

19 November 1962

As promised last week, you are now to hear the Shankaracharya's description of the 'Ladder of Seven Steps to full Realization' translated from a tape-recording of his exact words.

I would ask you just to absorb what he says and not 'think across' and compare this with any other ladder or any other seven-toned scale. Understanding of these Seven Steps with the Three Gunas is all that is necessary to enable the Realized Man to *Do*, that is, to assess the inner nature, the stage of development and the day-to-day state of anyone who comes to him, and to bring such a person a step nearer Self-Realization. By learning this and asking further questions we can receive direct instruction from Higher Mind:

(S.) According to the Nyaya System, in the quest for Realization there are seven stages:

*(N.B. These all have long names; we are trying to get the root meanings of these names, but meanwhile affix our own labels.)*

**FIRST STAGE** is the '*Good intention*', the '*Right Impulse*', the arising of the right desire. This is the starting point which leads to:

**SECOND STAGE.** *Decision.* This is the stage where rationally (intellectually) the man makes up his mind and can go further. He has no doubt about the Way, which is in line with his intention and conviction.

**THIRD STAGE.** *Effort.* Certain particles of fine matters have formed in the organism which cause him to strive toward Sattva (Love).

**FOURTH STAGE.** *Pull of the Way.* Where influences from the Way pull him from the outside world of sensations and pleasure, so that these begin to lose some of their power.

**FIFTH STAGE.** *Insight,* which denotes that the man starts looking at himself and other things *as they really are*. He gets right values for everything; he realises about things what they are, how they are constituted and what their properties are.

**SIXTH STAGE.** *Abundance,* which is the stage where the outward pull is nearly gone, and he is filled with abundance of Sattva or Divine Love and happiness.

**THE LAST OR SEVENTH STAGE,** which he calls *Turiya*, is the stage of the fully Realized man, when he knows Himself; he knows all that can be known; he knows how to *do*, and whatever he does is just the right thing – right actions, right feeling, right thought – everything all combined. That is the Seventh Stage of the Seven-stage System of Nyaya for Self-Realization.

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R. Asked if there were two points where additional help was necessary.

S. He agrees with what you say and goes on to describe the role of Teacher in relation to disciple. Help is important in the first stages just as a man learning to swim has to get help in the learning; but once he has learnt, he can swim as he likes. The Teacher watches the actions, movements and words of the pupil and finds out how much he can bear (as a voltmeter shows how much voltage can be taken). So at the first stages, the Teacher watches all this and gives him the power to go along the Way, and then later on the *Second Impulse* is given, so the pupil can achieve complete Realization and become like the Teacher himself.

This process is only known to the Teacher, and unless the disciple becomes the Teacher he would not realise the importance of these *shocks*. (his word!)

To return to the example of swimming; at the end, the swimmer can be in the water for hours and hours together, but in the Sankhya and other Systems it is held that when he comes ashore he is away from the water. In the Vedanta System, however, it is held that Turiya is like this: A man can live in the world, be in the world, and also come out of it and enjoy the Higher Emotion ('bliss') in himself without any action in the world, and this can be simultaneous.

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#### COMMENT

As it soon became clear that, in general, we are in the Fourth Stage and wanting to be permanently in the Fifth, most of the subsequent questions were about these two stages – and we'd like to hear your questions and remarks!

For when I asked: 'May we have your permission that we should send this to London, for it is parallel with a scale of Seven Steps they are studying just now?' He replied:

You can happily incorporate these Seven Stages with your own System. He thinks they will fit in very well and promises to give more explanation and illustrations in due course.

He added that:

On the Way the disciple experiences trouble and difficulty up to the Fourth Stage. We can take an example from our everyday education system: When a boy is put into school, the painful job of learning the alphabet and all the combinations of letters and the grammar takes a long time; once he gets the grip of these things, he can learn much by just listening to the teacher. But the *Fifth Stage* is a stage *where he helps himself to knowledge*; his own experience and intuition bear upon his knowledge so that he starts understanding things by himself; and the *Sixth Stage* is a tremendous opening-up for the disciple where he rises to a high level and can establish the full relation with Higher Ideas and Higher Mind. Then he prepares himself for the *Seventh* – and so to be a Teacher himself.

Another example is that of a traveller who has to go a journey of seven hours, and who starts in the dark at 3.00 a.m. with a small lamp in his hand and with the aid of street lamps. The way is not clear and the light is bad, and he feels his way with some trepidation and caution. But by the time he reaches the Fourth Stage, there is dawn, and the sun's rays make the Way increasingly clear so he doesn't need the other lamps. He can now with certainty tread his way up to the High Noon of the Seventh or final stage; so that when he meets the Atman he is going to see, he can become like Him.

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#### **Answers (12.10.62) to further questions about Steps 4 and 5 of the Seven Stages on the Way to Realization.**

(S.) The Fourth Stage increases the Sattva guna ('Divine Love' in this context). The increase of Sattva guna determines this stage for the aspirant so that the pull of the spiritual world becomes greater than that of the material world. Even very important activities in the material world no longer have so much pull on the aspirant as do his endeavours in the spiritual field. He saves time from them to complete his work on the

spiritual line. It is this stage which determines that the disciple would rather complete that Work than leave the Way.

Q. Does this stage (perhaps like the other stages) come in glimpses first? Do you get a glimpse of the next stage ahead before that becomes established permanently?

S. The Fifth Stage is that in which the person ceases to consider all that is in the world as outside himself. He starts getting glimpses of the fact that he and the outside world are one thing. As far as the relation of Fifth to Fourth is concerned, it is quite possible, even before the Fourth Stage, to have glimpses of the next stage ahead. As an example, we in India have educational stages. You have to pass from Primary to Graduation, stage by stage, just as you have to take these steps. Unless you pass the first, you can't go on to the second. One could conclude that the second stage includes the first, or that the first carries the possibility of the second.

In reply to further questions:

S. The completion of the Fourth Stage determines that the disciple does not go back (or leave the Work). The realization of the Fifth Stage gives a feeling of unity with the material world – unity of spirit with materiality. He realises, for instance, that clay is not different from the pot. He sees the unity, the causal aspect within all the material things we see in our daily impressions. He sees the root cause and the product of the cause together – sees them as one thing. (see the 'Stupid Traveller' in *Tertium Organum*)

Asked further about loss of sense of duality, he replied with the example of a real elephant and an artificial one made of felt.

They may look alike, but with the real one we watch out for our safety, as we might do with the artificial one if we didn't know it was unreal. The coarse material world of the senses is like the artificial elephant; once we know *that* is artificial then we know the Real; we establish relations with the Real and we don't bother much about the artificial.

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This scale of Seven Stages is especially valuable because it omits all irrelevances and applies the Law of Seven to the one most important thing of all.

A good way to study it is to regard oneself as having to go up the steps every day. One begins the day in the Common life – How much time does one spend there? How often does one get a 'good impulse', and how long does it last? And when one does come to a decision to work (Step 2), does one carry it through? Again, has one in the last day or two felt the 'Pull of the Way'? How strong was it, and what does one do when it comes?

Then one can look at this period of one's life on a longer time-scale and compare oneself with other people one knows. At what level does one generally live? – and what is the highest point that one can reach, or the highest one has experienced by good luck or with help?

To find answers to these questions, of course, is only one's own concern – no need to trot it all out at meetings! But such a study can pave the way for really constructive questions.

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