

23 November 1964

## READING 6

FROM MONDAY MEETING, COLET HOUSE, 16TH NOVEMBER, 1964

Dr.R. I have had a feeling recently that we may have taken the Shankaracharya's wide influence in too narrow a line, so I have asked Mr. Allan to try and bring us back to the freshness of the impact that the Fully Realized Man has had upon us. I have given Mr. Allan a completely free hand and I don't know what he is going to talk about, but I hope you will ask him questions.

Mr. Allan. At a fairly early stage in my talks with the Shankaracharya I asked him about the question of *knowledge*, particularly in regard to the Fourth Way. He said behind the structure of worldly knowledge we should remember always flowed true Knowledge – true Knowledge without the bonds of worldly knowledge. This true Knowledge permitted us to rise above the limitations of pain and pleasure, and with it we could enjoy peace and serenity even in the midst of action. The harmonising and co-ordinating of this true Knowledge with our ordinary life lies at the heart of his and, for that matter, of any true Teaching.

It is to learn all this that we meet here, that we come together in smaller groups, that we organise other activities. These are not social meetings, nor are our group discussions academic or philosophical lectures; physical culture does not play any part in the Movements we do or in the Turning. We meet and talk and move so that we can penetrate to better understanding of ourselves, of each other, and of the world around us. So there is something special about these occasions when we are together, and as we meet we must surely cast off ordinary attitudes and thoughts and postures; we can leave our worldly luggage at the door! During this time we might be closing our minds to the knowledge and cares of the world and opening our hearts to that true Knowledge which flows behind.

Mr. Allan: (after music and five minutes meditation)

To come back to this question of true Knowledge that flows behind the structure of worldly knowledge, these are some of the things that the Shankaracharya said.

For example:

One may come across a rope in the dark and mistake it for a snake or a crack in the earth. This would create confusion and fear. This is all due to ignorance. If you come near the object some doubts may disperse, but until you reach close and see it in the light, you cannot be sure. Once you know the thing as it is then never again will you have any doubts.

The same applies to the Spiritual world. As long as we live in ignorance we limit ourselves according to our knowledge and use only those powers which we know. The latent powers and the unknown is ignored and feared. Unless one has full knowledge of one's eternal, true and conscious state one is just running round in the dark rent with fear and doubt.

On another occasion I asked him how one could use the true Knowledge to free oneself from the attractions of wealth, power, position... ?

S. This calls for knowledge, the knowledge of the ever-changing world... One must work as much as one wishes for them, but one must remember this: either these objects will change or one will have to use all one's powers to keep them, but one cannot hold them any more. That will be the disillusion. The fact that the stream of true Knowledge runs beneath all worldly things should never be forgotten. This stream of real Knowledge is never changing and promises to keep one alive when every other worldly attraction has passed away.

That surely is what in fact we are after, and it is something very big. In one of our papers recently we were told how few people in all the world ever found this Way. We have found it – perhaps by luck, perhaps through desire, perhaps through memory, perhaps by effort – perhaps by a combination of them all; but we have found it, and having found it, it is now up to us to proceed along it. We will get no further by just hanging around!

Then again, I once asked the Shankaracharya if anybody had any better chance than anybody else of making progress on the Way, and he said:

Profession or status, wealth or poverty, talent or no talent, is no criterion for coming into this Work. Intense desire for development is the only criterion. Anyone who has that desire is welcome irrespective of position or prestige or wealth or profession.

On another occasion he said that there were two types of people who come to the Work – those who wanted knowledge only and those who were prepared for self-discipline. Of the latter, he said that they were all right. Acceptance of the discipline of meditation implied work step by step, and this would lead by gradual process to true Knowledge. Of the former (those who come to the work for Knowledge only), they had to be brought along with tact, but they had to wait until their desire became so intense that they would truly meditate. So for us it seems to me to come to this: if we want to get on, then we must start doing something about it! We are not going to be *given* any more and, because ours is the Fourth Way, we are not going to be *driven* by anyone. If we want that, then we have got to choose another Way – the Monk's Way, for instance, involving total surrender with all that that implies, and that implies a great deal.

For us discipline is self-imposed, but self-discipline there must be. Taking the Ladder of Seven Steps for a moment, we would not be here in Colet House, in this Work, if the 'impulse' of the 1st Step were not strong in most of us. The next Step, you remember, is 'decision'; and after that comes 'effort' before the 4th Step, which is called 'the pull of the Way'. The 'impulse' has brought us here; 'decision' means *deciding on something*, not just thinking how nice something would be. If we decide to proceed on this Way, that is something definite and clear-cut. It means giving this top priority in our lives. It means that if we wish to meditate, for example, then we can no longer say that our ordinary life makes it impossible to find two half-hours each day. Our ordinary life must be adjusted to make it possible. I am as bad as anyone! One says one cannot get up in the morning to have a half-hour because one got to bed late. One has to alter things so that it doesn't happen, so one *does* have a half-hour. It can be done if we have taken the 'decision', and smaller, practical things can be governed in the same way.

But from this point of 'decision', desire and discipline need to be directed towards 'effort'

(3rd Step). Once more, 'effort' means *effort* and going on! With the example of the meditation, it means that during the half-hour which our 'decision' has made available to us, we have to make the 'effort' to direct and hold our Attention on the mantra. Whatever we may have gleaned from others (though perhaps through misunderstanding), we know that in fact this does involve effort. So does the Mevlevi Turning, so does any other discipline which we impose upon ourselves. Effort results in experience, and it is through *experience* that one reaches the 4th Step, 'the pull of the Way'. Having experienced true Knowledge there is no temptation to turn back. The Shankaracharya had this to say about experience:

In our worldly life one needs money to build a house, have a car, buy food, clothes and other useful things. Without money one can't get these things. But money cannot buy everything. One can buy a pen, but one can't buy writing. This one has to learn for oneself. This cannot be bought.

Likewise in the Spiritual world there are books to give you Knowledge, but Knowledge itself does not make you a Realized man. You need experience. Unless you *go* on the path, Knowledge of the path is useless. What books can't give you, a teacher can. You can get most things from others, but Realization you must experience yourself.

This experience seems to make us a vehicle through which true Knowledge can pass. In its passing it illumines us as well, leaving us a residue of happiness and well-being. Those of you who were at the Bedford Gardens Group last Thursday heard a very moving description of this by Mr. Coovadia. The man who taught our people the Mevlevi Turning showed that its purpose was to receive and, at the same time – simultaneously – *to give to the people*. I believe that whenever he saw anyone turning for their own benefit he would shout: 'the people, the people Mr. So-and-so.' The Lord's Prayer – 'Thy Will be done' – recognises the same purpose, and the prayer-book's phrase referring to God 'in whose service is perfect freedom' catches this refrain of selflessness and Love, about which the Shankaracharya had a great deal to say. On one occasion he said:

When the hermits were in the forest they surrounded themselves with fire. This kept even the most violent beasts at bay.

I asked him, 'What was the fire with which we should surround ourselves?' He replied that it was *Love*:

Love kept selfishness and attachment at bay. If you love either one person or everybody and your love is not reciprocated it makes no difference to your love. Self-assertion does not exist in love. True selfless love is only experienced when attachment and selfishness have gone from coarser forms of love.

And again he said:

Gain or loss makes no difference in love. One acts for the love of the act, not the result. Love brings equilibrium; love asks for no return.

In this Way we climb to the higher steps of the Ladder of Self-realization first through 'impulse' to 'decision', and then by 'effort' to 'experience' and the onward pull of selfless Love. Now this, of course, is personal work; but there are (as we have been taught for long enough) two other lines of Work as well – work together in Groups and our combined work for our

organisation, for School. The Shankaracharya very often talked of the advantages of keeping 'good company' and of discussions with companions on the Way. He said this sort of thing on many occasions:

The remedy is good company – the company of learned men on the Way or a School where real Knowledge is discussed and given. Go to them and listen peacefully.

The object, of course, of these meetings and the discussions that we have is to share experiences and to pass on to each other the strength that we have gained. We have a contact via Dr. Roles, and through the Shankaracharya, with unlimited strength. Dr. Roles reflects that for us, but so does any one of us who *turns towards the Sun*. We, at our Group meetings, should be able to light each other's path; but this cannot happen if our reflectors have lain unburnished through the week and even on our meeting night are dimmed by the mist of worldly care. We all know how this dimness dulls our talk. We know, too, how a shaft of light can brighten it – how disputation can suddenly be displaced by Understanding. We know then what Group Work should be like. Group meetings are special meetings with a high purpose, and unless we recognise and remember this throughout the week we shall do no good either to ourselves or those who look to us for help. It comes back again to this all important *moment of 'decision'*.

When one comes to the Third line of Work – the work of the School – the reflector (being made of larger numbers of individuals and larger groups) is wider, though of course it can only be as bright as its component parts. Its use, however, is not in our hands. Some of you may remember how in an earlier talk I spoke of the Shankaracharya's description of the Four Ages. In each of these the state of the world was worse than in the previous one, and much more effort was required each time to return to sanity. He told us that we were now in the fourth age, and because it was beyond the power of any one man or group to repair it, Schools cropped up all over the world. This was by Divine impulse.

It is once again a case of 'Thy Will be done'. The Shankaracharya gave warning of using the Work, the School, and particularly the meditation wrongly:

It is not for the masses, (he said). It is not to be given to the whole world because the (whole) world cannot take it. If this is tried the System will have to be diluted and this we must avoid. You can spread it only insofar as you can keep your organisation intact. Do nothing beyond that. Use your full energy but do not over-strain your organisation so that it becomes second-rate.

Now in their practical terms these directions are understandable, for Western society is today so complex that for it to change direction long preparation at many levels is necessary. In the course of public life I have observed how small is the area in which direct power can be exercised both here and in other countries, including Russia. So readiness to accept it must exist in different places and at different levels before any change can be effective.

In our organisation there are people in touch with most aspects of our national life. Through them by example – by deed and by word – an influence can be, and is being exerted in places where preparation is important. But of course School Work is not limited only to people in, as it were, strategic places; it has a much wider base than that. There is a role for everyone.

It seems very important to remember this side of our Work, for it is the Work of the *Inner Circle*. Through it we become part of the Inner Circle with the possibility of touching the very Centre. It is there that miraculously we rediscover our own Selves. We find that we are, in fact, the microcosm of the Macrocosm. To quote once more the Shankaracharya:

The microcosm is made of the same substance as that from which the Macrocosm is made. The body is made of elements of earth, water, air, fire, ether, Manas, Buddhi, and Atman. The Universe is also made of the same substances. In full Consciousness the elements are all united and the body expands to embrace the Universe.

This happens when there is true Knowledge coupled with a method. Keep hold of the Centre which is the Self.

When we *know* for ourselves that the microcosm and the Macrocosm are one, then the circle for us is completed. That circle begins and ends with ourselves. As we sit here we have the strength, we have the Love, and we have the Knowledge to complete it. The challenge that faces us here and now is, 'Do we have the Will?'

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(Dr. R. So now, in the light of the Shankaracharya's message to us, we have each of us to decide what we can do on three different scales – the 'three lines of Work' – by asking these three questions:

1. How can I make use of what the School provides to assist my own efforts on the Ladder of Self-realization?
2. How can I play my part in the inner work of the School – work with and for its other members?
3. What do my interests, training, and capabilities enable me to contribute to the School in its work for the people in the world around?)

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