

5 February 1979

READING 2

To keep going this week and enjoy some refreshment at your meetings, it is advised that you hear again the continuation of the talk with the Shankaracharya (begun in Reading 1) which was quoted at the big meeting last Monday.

To get guidance from 'the God within', only one thing is essential; the individual has to realize that he has *nothing of his own*; and fairly attribute all the energy and every good impulse to the Divine Self within. In the Shankaracharya's language, the separate individual consciousness is called the 'Vyashti'; but this is only an 'atom' of the Self of the Universe, 'Samashti'; just as a drop of water is an 'atom' of (say) a lake or river, containing all the properties of water (physical, chemical and biological), but by itself the drop is totally insignificant and impotent.

So when the questioner opened the given conversation with the remark: 'I now realize that I have nothing of my own', His Holiness expressed his pleasure in the following words:

This realization that 'I have nothing of my own' is the best possible realization... This realization simply connects one in all respects with Universal Consciousness – the Samashti. It does not in any way imply the non-existence of the individual. The Self is here in every one of us, but without this realization one experiences the Self as *opposed* to the world around. So it comes about that there are two camps; one of separate individuals each having his own existence (physical, subtle and Causal) and then apart from the individual there is the world around – the universe. So the individual has to explore and find a way to communicate with that world. But the realization that 'There is nothing of my own' simply *unites* the individual (Vyashti) with the whole Samashti – everything there is in Creation.

(Record, 21 September 1975)

Comment. And this change of attitude (the essence of the Advaita or non-dualistic tradition based on meditation and championed by the first Shri Shankara twenty-five centuries ago) is of course what is most needed today. Humanity has fallen apart into groups of separate individuals out to extract what material advantages they can from an apparently hostile environment which they pollute and attempt to destroy by exhausting its energy stores. Such a state of affairs can never lead to contentment or continued prosperity.

The remedy must begin with ourselves and those in close contact with us. Going inwards through meditation we come to a further realization, namely that natural evolution has given the human species everything it needs for the realization of individual possibilities.

Each of us is like a house with a complete electrical installation for lighting and heating and any other energy requirement; but we cannot make use of it until we learn how to operate the switches that connect each of the rooms with the main electrical supply.

The method we are frequently advised to use is to remember the Universal Self – 'That immense source of energy the Param-Atman, with fullest concentration and humility'. We have to begin with that part of the mind in which alone we can be conscious (base-line of diagram); persuade it (the 'Buddhi') to accept this idea; and drop the useless burdens it carries.

To be sure, this 'consciousness' of ours is only a reflection of the real Consciousness, like a fitful and dusty mirror reflecting a permanent light; but by consciously remembering the Param-Atman at any moment, we can greatly improve the mirror, and quite soon get the memorable experience of reaching the light itself for the few seconds which make all the difference.

Though this may seem difficult to practise consistently at first, it will soon become natural. Moreover it is simple compared with the far greater expenditure of time and energy involved in other disciplines past or present.

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