

5 October 1964

READING 1

FROM MONDAY MEETING, COLET HOUSE, 28TH SEPTEMBER 1964

Dr. R. We have so much to tell you that we had better begin. I want you to try and keep in your minds this afternoon that what we are talking about is *a contact with the Inner Circle of Humanity* which this School has always needed to establish. I don't want you to be thinking geographically; the important aim is to achieve and maintain continuous connection *with a man of a certain level and a Tradition of a certain purity*.

For various reasons (which are not secret in any way but I won't go into them now), it became necessary to plan another expedition to the Shankaracharya, and about Easter we wrote to ask if three of us could visit him. He quite understood the reasons, was very glad and gave us plenty of choice of time and place. The meeting was originally planned for October, but such things as the General Election came along and there was just one fortnight when Allan could get away and that was the fortnight in mid-August. I couldn't go then, so we only overlapped one day and we had one audience, together with interpreter Jaiswal, with the Shankaracharya; but he arranged everything so that this seemed now to have been by far the best way the whole thing could have been done.

That is all I need to say now about the expedition as planned. So I will ask Mr. Allan to give you some of his impressions. They are entirely off his own cuff, not mine!

Mr. Allan. This Shankaracharya's charge is North India from the snows of Badrinath at the source of the Ganges, South to Jabalpur and East to Patna. The Ganges valley is about the most densely populated region of the world; he maintains permanent establishments in some of its chief cities and visits various groups of followers, his own and those of other Enlightened men, elsewhere in North India. In August and September this year he was visiting Lucknow where, though he had certain official duties to perform, he was occupied chiefly in teaching and giving the meditation.

On official occasions when he spoke in public, he used public assembly places (either indoor or outdoor) and his audience would be a thousand or more. For smaller meetings one of the members of his group in Lucknow had built specially for this visit a large airy room which held thirty or forty people for a day-time meeting, and in which the Shankaracharya's closer attendants slept at night. More intimate meetings were held in the house of the man with whom the Shankaracharya himself was staying. This was by Western standards a fairly humble little two-storeyed house with a small garden. The rooms upstairs were reserved for him. Downstairs there was a tiny study opening on to a larger living-room with curtains into the kitchen. The staircase was the other side of the kitchen, so that when the Shankaracharya came downstairs he would walk through the kitchen into the living-room to sit, cross-legged of course, on a couch. The room could hold about twenty people sitting on the floor. It was wonderfully clean, but not specially prepared in any way. There were frames with family snapshots on the little table, and damp from the recent monsoon rains had stained the walls.

It was here that Jaiswal and I first met him. I wrote to my wife about that first meeting as follows:

Off this (a courtyard) in a family sitting-room three or four people were sitting on the floor in front of an empty bed with cushions on it. We were invited to sit down together and within a minute the Shankaracharya came in. My first impression was how small he was. This is quite forgotten when he sits on the bed. My second feeling was how young he was – though I believe he is over 60. I gave him the flowers that Jaiswal and I had bought and these were put round his neck. During these preliminaries I felt his eyes on me and when I eventually looked at him saw the intensity of his gaze before he shifted it.

Jaiswal then spoke as Dr. Roles had instructed and then said the little speech that I had prepared. In this I had said that, in order to be of use to Dr. Roles and those in London, it was necessary for me to try and climb the Ladder of Self-realization. I sought his help in this.

He replied that if one wanted to be of real help in the world one had to be prepared to act as a go-between between the Inner Circle and the people. A go-between had to have confidence in himself and must get rid of doubts. If he had a shred of doubt then this would be passed on. I asked for his help in this. He said, Yes, that this was his domain. He told us to come to him at 8.30 every morning for meditation with his followers and at 4.00 in the afternoon for private talks.

Looking at him today I suddenly saw that God became *Man* in Christ. This was the whole point. There is no object in expecting to find a God amongst men but one can find a man with the qualities of God, and all men have the qualities of God in varying degrees.

During the next two weeks when I spent at least four hours a day with him, I realised how very little separated this man from God. Two things struck me in relation to this: First, the complete irrelevance to him of Time and Space; secondly, the universality of all he taught and said. As regards time and space, here are a few random sentences from what he said:

True Knowledge is sometimes passed on without word of mouth. This ensures its continuity. Time and Space are no barriers in the imparting of True Knowledge.

Again:

In the Spiritual world the guide need not be near; he can direct from a distance. He can establish and keep contact from very far away.

The influences of Realized Men are everywhere. Contact with one of them establishes contact with all and through all time – not just the present, but the past and the future too.

He so often understood what was in my mind and made it apparent that he understood, that at last I felt I had to remark on it. He said quite simply:

Of course, we sit close together and I know your mind. But don't think it is only when we are close; distance has nothing to do with it.

Dr. Roles had already told many of us about this. Now I know it to be a fact from my own experience. The fact is that Dr. Roles – having been recognised – has been able to establish for all of us here in London a contact which can give us now – this moment – access

to unlimited power, love and help. There is no need to journey to India; help is here, and our Work lies in supporting our Leader. Nor should any question – provided it is genuine – be thought too trivial or embarrassing to ask. I asked questions varying from: ‘Is the Sun the Absolute as far as ordinary man is concerned?’ to ‘In regard to the meditation, does it matter whether one breathes through one’s mouth or nose?’ I asked about marriage and the Sex Centre and raised many everyday topics with him.

Just to put this in the right perspective, I would like to tell a little story about the end of our meeting. Mr. Jaiswal and I were together all the time; we travelled out together, we shared a room together in the hotel and we worked very closely together. He was a marvellous interpreter because he has a great knowledge of the languages, Teachings and conditions there and also of our own System. He was also very helpful in that he is apt to be detached on certain emotional occasions; and when we were about to go to our final meeting, I was wondering what I would do. In all our previous meetings we both stood up and held our hands together in Eastern fashion, while all the others bowed down with their foreheads touching the floor. I said that I thought that as it was our last meeting I must at least kneel down. Jaiswal said, ‘I think we should keep both our feet on the ground and our heads on our shoulders.’ In fact we both knelt down!

Well now, as regards the Universality of the Shankaracharya’s Teaching, here are a few more extracts:

The supply of Knowledge is unlimited and available at all times. It manifests itself according to the need of the time.

I asked whether Knowledge had hitherto been concentrated in certain parts of the world. He said:

No, Knowledge is not bound to any land or place. No place is favoured; if certain types of people are prepared at any place they will receive it. Anywhere, any time, anybody who is looking for this Knowledge must get it, for it is not for a single race, colour, creed or nation; it is for everybody who desires it strongly enough. The fundamental principles are the same all over the world. Different interpretation results in the creation of different religions. One has to look into all of them to find the common thread and the common point of departure.

Here are some other sentences that will surely strike a chord with us:

The Ray of Creation is from Unity to diversity; the Path of Development is the reverse.

We are a duplicate – a microcosm of the macrocosm. To know about the Absolute one should look to oneSelf. ‘As above so below’. Everything shows the pattern of the Absolute.

Finally, he said there were two requirements:

One is to think, discuss and hear from men of Higher Consciousness or read books relating to Spiritual subjects. The other is to practise in one’s own life as much as one remembers. Persistent practice is the key.

Persistent practice did not refer only to meditation, but to using the Knowledge in our

ordinary life and making it part of ourselves. Only then would we be able to climb the Ladder of Self-realization and reach that Unity with the Absolute which was the goal and the destiny of all mankind. He said it was like a University degree; you could talk about the syllabus and describe the exams, but only by attending the lectures and taking the exams could you actually acquire the knowledge justifying your degree.

I asked if there were any cribs, and short cuts? He said, No, not really. If by chance – or by some special circumstance – one gained Knowledge beyond one's Being, it would be unnatural and only temporary; one could not make any real use of Knowledge gained in that way. This was where the importance of School work lay. He talked often about the value of working and studying together, emphasising the help gained through being in the company of those who also were seeking higher Consciousness. The Work of a School should be primarily directed to the achievement of Self-realization – first by its Leader, then by all its members. But Schools had a worldly function as well, particularly at this time. Here I will read again the words he actually said:

From the beginning of Creation all are after happiness, which is in man's nature. When mankind becomes attached to happiness then a wrong type of happiness is created, and a distinction has to be drawn between this happiness and pure, detached happiness. Pursuit of unnatural happiness multiplies our miseries, our distractions, our sorrow, and everything we don't want. When bad influences creep into the world and misery runs over creation, certain impulses are given. Then either a single man or a School crops up somewhere and ultimately succeeds in mending things and bringing the world back to a stable state. This is only possible through mankind; it cannot be done by God direct.

There are four ages: In the first age elements of Sattva predominate; people can take care of themselves. In the second age when there is some bad activity, a little effort at regeneration is enough to put things right. In the third age, which is darker, the capacity of human beings to remember is being lost. In this age more effort is necessary, but one person may be enough. In the fourth age (in which we are now living) bad activities have gone so far that Creation is engulfed and people everywhere have their minds full of tension and material things. To remove all this impurity Schools spring up all over the world because it is too much for any one man.

The impulse to do this is given by the Almighty.

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Now, clearly he saw us as one of these Schools directly linked through those who created it, and now through Dr. Roles, to Higher Consciousness, and linked, not only for our own sakes, but for the wider purposes of the Inner Circle itself. He said that the Work of the School in the world should be directed in two directions – the elimination of bad influences, and the improvement of existing conditions. In relation to the *internal* work of the School, he stressed the importance of both Knowledge *and* method. You must have both, for one without the other was no use. The method we mainly discussed was the meditation. He referred to other Ways requiring more rigid and vigorous discipline, but said that ours was the Fourth Way, the Way of ordinary people, and we must use simple, ordinary methods that could be easily understood and practised. He never excluded any other method or methods,

and I think I can understand why some of our members have found, for instance, that Turning and certain Movements can help meditation. They are in a sense complementary.

He gave a great deal of practical advice about meditation which I am sure Dr. Roles will pass on, but there were two general things which struck me personally. First, although he never said that meditation was difficult, he never pretended it was easy. Secondly, although he said that physical relaxation at least should come quickly to all, each person had their own pace of advancement. One should never strive for results. If one was not getting results, it was usually because of tensions and much effort merely increased the tension. Our efforts should be more and more directed to the persistent practice which he had already described at a meeting. He said that this kind of effort to put Knowledge into practice when coupled with the meditation helps to make the Teaching part of our lives. I will tell you what I experienced in this way.

One morning we had talked much about seeing oneself in others. In the afternoon I was in the market square when a communist agitator arrived with a loud-speaker van. The riot police were out and there was tension about. This man wanted to incite trouble. I couldn't understand what he said of course, but his voice, his bearing, his face, expressed the extremes of hate, envy and violence. I reacted in the way you would expect a Western Conservative to do, but suddenly there flashed into my mind the idea of seeing myself in that man, and almost at once all my prejudices had evaporated, I understood him; I was insulated from his hate, and I had to love him. Seeing myself in others has since then become much more a part of my life. I can now often see myself in the pompous politician, in drivers who cut in front of one, in the sullen shop-keeper; and it is marvellous of course to be quite free in those moments of the totally unnecessary burdens that such people would cast upon us.

On a different scale, like all of us, I have had occasional glimmerings of infinite understanding of something or of some person. I see now that this springs from one's search for Unity. Unity of oneself, Unity with God, the Absolute – however you look at it; the point being that Unity with the Absolute would mean *becoming* the Absolute, and if one *becomes* the Absolute one understands all; and in that state there can be no negativeness, only love. Now *this*, above all, is what we all want to make part of our lives and I feel that it is neither as far away nor as difficult as we may think.

Towards the end of my stay I asked the Shankaracharya how one could repay debts to those who had helped one. I was thinking not only of my visit to him, but of my seventeen years in this School and of the earlier work that had gone into its creation. He knew this of course, and he said by giving to someone else, by being vigilant and living in the help of others. My trip will be of no value to me or anyone else unless those instructions are carried out. If so, it may perhaps form another strand in the already stout rope that now binds this School to the Inner Circle.

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Dr. R. Before putting your own questions, may I just say in case you get muddled with the terminology of our System, that he (the Shankaracharya) explained to me afterwards the use of the word 'absolute' which is used in the translation here. He spoke about different 'observers' in oneself; you have these different levels of mind as a series of observers until you get to the *ultimate* or *Absolute observer*, the ultimate You. The word 'Absolute' is not used on the same scale as in the System 'Ray of Creation' where the 'Will of the Absolute' does not extend to 'All Worlds', and so on and so forth. Don't be confused with the word 'absolute' as used here. Remember that it refers to the ultimate Me, which is not separate from the ultimate Universe. It is only illusion to say or think: 'This is me, and that is the world'. We have only to get rid of this illusion to achieve Self-realization!

NOTE

What we would like from this meeting is as follows: Suppose any of you were, like Mr. Allan, in the presence of a man whom you felt sure could give the ultimate answer to all your questions, but would only answer sincere and important ones, what would you ask? Please note down any immediate questions expressed or, if you like, let people try to find their questions and write them down and bring them next week. Also remember they would have to be expressed simply and shortly because you would be talking through an interpreter!

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