

October 1963

READING 1

With the coming of our System to the West in 1915, and to England in the 1920's, many people began to get a glimpse of a certain *philosophy* – like the framework of a noble building – which started to give life a meaning. Many years were spent filling in this framework with *theoretical knowledge* which (while it gave a reliable way of thinking about many otherwise insoluble problems) sometimes obscured the grandeur of the building itself and prevented us from actually living in it. But recently more and more of us have been tasting the joys of *practical experience* of entry into this palace as contrasted with the chill of being locked out. Put another way, we have tasted an 'elixir of Life' which, while we have it, transforms everything into delight. If we call this strange thing 'Happiness', we must recognise that it is utterly different from all the other things we have called by that name; and that unless we have this *one* thing, we don't know what true happiness is. It is like the difference Christ described in His talk with the woman at the well:

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into Everlasting Life.

(St. John 4: 13–14.)

When this 'well of water' starts 'springing up' in someone, all the other trickles of happiness contribute to it, but without it they inevitably dry up. Not by definitions and words can this happiness be communicated, but by the look in people's eyes, the vibrations they give off, and by their behaviour.

So now, this Autumn, our aim is that each person shall be helped as much as possible toward that *change of Being* which is necessary for *Self-realization* – another name for the 'well of water' from which one can drink whenever one is thirsty. Three principles must be remembered:

First, people are *very different*, and moreover we are all at different stages, and have different needs at different times. Self-realization is the aim for all, but there is no one Royal Road to it.

Secondly, not one, but *three Lines of Work* are necessary (this has been abundantly proved) to achieve full and lasting happiness. Each must find a way of working not only for himself, but for other people, and for the School itself and its surroundings. We found it before in the organisation of our meetings and of our Movements to music. We have found it with the Meditation, which gives abundant opportunities for three Lines of Work in seeing that many people are given its benefits. And we found it again in achieving contact with the Mevlevi, in making possible a visit from their instructor, and now in carrying on that work. Moreover, the ceremonial of the Mukabeleh (or demonstration of the Turning) is *designed* to have an uplifting effect on all beholders; and we hope to provide opportunities for everyone who wants to see it. For some such 'shock' can be of the utmost value whenever individual work loses its impetus. That is why a School makes the chances of success so very much greater.

Thirdly, we know very well that Self-realization must proceed in stages. Three stages have been very simply described by the Sufi mystic Al-Ghazzali, and we would like you to hear yet again the account that was first introduced to you in February, 1958:

THE ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS

Some of you are finding the idea of 'Will' to be too far away and too bleak to give the warmth and incentive needed to make small efforts from day to day.

Really the concept of 'Will' is closely related to the concept of Happiness – for unhappiness arises from conflicting desires and the only permanent happiness is to know the Truth and to isolate oneself from the false. Above that again – the highest step of all – comes Will and the power to *Do*. This is to be able to live by the Truth and act accordingly. There can be no greater happiness than that, for there would be no longer the frustration of not being able to help the Work and help other people.

Confirmation of this idea of equating 'Will' with Happiness comes from someone who (interested by the phrase used in the programme 'The Alchemy of Happiness') has given us a small pamphlet with this title which is an epitome of certain Eastern teachings. As far as I know the phrase 'The Alchemy of Happiness' was coined by the Sufi mystic Al-Ghazzali. His great work (the *Ihya ut ulum*, meaning 'The Revival of the Religious Sciences') has been one of the cornerstones of the Mohammedan religion. It is full of stories, fables and parables, some of which were borrowed by Rumi and used in the *Mathnawi*. Because of the great length of his book, Al-Ghazzali made a much shorter version which he called the *Alchemy of Happiness*.

The pamphlet mentioned above is shorter still, and from its 5 pages the following remarks can be quoted:

My subject tonight is the Alchemy of Happiness. The highest state of the soul in the Sanskrit language is called Atman which means happiness or bliss itself. ... Today we often confuse happiness with pleasure. Pleasure is only an illusion of happiness, a shadow of happiness, and in this delusion man perhaps passes his whole life seeking after pleasure, and never finding satisfaction. ... [Happiness is a state of the inner man and is not dependent upon outside things.] The one who is happy is happy everywhere; in a palace or a cottage, in riches or poverty, for he has discovered the fountain of happiness which is situated in his own heart. ...

Happiness cannot be bought or sold, nor can you give it to a person who has not got it. All religions, all philosophical systems have taught man in different forms how to find it... And wise men have in some form or another given a method ... and have called this process *Alchemy*... The stories of the *Arabian Nights* which symbolise these mystical ideas are full of the belief that there is a philosopher's stone that will turn metals into gold by a chemical process... Gold stands for Light or Spiritual inspiration... A person who follows a religion and has not come to the realisation of Truth, of what use is his religion to him if he is not happy? A religious person must be happier than one who is not religious. If a person who professes religion is always melancholy, in this way religion is disgraced; the form has been kept but the spirit is lost.

The whole process of making gold is described by the alchemists in a symbolical way. They say gold is made out of *mercury*; the nature of mercury is to be ever moving, but by a certain process the mercury is first stilled; and once stilled it becomes *silver*; the silver then has to be melted, and on to the melted silver, the juice of a herb is poured, and then the melted silver turns into gold... The real interpretation of this process is that mercury represents the nature of the ever-restless mind realised especially when a man tries to collect his attention... Such is the nature of mind, it becomes more restless when you desire to control it; like mercury it is constantly moving. When by collecting the

attention one has mastered the mind, one has taken the first step... but for this stilling of the mind a special method is necessary and is taught by the mystic, just as singing is taught by the teacher of voice production. [Different methods are used in different Schools, in ours the method is 'Self-remembering'.]

When the mind is under complete control, and no longer restless, one can hold a thought at will as long as one wishes. This is the beginning of phenomena; but some abuse these results, and by dissipating the power, they destroy the silver before turning the silver into gold. The silver must be heated before it can melt, and with what? – with that warmth which is the Divine Essence in the heart of man which flows out as sympathy, humility, unselfishness in a stream of a thousand drops... The moment this happens the man really lives; he has unsealed the spring of happiness which overcomes all that is jarring and inharmonious.

After the heart is warmed by the Divine element, which is love, the next stage is the juice of the herb which is the influence of Truth itself. The love of Truth alone is not sufficient, knowledge of the Truth is clearly necessary. Knowledge of Truth strengthens man's belief in the Truth, throws light on the individual and on life. Things become clear; every leaf on a tree becomes a page of a holy book to one whose eyes are open to the knowledge of God. When the juice of the herb is poured on to the heart and warmed by the love of one's fellow men, then that heart becomes the heart of gold, the heart that expresses what God would express. This man has not seen God, but he has seen the reflection of God in man, and when this is so, then everything that comes from this man comes from God himself.

That in brief is the 'Alchemy of Happiness', which can be put into practice at any moment when one sees oneself.

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We have understood very much from practical experience since we first had this in 1958. Nearly all the people to whom the Meditation has been given have found that it is capable of stilling the mind (that is, of transforming the mercury into silver) – if it is used in that way. Those who have continued to meditate have also found that, if we let it work this way too, it helps to *melt* the silver. Others have made the mistake of expecting the juice of the herb and the transformation of silver into gold, *without* the complete melting of the silver, for which the Awakening of Conscience and of love for other people, and all the friction of life must play a big part. The same has been found to be true of the far more difficult and arduous technique of the Turning; and the two methods have also been found to help each other.

So now we all want the melting which will bring us toward the juice of the herb, and nothing will satisfy us until we get it by one means or another.

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