

25 January 1982

READING 1

An extract from the first small Monday meeting gives us a suitable introduction to what should be, for members of the Study Society at home and abroad, a very happy New Year:

Dr. R. Granted that human structure gives us our 3-fold human nature: knowledge, feeling and doing, we find every sort of inspired writing, every sort of organisation, every teacher with a different use of a few important words.

Lady Allan will read part of an audience with H.H. in 1972, the first time my wife met him (along with the Allans and myself):

Lady A. With that little lead-in he said:

An ordinary educated person of today, hearing quotations from all those sources usually gets perplexed; for he is neither fully capable of all activity or knowledge, nor can he devote himself to the Absolute because he has to live his householder's life. There alone is the need for enquiry for anyone who, after hearing all those different views, wants to get everything clear for his own sake. Here is an illustration.

Once in a village an elephant appeared and the news went round, so everyone wanted to experience the elephant.

(Dr. R. This is told in many Traditions, notably in the *Mathnawi*, but this explanation is the source of them all):

Unfortunately most of the inhabitants were blind, so they had to be led to the elephant, and the man in charge (the Mahout) let them feel it, but of course they each touched a different part. Having felt it they assembled together and wanted to verify that they had experienced the real thing. The one who felt the foot said that the elephant was like a pillar, the one who felt the tail said the elephant was like a stick; and so it went on with the ears, tusks, fat tummy etc., each describing it according to their own previous experience with which they could relate it. Then they started refuting each other: 'Yours wasn't the proper elephant,' 'Yours was an illusion,' 'Mine is the only real one,' etc.

Later on, the Mahout told them, 'Not one of you can have the vision of the complete elephant. All you can do is put together these experiences that different people have had of 'elephant' and out of all these then a novel creature can be imagined which is *known* as 'elephant'. But it is not only the sum of all these parts but *something more*, which represents the whole unity of the creature known as "elephant"'

In the same way, because of all the different accounts of different sciences and religions it is usual for some sort of conflict or doubt to arise in the minds of individuals. They must quickly make an effort to get it clarified, because there are people like this Mahout in our spiritual life who are able to dispel our doubts.

(Record, 13 October 1972)

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(After discussion and/or Meditation)

This was precisely what Mr. Ouspensky had in view when, having got Colet House for us just before World War II, he started a Society which we later called 'The Society for the Study of Normal Psychology' or 'Study Society' for short.

He insisted on 3 points:

1. That we must study healthy normal people (not making theories only out of case reports of mental or damaged cases as psychology loves to do, and psychoanalysts were doing then).
2. That we should establish a common language, agreeing among ourselves always to use important words like the four 'States of Consciousness' to express the *same* meaning.
3. That we should use contemporary Western language and keep abreast of Western discoveries about the nervous system (e.g. the 'alerting system,' the asymmetry of the two halves etc.).

We feel that this is also what people like Professors Schaefer and Hoyle want to do; and also that the Shankaracharya's own words, stories and illustrations *taken in their own context but translated into Western form* contain the best and simplest description of all we can know at first-hand about the 'elephant' i.e. True Knowledge from the Absolute within each of us.

Please make it clear what each of you have time for and want to study this term to your group taker.

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Bright Thought for 1982

If we do not frequent good company then the thought of Param Atman recedes to the background and ego comes in front. Ignorant worldly people, however, see no sense in all this and treat it as a waste of time.

Shri Malviya used to meditate and think of Param Atman for 2 hours a day. One of his friends said, 'Why do you sit idle for 2 hours every day? Instead of that you could be doing some useful work to benefit yourself or someone else.'

He replied, 'Alright, I am wasting 2 hours a day but you are wasting the other 22 as well!'

(Record, 4 February 1973)

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