

13 May 1974

READING 3

ON 'BEING CONSISTENT'

We come now to the most important practical part of all the Shankaracharya's instructions to us over the years; but to understand what he said at our last visit a bit of background is needed. We start with some long-familiar words from Mr. Ouspensky's Sixth Psychological Lecture (1934 – 1940):

The idea of *Being* entered into the very foundation of thinking and speaking about man in religious thought, and all other descriptions of man were regarded as unimportant in comparison with this... In modern thought people ignore the idea of Being and different levels of Being. On the contrary, they believe that the more discrepancies and contradictions there are in a man's being, the more interesting and brilliant he can be. It is generally – and not always tacitly – admitted that a man can be selfish, unreliable, unreasonable, perverted, and yet be a great scientist, a great philosopher, a great artist (or a great administrator). Of course, this is as impossible... as to be a prize fighter or a great athlete with consumption.

Just now people are coming to some slight realisation of this because of the publicity being given to corruption and sexual irregularities in high places – among presidents, leading politicians and business men. When asked what was the most desirable aspect of Being for the individual to cultivate, Mr. Ouspensky would say, 'reliability; when in doubt keep to plan.' Today we still choose people for our Society on the basis of reliability and not brilliant unpredictability!

The Shankaracharya calls it 'consistency'. At my very first private talk with him in 1962, when I mentioned that the keynote of our Western System was Self-remembering, he replied:

The realization achieved makes it possible that a man does not forget himself... After constant meditation and work on oneself, the adept starts to realise that a man is not just flesh and bones; he is also soul, he is Consciousness and he is Bliss. When he has fully realized this in practice, whatever he does – the way he moves, the way he talks – becomes quite fitting to the dignity of the Divine Self... Now even if *you* cannot remember yourSelf, the relation which has been established between you and me would enable you to remember. This relation must not be broken, and you will see that from my end it will be continuous. For a fully Realized man has come to a situation where, if he remembers somebody, that memory is continuous – that person will *have* to remember him. And, when he does so, His Holiness knows it. To increase the power of this relation, one has to bear it in mind to speak what one feels and do what one says.

(Record, 9 October 1962)

[Pause for silent understanding of his meaning.]

This thread has run through all our conversations with him over twelve years, and once again last January when Lord Allan (8) asked:

'How can I have His Holiness's help to dive deeper?', the conclusion of his answer was: 'Whatever one says one should do, whatever one thinks one should say, and whatever one feels one should express.'

In the next question at our 3rd audience, Lady Allan (17) refers to that answer:

Yesterday His Holiness spoke of consistency in his answer to my husband's question. Is it this that can provide a thread of remembrance through the day and keep a little Light in the darkness?

S. There is a verse in one of the Scriptures, the gist of which is that a good man who wants to go on the Spiritual path, speaks what he feels and does what he speaks; that is, he speaks from pure feeling. When he has impure feelings he tries not to speak, or express those feelings, or rush into action. But a bad man is not consistent – he *feels* something and *says* something different; he *says* something and *does* something else.

But if one tries to speak from pure feeling and do exactly what one says, then this would build up one's inner strength, and because of this transparency, this unity of one's mind and sincerity of one's heart, the way will become clear.

After illustrating this from an episode in the *Ramayana* epic, he continued:

This is the sort of purity one gets only if one follows pure feelings, and expresses them in true words, and does exactly what one says. If one learnt this System, and kept this consistency, then one's Essence[†] would grow – one would become more serious and have more strength of character. This brings unity within a man and creates a sort of depth; and into this unity and depth of the individual the glory of the Absolute descends, and that glory becomes manifested all around.

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†NOTE ON 'ESSENCE'

In that first talk (twelve years ago), we had asked him why the effects of the Meditation are so different in different people. He answered:

The real cause of the different effects of the Meditation in different people is the distribution and proportion of the three Gunas in their Essence. In no two men is the Essence alike; it depends on the former life.

(The word used was Samskara = 'the essence of the individual life into which are collected the combined effects of all those thoughts, feelings and actions'.)

The story of the white Swan and the crows can illustrate the relation of Essence and personality, if you can find them in your own nature.

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