

9 July 1973

READING 8

FOUR WAYS TO SELF-REALIZATION

PART 1

Each of the three storeys of the 'house in which man lives' forms the basis for one of the traditional 'Ways'. These have been created by, and for, extreme types of people (what we call one-storeyed people) – intellectuals, devotionals or addicts of physical action – so each Way operates to the exclusion of the others. As His Holiness has pointed out, Scriptures like the Vedas, the Gita and the Gospels provide for all three, leaving each kind of person to make his choice. This often leads to confusion and conflict.

Since the majority of mankind are average, not extreme in their make-up, having possibilities in two or even three storeys, it is fortunate that there is a *Fourth Way* which is little known and only 'surfaces' at particular times in human history. To this Fourth Way belong both the tradition of the Shankaracharyas and our own Western tradition; and the Meditation system we use was adapted about thirty years ago from one of the traditional Ways (Raja Yoga) for use in the Fourth Way.

The Fourth Way can be carried on in the conditions of ordinary life, so there is no attempt to change the external conditions of the individual, which are considered to be an important part of his Self-realization. The Fourth Way works directly on the unity of the individual nature with the pure Consciousness, but it borrows and adapts from time to time methods and disciplines from the traditional Ways. Thus work on all three storeys proceeds *simultaneously*, since all are linked by the same process of going inwards to seek the True Self.

The traditional Ways all demand the big step, at the very start, of giving up all one's personal life, one's career, one's name and one's possessions. Whereas, too, the traditional Ways rely heavily on discipline and obedience (the pupil being continually shown or told what to do), in the Fourth Way the principal requirements are *understanding* (of the nature of the Divine Self and of one's essential unity with it); and the *practice of attention*. Thus the enterprise of the pupil, in putting the teaching into practice in his own particular circumstances, is the main essential to success.

Though the Fourth Way is physically so much easier, yet in a subtle way it is more difficult, for any progress is blocked at the start by the mechanical parts of the different functions, which combine together to keep us behaving like mechanical puppets. The exacting disciplines of traditional ways (such as the Dervish turning) cut right across these mechanisms at the very beginning.

Take the mechanical part of the emotional function which we were discussing last week: the full action of the emotional function is blocked at the outset by *built-in likes and dislikes*. We will never learn anything while these surface reflexes are allowed to operate; and in particular we shall never know ourselves if we confine Self-knowledge to merely knowing what we like and what we dislike. Then these discussion groups of yours: I know quite well by now that any fresh idea will immediately divide the group into a) those who like it, b) those who dislike it, and c) the majority who take it as it comes unless their own feelings are in some way hurt!

The introduction of a diagram, for instance, immediately provokes in a number of people a state of total negation, where they shut all the windows and draw the curtains. Some like one kind of music which others dislike; some object to what they call the 'Indian' approach, while others dislike reference to brain structure. Emotionals dislike intellectuals; intellectuals dislike emotionals; and 'practical people' dislike both! Yet what our emotional function is made for is to love and pursue the Truth at all costs whether we like it or not; and the idea of Param-Atman leads to the exciting discovery that all these conflicting characters exist in my own nine-roomed house.

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PART 2. THE PRACTICE OF THE EMOTIONAL WAY (BHAKTI)

For those who are capable of taking this way, and who realise clearly that *Bhakti means devotion to the Param-Atman* and not merely to some other person, it is quick and easy in comparison with the Way of Knowledge or Reason, where there are many rules and regulations and where the steps towards Self-realization can be precisely named and defined. Whereas in the Way of Knowledge the difference of level between two people is fairly clear – one obviously knows more than the other and so will assume the role of teacher – on this Way it is hard to tell which of two people has the most love and fidelity, a question which is felt to be of little importance.

We have to realise that the emotional function in all ordinary people works far below its full power. The following quotations from the Shankaracharya referring to the Emotional Way (Bhakti) may help to arouse your interest:

...Once we apply ourselves to the Param-Atman with a single-minded devotion, we reach the stage of a Mahatma in no time and attain permanent peace – as stated in Chapter 9, verses 29–31 of the *Bhagavad Gita*:

29. I am the same to all beings; to Me there is none either hateful or dear. But those who worship Me are in Me and I, too, am in them.
30. Even a bad man, if he begins to worship Me with single-pointed devotion, is seen to be good; for he has formed a holy resolution.
31. Soon does he attain virtue and eternal peace. O Arjuna, know for certain that no devotee of Mine is ever destroyed.

If once during our lifetime an unshakable faith in Param-Atman is established, that is, that we belong to the Param-Atman and Param-Atman belongs to us – then we are out of reach of all harm. At that stage things change their properties for us, a harmful drug becoming harmless. This is how a cup of deadly poison given to Mira, a perfect devotee, lost all its poisonous properties in her hands. We know that substances change their properties during a chemical reaction, i.e., on a chemical plane. Then, why can this not happen on a more subtle plane, where much more powerful forces come into play? Bhakti can do all that. It cleanses you, purifies you, decorates you, and presents you before the Param-Atman at your best.

(Record, Ashram Talk: 7 March 1971)

You have asked for help in developing love or devotion to the Param-Atman through the practice of Bhakti, stating that your own capacity for love seems feeble. You should not worry on that account. Rather you should recall that the path of Love is that very path on which Param-Atman is pouring His favours and blessings all the time. Love is

not 'doing', it is 'feeling'. Love and True Knowledge are just two names for one and the same thing, which is a natural manifestation of the Atman, and it comes to the surface inevitably when the Antahkaran (Soul) concentrates. Then you get the 'feel' of it.

(Letter, 14 January 1972)

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...A person who practises Bhakti, uses his speech for expressing the properties of Param-Atman, and his eyes for seeing Him everywhere. He is reluctant to use his organs otherwise. In this way he is practising Bhakti everywhere, whether he is in a jungle or at his house. You are listening to this talk about the Param-Atman. This is also Bhakti. But no action, by itself, is Bhakti. Thus growing crops on a field, sitting at a shop selling things, etc., and all such activities can be converted into Bhakti if they are done with a spirit of service to the Param-Atman.

Bhakti is a power of the heart. Let this single power of Bhakti drive all your actions, just as the main current drives all the machinery in a factory...

In the mind of a busy householder, the idea of Bhakti is sometimes lost sight of in the midst of daily engagements. The way to reverse this is to read inspired works like the *Bhagavad Gita* [or the Gospels]. This should be done as a daily routine by anyone who wants to practise Bhakti.

A rich man used to go to a Mahatma, but he used to talk to him about his household affairs only. The Mahatma asked him the reason, and he replied that it was so because his household people loved him very much; therefore they were always uppermost in his mind.

The Mahatma went to his house one day and gave a sewing needle to his wife. He said to her, 'Your husband seems to be planning to take all his possessions with him when he goes into the next world. Tell him to carry this needle also for my sake. I shall need it there for sewing my torn clothes.' When she told this to her husband, he understood the truth about the worldly belongings.

So, you should try to hoard that which you *can* take with you, i.e., Bhakti, and not that which would be left here, i.e., the worldly possessions. Transfer your attachment to Param-Atman. This is Bhakti. Under the influence of Bhakti, everything undergoes a transformation. Poverty becomes riches, poison becomes nectar. There is pain and suffering in the world only as long as faith in Param-Atman is not there.

(Record, Mela Talk: 16 January 1972)

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