

## PATHS PART 4

**The intellectual path**

Having spent some time dealing with the physical path and its application in our teaching, it might seem logical – remembering the idea of the three storeyed house – to consider next the devotional path and the emotional side of our nature, but in fact there are good reasons for first tackling the intellectual approach. For example after the steps involved in control of the body in the eightfold way comes the control of the mind.

As before we first consider the path as a discipline in itself. We know about two such approaches, through the study of the System and through the Shankaracharya's explanation of jnana yoga, the knowledge path in the Indian teaching. The Shankaracharya described it as follows:

Those who are critics, that is critical in their approach, are intellectual. They need the Jnana, intellectual teaching. [10.1.78]

The third is the way of Knowledge. The general question of our origin, or the origin of anything, leads to speculation about the unknown. [14.10.62]

One immediately jumps to the conclusion that the jnana path involves a great deal of intellectual effort, and learning a detailed system of knowledge. But that is not the case at all. The 'knowledge' is knowledge of the Self, and it is therefore primarily an inner search. Within Advaita or Advaita-related teachings on jnana, there are two basically different approaches. In the first, which was the original Shankara's approach, it is supposed that the final realisation is that only Brahman (the Absolute power of the universe) is real, and the individual Self is to be identified with Brahman; the path seems to be a negative approach (neti neti, not this not this, in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*) to eliminate that which is unreal. In the second approach, in the teaching of Ramana Maharshi and his successors, the emphasis is affirmative: to find the self by concentrating on the feeling of 'I' and finding its source.

There is also a devotional path (bhakti) which we will come to in due course. But it would be good first to understand the implications of the knowledge (jnana) path.

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What is needed to pursue this kind of path? What kind of mental equipment and preparation? What methods? What 'book knowledge'? What help? Is it for us as individuals?

It might be helpful to consider Ouspensky's statement that the 'idea of the System is to bring man to conscience', and on the Shakaracharya's insistence on the need for discrimination.

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We probably think of the System approach as first studying the laws of the universe and then gradually applying them (and we will consider the place of such knowledge next week), but in fact the emphasis in the System is from the word go on waking up and then asking questions about the self. Here is how Dr Roles put it in 1976:

Inherent in human nature at all times and places have been certain fundamental questions which are difficult to verbalise and therefore mostly remain unanswered. These were recently expressed very well in a school essay by a little girl of eight entitled "My Thoughts":

"I sometimes feel who am I? Who is that Person outside my body. I do not know what I really look like. I look in the mirror sometimes but that is only my reflection I do not understand myself who am I? Is God true is he Magic no but God once came down to make Peace, Joy, Love, Kindness, we never succeed in it. I do believe in God in one way and I don't in another way. It seems very hard to me I do not understand life.....I have always wondered what did God create the whole universe for, or did he just create the earth."

Just as there have been those questions at all times and in all places, so many ways have been discovered by different people of coming to the realization that there is a Source of Power within everybody, and that there are ways of reaching it. Those who discover this "big Secret" know that it gives the whole reason for living through what is otherwise a *meaningless* life.

In his fifth Psychological Lecture to us and our friends back in the 1930's, Mr. Ouspensky pointed out that "all our troubles come from not remembering ourSelves" whereas self-remembering is part of the human endowment (part of our birth-right) and if we could learn how to realize it, all our troubles would disappear.

"We must begin", he said, "by learning to control those parts of our make-up which *can* be controlled by such will as we have. Schools in the East often begin with control of *movements*, but this requires very arduous training over a long time . . . In modern life in the West it usually more simple and direct to choose that other department which we can get under control, namely our Mind."

For that there is a special way . . . This is what he called "Self-remembering".

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*Exercise.* The idea of the exercise is to take the first steps in self-remembering, to begin or re-establish the habit of 'coming to oneself' during the day. So the next step is to become aware that one is present.

For five minutes a day, as before sitting with a straight spine, become conscious of the body from toes to head. Then say to yourself silently, "I John Smith (i.e. your own familiar form of name) am here now". Try to hold this awareness for as long as possible during the five minutes.