

18 March 1974

READING 8

PART 1

In this, our last paper this term, I would like to refer to the concluding paragraph from the Shankaracharya quoted in last week's paper (Reading 7, p.32):

How to act in the world is again regulated by the True Knowledge which is being given to individuals – one can waste the energy in fruitless activity or one can use the energy to good purpose. So one should use one's Understanding (Buddhi), one should use mind, eyes, ears, body, making the best use of all one's faculties according to True Knowledge. Then, having spent one's energy, go back in meditation – two half-hours every day – and recharge oneself with the pure energy which is available from the subtle or causal levels.

COMMENT

In practice, this turns on the problem of reconciling the Natural or Universal Laws of Nature (the subject of True Knowledge), with those man-made laws peculiar to the country and society in which we have to live. A 'fully Realized man' (like the Shankaracharya), belonging to another culture and country, can thoroughly instruct us in the nature of the Creator of the universe and Natural Laws which are His manifested expression; but such a man has to leave it to us to find how to live our lives and search for the Truth behind the man-made laws of our particular social fabric.

PART 2. [Omit if you prefer to keep entirely to the Shankaracharya's own words.]

This reconciliation between the Natural and man-made laws is nowhere more rewarding than in the Creative Arts. I'm sure you'll appreciate the insight shown by a dramatic critic in the *Listener* (14th March, p.347, 'A Creaking Storm' by John Elsom). In criticising the current production of *The Tempest* (Shakespeare's last play) at the National Theatre by Peter Hall, he said:

The opening storm scene can (and should) be spectacular, with the universe apparently disintegrating into waves and rocks, the chaos of cries and thunder, and Ariel darting like lightning among the broken spars of the wrecked ship.

The moment of 'wonder', however, should come later when we realise that this anarchy is being controlled by the impulses of one man, Prospero. How and why is he conjuring up the storm, and what does this superhuman power mean to us? Are we, too, responsible for the chaos which surrounds us? Are we victims of magic, or unconscious magicians causing the storms which we lack the skill to placate?

[Note: 'Magic' here can be thought of as the influence of the subtle and causal levels on physical events.]

Quotation continues:

If the 'wonder' of *The Tempest* is ascribed to its masque-like techniques, the actors aren't encouraged to search for their own understandings of the 'enchanted isle', of Prospero's magic, and his refusal eventually to practise it.

The *main theme of man-made art versus natural law* is thus pushed to one side, and the cast is left with nothing better to think about except how best to submit to the surrounding (technical) tricks...

[Pause – to let this sink in, and perhaps to read it again.]

*

It is intended that this same theme of Natural Law in contrast to man-made laws (as applied to the Arts) should be demonstrated by films to be shown at the Annual General Meeting of the Study Society next week. The extraordinary intelligence and adaptability revealed by the various species of Organic Life is well shown in the first film (*The Private Life of the Kingfisher*), and contrasted with the work of the painter Claude of Lorraine, who created a dream-world in which he was not limited by a too exact representation of the natural scene!

*

PART 3

Some of us have by now realised that the ‘interval’ below the Unrealized Sun or Param-Atman in the Fourth Room (see Figures 3 & 4), must be filled by a ‘fully Realized man’ representing a great and permanent Tradition. Any lesser teacher could only serve as an introduction so that we shall be able to recognise the ‘Complete Man’, and understand him, if we are lucky enough to come under his direct influence. Once formed, the relationship with such a Teacher is permanent, whether or not the individual has achieved Self-realization; for the Tradition and its work continues – it is ageless, but finds different forms of expression according to time and place.

A question asked at our third audience, 18th January, 1974, shows the importance of this relationship:

A. (14) His Holiness referred to clouds that may come between the aspirant and the Guru. If, during the working day the main cloud appears to be plain forgetfulness, can His Holiness recommend any technique or method whereby the aspirant can keep the Guru in mind throughout the day?

S. During the working day one is involved in Rajas because one has to keep on being active, and it is in the nature of Rajas that one thing you have to be forgiven is that you forget your longing for this – it is a natural phenomenon and it should be so. But, *if it is natural to forget, it is also natural to remember*; so, when one knows that one has forgotten, one should remind oneself of whatever one has forgotten, and try to bring this forgetful state between two moments of remembrance.

If the darkness, which symbolises forgetfulness, is caught between two lights, then it is very easy to cross the darkness without any help from outside, because there is light behind and light in front.

So remembrance does reflect some Light in the darkness, and one can hold on to the Light further ahead and go through the darkness.

If there are two periods of remembrance, then one would see that the forgetfulness in-between them has no force of its own – it has lost its force and, whatever has to prevail in the individual, would be available by remembering again.

There is a small creature called a mongoose, whose nature is to fight snakes. Whenever they meet they have a fight, and when the poison of the snake enters the body of the mongoose through a bite from the snake, the mongoose runs away from the fight and goes to smell a certain type of herb; and by smelling this particular herb the poison of the snake is nullified, he becomes fresh. He then returns to the fight again, and this process can go on as long as the fight is not over – so, it goes back to smell the herb, and comes back recharged for the fight having undone the effect of the poison.

Forgetting is very much like this poison which is being put in by the snake – the Rajas – into our nature (Prakriti). One need not bother about it, one simply needs to go and get the help of the ‘herb’. By remembering the Guru all this will be easy, and forgetting will have no bad effect.

* * *

