

22nd June 1970

## READING 7

### UNITY

On yet another important point there is perfect agreement between our fragmentary Western System and the Tradition of the Shankaracharyas. Mr. Ouspensky in his lectures said that man must first acquire certain things which he thinks he already has, like 'Unity', or 'Consciousness' or 'Will'; and he stressed that we should begin with 'Unity'.

If we think we already have Unity, then our conscience must be asleep; for in a 'moment of truth' our disunity is what we usually feel most clearly. St. Paul following his great 'peak experience' often had such moments, and gives this excellent description of one of them:

We know that the law is spiritual: but I am of the flesh and a slave to error. For the things I do, I do not know that I do them; I do not do what I want to do; but what I hate that I practise... For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwells no good thing: for though the will is present in me, yet in the work-out I find nothing right... For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man; but I see another law working in my limbs, which is at war with the law of my mind and leads me captive to the law of sin which is in my flesh and bones. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

(Romans 7:14–25)

So those who have enough 'moments of Truth' to realise just how disintegrated they are, begin to look for some means of integration, and when they find this they keep relating it to whatever aims they may have.

When asked what is the object of Meditation or any other genuine discipline, the Shankaracharya also says 'To Be – to be One'; and both Systems agree that before man can 'Do' he must first 'Be'. Both agree that, of course, to keep alive at all we always have to be doing things; but this is not what they mean by 'Doing', for it is simply reaction to pressure from without. The power to 'Do' comes from within and means to 'have power upon the hour' – something rare like 'justifying the ways of God to man', communicating love and happiness to other people, or creating a fine and original work of art.

So we must now return to the first aim – to learn to Be, to be One. Some of you last week realised that you cannot be both 'sincere' and 'clever' unless you are a united person. I want to approach the subject of Unity this week in the new way we have tried at the last two Meditation meetings.

In one of his public addresses (at the recent religious festival at the junction of the great rivers) which we attended, the Shankaracharya began by referring to the significance of the river Ganges in Indian thought and tradition:

He said that, in general, the flow of this civilisation is directed towards this river, both physically and spiritually. Explaining the nature of this ancient civilisation, he said that its basis is Yoga. Yoga means union by fire. Man uniting with God is Yoga. A disciple uniting with the Guru is Yoga. A boy and a girl uniting in wedlock, is also Yoga. Yoga is true when the uniting persons never separate.

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At other times he has said that our System of Meditation belonged to Yoga and is the most rewarding form of Yoga to practise in ordinary life, having been adapted from Raja Yoga, the 'king of Yogas'.

Note the expression: 'Yoga means Union by Fire'; this idea also appears in the fragments of our Western System. You may remember that it borrowed an Eastern simile to the effect that man's psychological nature is like a mixture of powders which have to be fused by fire into a physical alloy; the fire being produced by friction, developed in 'the struggle of yes and no'. The Shankaracharya's approach is however much more encouraging; in olden times he says the friction had to be produced by fiery disciplines, terribly difficult to carry out. But now, provided that a householder is under a little subtle discipline and guidance, the friction produced by life itself is quite sufficient. The fire that unites the past with the future is the *present moment*, with all its demands. We should therefore welcome all difficulties and disturbances as part of the process of acquiring Unity.

On the way to the final union between a man, his Teacher and his God, there are a number of smaller 'unions' which have to take place. You have been hearing recently something about one of these – the union of action, head and heart, so that our thoughts, words and deeds become consistent with reason and conscience and with our aim of Self-realization.

But the obvious need we have at present is for more *unity* in the weekly meetings of our different groups. The Sanskrit word for any gathering of people for the purpose of Self-realization is Satsangha, and 'sangha' means Unity; the word satsangha being the same one which is often translated as 'good company'. The importance of having regular gatherings for the promotion of Unity on the way to Self-realization cannot be overestimated. No technique will succeed for a solitary individual – he or she will only be increasing their own false ego – the cloud of unknowing which alone keeps us from the Truth.

But what do we see at so many of our meetings? Certainly not unity. Too often people come to them as separate individuals and seem to take every opportunity to get into futile arguments and fall apart. This is because people forget that success in the group depends on each person coming to it with a contribution of their own derived from efforts during the week before, and not leaving it all to the group-taker with whom they often begin to find fault. This isn't the way to acquire unity either individual or collective.

Try to plan something to carry out together during the week so that next time you meet you will be more united with each other. There is available much valuable material on how to get the most out of regular meetings in a group so as to achieve Self-realization more quickly and easily, but first see what you can find out for yourselves.

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