

9 November 1981

## READING 6

### (INNER RENUNCIATION)

Proceeding from last week's story, how can each of us get out of the habit of marching down the road of life as if we owned the place, getting into endless trouble ourselves, missing opportunities of helping other people and often doing them unintentional harm?

As this is at the centre of the whole human situation and there is very little else we need do, we should concentrate on trying to get it right, for it's difficult to understand and many mistakes are always being made by people who profess to guide others on the spiritual path.

At an audience in 1974, R. put the following question to the Shankaracharya:

R. Last night I woke up with your words of personal advice: 'Practise "giving up" all the time, by regarding the body, the mind and the heart as belonging to the universal Self (Param-Atman) and so offering all these back to Him.' Even a little of this is found to be more effective than anything else. How can I make myself do more of it?

S. This observation is in keeping with the spirit of the first Upanishad – the Ishavasya – the first two verses of which form the essence of Indian philosophy. The complete *Gita* that we know is almost an explanation of those two verses which say essentially that all the universe is filled with the Absolute. The first verse says:

Whatever one sees in Creation – whatever moves – one should use it fully and enjoy this Absolute everywhere, but one should enjoy it with renunciation. One should not try to possess it. Just because the Absolute is everywhere one need not to try to hold it; enjoy it and give it up. So, 'giving up' is the most simple philosophy which promises complete fulfilment of the individual's life, and also Liberation after having enjoyed it.

The next verse says that if one could live like this one would desire to live a hundred years and, having lived it this way, none of the 'Karma' – none of our actions during those hundred years – will bind us with their effects. We are not in bondage for we are in fact already liberated, we live in Liberation, and when the body is liberated we go forth as a Liberated being. Man is the only created being that has this possibility. If one could practise it all day and every day one would experience liberation within and achieve permanent Liberation from the body (physical, subtle and Causal) when its time ends.

We were given the following story some time ago, but the situation now demands that it should be told again:

It relates to Prajapati, who is the teacher of the Gods, the priest of the Gods. His son Kach, having gone through the proper education in the Vedic and Upanishad texts, and having acquired all the knowledge that was to be acquired, came back to his father. His father asked him what he was intending to do. He said, 'The essence of all I have learnt is that renunciation is the best medium for life, so I would like to go the way of renunciation.' So he would not take up the activities of the priesthood, and he would not help in the household activities either; he just stayed in the house.

After some time, the father asked him whether he had really renounced everything? As far as the father could see, his son *had renounced all work*, but he still keeps on moving, eating, and using the amenities of the house. 'So what

about that?' The son said, 'All right, I will renounce the house,' so he left the house and went into the jungle and stayed there.

Then, after another interval, the father revisited him there and asked him what the situation was? The boy said, 'I can't say I have acquired complete peace, so it seems I have not yet renounced everything.' The father said, 'Yes, of course, it seems so – your renunciation is not complete, otherwise peace would descend on you.' So he renounced the cloth which he wore, the food he ate, and all activity, yet he could not get the real peace of mind.

'Now,' he thought, 'the only thing left to renounce is my body, so I must renounce the body,' and he prepared a funeral pyre intending to jump into it. His father suddenly appeared and asked him to be sure that this would be the final renunciation. The son asked, 'But once I have given up the body, what else will remain to bind me to worldly things?'

The father replied. 'Your subtle body is not going to die with your physical body, and the activities of the subtle body (which has desires) will make it keep on wandering, and will not subside after this body is burnt. You will get another body when this one is dead, because there will be *some* desire in your subtle body; so burning the body is not the final answer – you are not going to get rid of this creation.'

So the son said. 'Well, what should I do if I cannot renounce, what else should I do?'

The father then said. 'At last you have asked me a question, so now it is possible for you to learn something! Give up all your learning, and the final giving up – the final renunciation – will be the giving up of the very idea of renunciation. *You* are not giving up anything, everything *is* given up. By the idea of *your* renunciation you are holding something in preference to other things – in fact, you are not renouncing; you are holding on very tightly to something lesser.'

The Shankaracharya continued:

The Creation is such that everything is there in its own right – everything has a purpose and must fulfill its function; so it must keep on revolving. It must be used; use everything, and give up the idea that *you* are renouncing. Don't hold on to anything in this creation, and that can only be done by this *final renunciation of giving up the idea that you have anything*. In fact, you have nothing. Everything is of the Absolute, everything is permeated by the Absolute; you use whatever you need, and the rest simply belongs to Him. This we must keep in our minds when we think of, or talk about, renunciation.

(Record, 19 January 1974)

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