

26 March 1969

**PROGRAMME****EASTER 1969****(PRIVATE)****JOURNEY TO TRUTH***'Learn to sift the fine from the coarse'*

Alchemical saying

*The man in the wilderness said to me;  
 'How many strawberries grow in the sea?'  
 I answered him as I thought good;  
 'As many red herrings as grow in the wood.'*

Nursery Rhyme

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The idea is to have a theme for each day of the week, illustrated by a story or simile to which one can return again and again after periods of stillness and meditation.

A common thread runs through these themes: *'The Search for Truth'*. Consciousness and truth are two sides of the same thing. As consciousness brings with it the feeling of 'I', so the search for Truth becomes inseparable from finding the answer to the question 'Who am I?'

**1ST DAY****24 March 1969**

Q. What is the function of Ahankara (the feeling of 'I' or personal individuality) in general, and at our level?

S. Ahankara is recognised under two varieties viz:

- (a) 'Artificial Ahankara'. This identifies itself with the physical body and sensory impressions or with borrowed thoughts and desires. (Shall we therefore call it 'False I' in English?)
- (b) 'Natural Ahankara'. This detaches itself from the above and goes higher up, to merge with the True Self, the Atman or Ultimate Observer who is above all.

Note: In the beginning the two are indistinguishable, and in many of the Shankaracharya's stories this lower consciousness is called the 'servant' in contrast with the Higher Consciousness which is called the 'Saint' or 'Holy Man'.

The Initial stages were shown in this story:

## 25 August 1964

Once there was a king who felt the need of a Saint, so he sent one of his ministers out with his entourage to search for one throughout the kingdom. They combed the forests and found several ascetics who looked holy, but they couldn't find a real Saint. So in desperation, after the first month of the three allotted to them, the minister said to one of his servants: 'There's nothing for it, but you'll have to sit meditating and looking holy so perhaps in two months you'll be able to satisfy the king.'

He duly did this and on their return, the king accepted him as a Saint and honoured him. The situation thus having been saved, the minister said to the servant – 'All right; that's enough; get back into your servant's clothes and go on serving me.' But the servant said – 'no, I don't serve *you* any more; for while I was meditating I discovered what I really want, and from now on I'm going for that alone.'

This illustrates the relation between the artificial and the True Ahankara.

## 2ND DAY

### 24 September 1962

Q. What about False 'I' that is in everybody; does it consist of the false picture we have of ourselves?

S. The accidents that we meet in life are the result of False 'I', the meaning of which is that we see the opposite of what each thing really is. We start seeing, for instance, that the body is oneself and not the Atman. We form a wrong picture of everything; we see what is not there and we miss what is there, and act accordingly.

The quality of Real 'I' is to see everything in oneself; the quality of False 'I' is to find oneself to be an individual separated from everything and see everything separated from oneself.. We cannot see the broad view of the Universe; we cannot see the Consciousness which is all-pervading.

### 19 October 1965

There was a man from the country who visited his city relatives; to entertain him they took him to the cinema, buying expensive tickets for the back row. But their country cousin felt insulted at being put at the back, and insisted that they sat up in front. All went well until a lion being shown on the screen suddenly looked as if it would jump out at them. Our friend, jumped up and hit out at the lion with his stick to defend himself. The screen was smashed, the film stopped, and the place thrown into darkness and confusion. At first no one could understand what had happened; then they realised that it was all caused by a man in the audience who had never been to the cinema before and took the film to be real.

The same applies to those ignorant people who regard what goes on in the world as real and, becoming identified and involved start acting foolishly and destructively; when the real significance of the Grand Drama becomes apparent to them, these people too can play their part with detachment and enjoyment.

**3RD DAY**

False 'I' never sees what lies immediately before it because it either lives with the ghosts of the past (the Hindi word '*Bhoot*' means both 'ghost' and 'the past'), or wanders into an improbable future.

**3 September 1964**

There was a lawyer who hoped for a son who would follow him in his profession; but his wife came of a medical family and had other ideas. They used to quarrel noisily all the time. One day a Holy Man happened to be passing and looked in to enquire what the fracas was about. When they explained the cause of the quarrel he said: 'Well, fetch the boy and we'll ask him what he wants to be.' Going very red they stammered out – 'but the boy isn't born yet!' Of course he told them how foolish they were, and even if they ever had a son how much time must go by before he would grow to seven or eight and the question of his profession would arise. We must take each step as it comes.

Being so confused about 'Time', False 'I' must not be allowed to mistake the transient for the permanent; for example, with regard to 'freedom' – a commodity in great demand among young people today:

**20 October 1965**

The appeal of freedom is universal, but there are two kinds of freedom – transitory and permanent. Children are jubilant when they rush home from school. One school here had to close for a week because the teacher had malaria. After a week he was still not fit, so the children were given another three days off. On hearing this news one child remarked: 'How wonderful it would be if the teacher died and we could have a holiday forever.' Everyone wants freedom; but we have to realise that the temporary discipline of education has to be gone through in order to get the permanent freedom.

**4TH DAY**

The permanent freedom is freedom from the sense of personal possession.

**3 September 1964**

Once a Holy Man on his travels was looking for a night's lodging, and seeing a palatial mansion he asked the doorkeeper if he could spend the night there. The doorkeeper inquired of the owner who refused, saying crossly: 'This is not a public inn, where anybody can come for a time before moving on.'

The Holy Man asked the owner, 'Who built this palace?' 'My father.' 'Now you own the palace?' 'Yes, I am the owner.' 'And who will own it after you?' 'My sons.' 'Who after your sons?' 'My grandsons.'

'This looks very like an inn', said the Saint. 'People seem to come and stay for a time and go away. What makes you say it isn't an inn? Had it belonged to your father, he would certainly have taken all this with him!'

The Owner realized what was wrong with his point of view and apologised. As long as the ego is in this ignorant state, claiming what is not his, one will not remember the Real Owner, the Atman, and so cannot attain Unity.

**5TH DAY**

Shedding the false, the Natural 'I' can learn to turn everything to good.

**3 September 1964**

Q. Does one have to drain one's fate to the bitter dregs before one can be released?

S. One can change one's fate also. Bitter things are made to act as medicine to cure ailments. The snake-charmer removes the poison fang from the snakes and earns his livelihood by exhibiting them. You also can transform your fate with good thoughts, good talk, good actions and good company. The present is the only time to change one's fate. One can transform these 'bitter dregs' into Elixir of Life if one makes use of one's good impulses.

**(11 August 1964)**

A thug named Valmiki lived by robbery with violence and fed his ten dependents with the loot. Once some ascetics were passing through the area. He stopped them and ordered them to give him everything they had. The leader of the group said: 'If you answer one question, we'll give you what little we possess. Your gang share your loot, but are you sure they want to share your crimes and punishments as well?'

The robber replied, 'I never thought of that!' The leader promptly said, 'Well, now is the time to think, so go to your people and ask them if they want to share your sins.' The robber went home and asked each one of them, but they all replied; 'Till now we have lived off your robberies, but you could equally well work for an honest living. Robbery is your business and your nature, we no longer want any part of it.'

This gave Valmiki such a shock that he went back to the ascetics and asked how to get rid of his sins. Through meditation he not only got rid of his sins but became one of the most celebrated Sanskrit poets and wrote the *Ramayana*.

Q. Can we get a shock like that?

S. (Had a good laugh.) No, that's for great poets! Ordinary people don't need such terrible shocks. They don't sin that much. For them more gentle and systematic ways are provided and they must be content with those.

**6TH DAY**

Shri Dattatreya (11th Chapter of *Srimad Bhagavatam*) had twenty-four Teachers; this means he had gathered teaching from twenty-four different incidents during his life. You have already heard the story of the Arrow-maker and here is another:

**21 September 1968**

Once while he was moving round the town he came to a house where all the men had gone out to work and there was only a young girl who was about to be married. The people from the other town had come to see if she was a suitable bride for their son. There was no one to entertain the guests so she had to do everything herself. She was very poor and had not much to offer them. She thought she would prepare them some rice, but even the rice was not ready, so she had to remove the husks before cooking it. While she was trying to do this

by banging the rice with a wooden hammer, her bangles made a noise, and she thought the guests would hear the noise of the bangles and realise the household did not even have rice. She wanted to save the honour of the house, so she started to break some of the bangles, but she found when even two remained there was some noise, so she broke all except one. Dattatreya observed all this. They invited him, too, to wait for some rice, and he stayed. After eating, he said that when one has to meet one's most respected guest one has to throw away all disturbance, and plurality must go, before one can have silence and unity.

So, when in meditation one goes to meet the Self which is the greatest of all guests, one has to leave behind all those ideas, thoughts and worries and reduce simply to One.

## 7TH DAY. SUMMARY

### 11 October 1962

On the Way the Searcher after Truth experiences trouble and difficulty in distinguishing the Real from the unreal 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 just by listening to the teacher. But the *Fifth Stage* is where he helps himself to Knowledge so that he starts understanding things by himself; and the *Sixth Stage* brings a tremendous opening-up for the disciplined man, at which he can establish the full relation with Truth from Higher Mind. Then he prepares for the *Seventh* – and so to be a teacher himself.

Another illustration is that of a traveller who has to go on a journey of seven hours; he starts at 5 a.m. with a torch in his hand and with the help of street lamps. The way is not clear and he cannot read the signposts, so 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 any artificial illumination. He can now move on with certainty up to the High Noon of the Seventh or final stage; so then he meets the Atman and he can become like Him.

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