

22 November 1976

READING 8

The path to Self-fulfilment – like any other path requires a certain number of steps. Mention has been made of the classical eight-fold path of Yoga, but this makes no concession to modern life, being designed for full-time ascetics and celibates.

There is another – much more practical – description of the same path in the form of a Ladder of Seven Steps belonging to a System different from Yoga, to which we were introduced quite early in our acquaintance with the Shankaracharya (October 1962).

At that stage we were comparing the Western System in which we had been trained by Mr. Ouspensky with his much more ancient Advaita (non-dualistic) System; so at that particular audience I gave this account:

Our System says that all the laws governing this manifest universe can be reduced to two fundamental cosmic laws; the law of three forces and the law of octaves. The law of three governs the birth of each single event, one example being the three gunas which control the physical and spiritual life of man. The law of octaves (or 'law of seven') governs every succession of events whether ascending or descending. Understanding of the interaction of these two laws is that of a man who has achieved all possible human knowledge in a state of cosmic consciousness. We have a universal symbol based on a circle of nine points which can explain this interaction and therefore all knowledge can be found in it. Would you tell us whether this outline is correct and whether, in your opinion, our system could at one time have branched off from your Meditation tradition itself?

S. There is no difference at all in this broad outline between your System and ours. Since he has already spoken fully about the law of three and described, with examples, the interaction of the three gunas, he will now give a description of the law of seven.

The law of seven is a repetitive motion which goes on mechanically unless there is escape from the circle through full Realization; otherwise the movement goes on repeating and again.

As an example the quest for self-fulfilment has been described as a Ladder of Seven Steps:

First Step is the *Good Intention* or *Right Impulse*, the recognition of the right desire.

Second Step is *Decision*, the stage where rationally the man makes up his mind and determines to go further.

Third Stage: Effort. In response to this determination and his consequent search, he meets with someone who gives him a system like the Meditation. As a result of practising it, certain particles of fine matter begin to form within him which cause him to strive towards increase of Sattva.

Fourth Stage: The Pull of the Way. Where the influences from the outside world begin to lose some of their power over his inner life. The increase of Sattva determines that the aspirant would rather complete the work than leave the way.

Fifth Stage is Insight. With help from the Self within, he ceases to consider all that is in the world as outside himself, for he finds that he and the world are one thing. It is quite possible that he will get glimpses of this while still in the fourth stage.

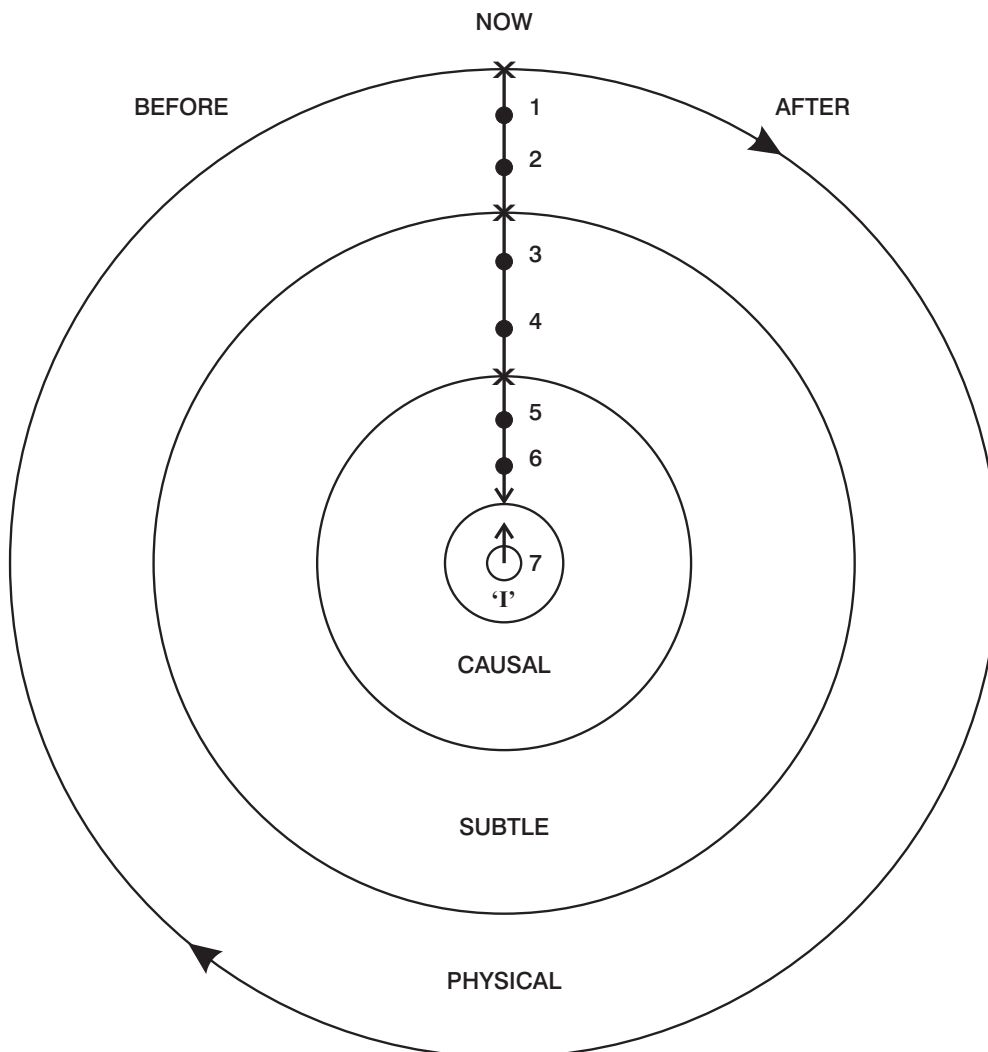
Sixth Stage originally called '*Abundance*' was later equated with Samadhi or ecstatic bliss.

The *Last or Seventh Stage* which he calls *Turiya* (enlightenment) is the stage of the fully Realized man, when he knows himSelf; he knows all that can be known; he knows how to 'Do'; and right actions, right feeling and right thought are all combined.

(Record, 11 October 1962)

He then went on to describe the role of the instructor in relation to someone under his discipline: Help is important at Stage 3 where the man decides to learn; just as a man learning to swim has to be taught, but once he has learnt he can swim as he likes. The instructor watches the actions, movements and words of the pupil and finds out how much he will take (as a voltmeter registers how much voltage can be taken). Later on (before Stage 7) the 'second impulse' is given, so the pupil can achieve complete Realization and become like the instructor himself. This process is known only to the teacher, and unless the aspirant becomes the teacher he would not realise that these 'shocks' (his word) are being given.

(Pause – possibly Meditation)



THE NYAYA 'LADDER OF SEVEN STEPS'

Over the years we have made some discoveries for ourselves about this 'Ladder'. As shown in the diagram these seven steps are already in existence along any radius 'Now' from the periphery to the centre. But because the repetitive movement of 'passing time' is imposed on the body of the individual from without, so 'time' in hours, days, years seems to take command over a union which by its nature is instantaneous or continuous like the spectrum of white light. The individual ('Jiva') must not be upset or deluded by 'passing time' which belongs to the sensory world and does not apply on higher levels or to pure Consciousness itself.

And finally while the intellect is always demanding precise definitions, descriptions, rules and regulations, a heart full of joy and gladness can transcend such artificial barriers though the mind must be present as a conscious observer.

We should prefer to use the picturesque language in which the Shankaracharya speaks to the crowds at the annual religious festival which welcomes all comers:

It is the business of Maya to make things look just the opposite of what they are, and to deceive the Jiva (individual feeling of 'I') so that it can be kept in bondage as long as possible. But the love of Truth removes the illusion of Maya...

A hunter plays a tune on his flute to which the denizens of the jungle love to listen; therefore they do not run away and are killed by the hunter. An insect loves the scent or (colours) of a flower and sits on its petals; the petals close up and the insect dies. A moth rushes to its death in the flame. This is how blind desires created by Maya ruin us if we do not realise what they are until it is too late...

(Record, 25 January 1970)

A story illustrates how 'giving up' leads to the only permanently happy result:

A king who had decided to abdicate and go into seclusion proclaimed that he would hand over the keys of his kingdom to the first of his subjects who would come to see him at 11 o'clock on the morning of the seventh day. Many people were attracted by the offer and set out.

But the king had laid out a well-constructed plan to select the most suitable successor. At each of the seven gates on the way to his palace he established a series of attractions; pleasure gardens, swimming pools, a market full of jewels and fine silks, a big dining hall full of luscious food and drink, a concert hall, a library, and finally a big sleeping room with voluptuous appointments and bedding. At all these places people stopped to help themselves and wasted time or forgot their quest altogether.

But one man (who was the last to start) paid no attention to all these temptations and went straight through to meet the king and received the keys of the kingdom at the appointed time.

(There is a subtle meaning to this story for all the different people are different aspects of the personal 'I'; whereas the 'one man whose renunciation brought him the kingdom' is the Atman himself, the Real 'I', who is of the same nature as the King.)

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