Group*

- 1) Will to improvement of one's being
- 2) Will to expansion of one's knowledge to be of more use.
- 3) Understanding of the necessity of working according to the laws of the work itself.
- 4) Will to self-education in work and service.
- 5) Preparedness to shoulder greater responsibility.

### *People Unsuitable for Group Work*

- 1) Chaotic, psychologically deficient, or fragile people. The group cannot and should not act as a therapeutic circle.
- 2) Such people as have a need for self-assertion and dominance, or "hasnamussian candidates".
- 3) Undisciplined and lazy people, or "tramps". Such people as have not energy enough for reading the books thoroughly.
- 4) Astral people and mediums – thus people with uncontrollable psychic "gifts".
- 5) People who are too much prone to formative thinking, or "lunatics".
- 6) People who are emotionally too negative – for example such as are filled with hatred, bitterness, vengefulness, cynicism, self-pity, depression, or similar.
- 7) Such people as who are inclined to believe in passing fancies and imaginings, especially about themselves.
- 8) One-centred-people, that is, such as are intellectual people, emotional people, or physical people too much and at the expense of the other centres.
- 9) Socially inhibited, reserved, or uncommunicative people.
- 10) People who have instrumental and manipulative inclinations, thus want to use the group for their own ends.

One unsuitable person in the group can destroy the group's whole work and make that work impossible.

It is easy to admit unsuitable people into the group out of thoughtlessness; it may prove much more difficult to make such people leave it.

Sentimentality, misdirected helpfulness, or a pitying attitude shall not guide the selection of future group members. A sound, moderate group egoism shall guide it: "Do we need this person? Is this person of use for us?" The best workers and servers are those who need the group the least, the worst are those who need it the most. There is a seeming paradox in "Only he can become a disciple who do not feel the need for the master."

### *People Can Be Suitable to Group Work If They*

- 1) Have a normal and relatively strong psyche.
- 2) Have a certain measure of humility and will to cooperation.
- 3) Have acquired a certain degree of self-discipline and skill for intellectual work.
- 4) Have some sensitivity to finer impressions but nevertheless keep both feet firmly on the ground.
- 5) Struggle to overcome formative tendencies.

- 6) Are striving away from negative emotionality.
- 7) Make common sense and moderation have the first and last word.
- 8) Are somewhat balanced in their being as physical, emotional, and mental people.
- 9) Are social, open, and communicative.
- 10) Want to learn what esoteric work means and demands, are prepared to obey the laws of the work.

#### *External Circumstances and Conditions of Successful Group Work*

- 1) It is generally preferable to hold the meetings at definite, recurring occasions, such as the same day of the week, the same hours.
- 2) Group meetings shall not be held too often (every week), nor too seldom (several months between them), nor irregularly.
- 3) It is generally preferable that group meetings are held without consumption of food, since such things tend to take up too much time and generally trigger mechanical social behaviours. Hold the meetings on such times as allow the group members to have their meals at home.
- 4) There shall be a chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer. These appointments generally rotate among the members, so that all of them carry the burdens; another option is that non-appointed members assume other tasks. The chairman leads the discussions, seeing to it that the agenda is followed without deviations. The secretary makes the necessary notes about what has been treated, the decisions taken in particular. The treasurer holds the material assets of the group in trust. Note in this how the three aspects are scaled down: the will aspect (the manu): chairman; the consciousness aspect (the bodhisattva): the secretary, the group's memory; the matter aspect (the mahachohan): the treasurer.
- 5) There shall be an agenda or work-plan for each group meeting, and this agenda shall be followed.
- 6) It is recommended that group meetings are held in a neutral room, and not in the home of some group member. If group meetings are held in some member's home, the circumstances must be such that no outsiders are present.
- 7) The group shall on recurring occasions evaluate its work and strive to improve on it according to what these evaluations indicate.

#### *Three More Rules for the Work of Esoteric Groups*

- 1) At each meeting the group shall do at least one exercise. It is suitable to begin the meeting with one exercise and finish it with another.
- 2) If group members see each others on occasions other than group meetings, they shall not then speak about what has been done or said at group meetings, least of all to outsiders.
- 3) If group members see each others socially and in the absence of outsiders, they shall never let such meetings be entirely mechanical, but shall always use the occasion to do some exercises.

#### *And for Every Man and Woman Who Does Esoteric Work:*

- 1) Every evening before going to sleep can suitably be finished with the five-fold general evaluation: What did I do well today? What did I do which I should not have done? What did I not do which I should have done? What did I do which I could have done better? What do I want to do tomorrow?
- 2) Not let even one day pass without reading something, however short, in an esoteric book. If I am too tired, I can always say a mantra or a prayer.
- 3) Not let even one day pass without thinking of, and thanking, the gods and the elder brothers.