

THE NEW TERM

We seem to have established a tradition in E Group of *not* having a paper – or not much of one – for the first meeting of the term, but instead holding a discussion about what we should be doing in the group, and what material people would like to have.

Looking back over the last two terms during which all our groups used the same material, we have followed two major themes: the different Ways, a whole term on this on a wide front looking at the intellectual and the emotional approaches to make sure we know what we are choosing and why; then last term a major look at Consciousness, with the System and Advaita views of the mind, leading on to Being and Conscience. Most of this dealt with personal psychology and we really ought now to change the scale, for example by looking at Man's place in the universe, on Earth, in society; or by looking at worlds within, the brain, our machinery.

Unfortunately it is all too easy to lose a sense of involvement when it comes to the wider scale, which is all wrong, because solutions to what seem to be our own internal difficulties may sometimes lie outside. Ken Wilber claims in his book *Integral Spirituality* that progress in a spiritual path depends on a number of apparently separate strands. There is the inner strand, which may rely heavily on some technique such as meditation, but there is also the physical aspect of well-being of body and mind, the understanding of the world, and the relationship with society. Each of these, according to Ken Wilber, has its own ladder and an integrated path requires one to move up all these ladders. Of course the different strands are not really separate and that's the point: one affects the others. So if we seem to be making no progress, it does not necessarily mean that our inner practice is faulty – it could be we need a break or some exercise, or there is some problem with a relationship that needs attention, or that we have shut ourselves away from reality. Often we are the worst judges of our own condition, and kind friends or a group can show us the way.

So we need to discuss what kind of knowledge would be helpful.

*

It is also a good time to discuss organizational issues. For instance some of us have a bad conscience about the way we treat new members of groups, particularly in the present Pewsey Group. Should we really have a separate new group which would start from scratch?

Then, would it be beneficial to have some shared activities with other groups, again particularly out of London where there is less going on than at Colet House?

*

The beginning of a new term is also a time to think about one's aim. For many people this involves the idea of self-realisation, and the following selection of quotations from the Shankaracharya (taken from the Colet Summer Programme) is a good starting point:

1. It is impure Ahamkar [feeling of 'I'] which is subject to bondage and freedom, and which we are trying to liberate.

Pure Ahamkar is already liberated. It is that which only considers itself to be the Atman. (74/113)

2. Self realization is not 'just to be' and it is not true to say nothing spectacular happens when it comes.

It is the greatest thing on earth to come to rest in OneSelf. (74/90)

3. Self realisation is not a state, it is an experience which when achieved stays there.

The Self is always there, living in eternity, and will go on doing so even if the forms take a different shape. (65/29)

4. By liberation is meant that the Self is liberated from possessions and attachments.

When Self alone remains then it shines in its full glory and needs nothing else. (91/17)

5. 'I am;' I am out of everything.

To realize that creation is in myself and still I am out of it is the sole purpose of Self realisation. (65/28)

6. Self realization means to see the Self, the Atman. But the Atman is not a subject to be seen only, but one to be known.

The Atman comes to know itself – that is Self realization. (65/80)

7. When one goes into deep meditation one reaches the spot where there is nothing but the Self which is still, firm and immobile.

That One is beyond senses and mind, so there is no possibility of any other type of consciousness than the consciousness of the Self. (67/44)

* * *