

## A TEACHING FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

### Levels of knowledge

The idea that there are different levels of knowledge has a number of implications for what we teach and to whom we teach it. There are three major statements by HH on this issue, and the suggestion is that we should spend a week trying to digest them. We need direction throughout and there is no better place to find this than HH's mission statement in 1989 on 'opening the vaults'. Here is the complete transcript:

M.A. In 1982 His Holiness told us that He wished our Society 'to enlarge its scope and fit into the service of the nation with True Knowledge and with confidence.' There have been several positive openings to which we have tried to respond and, as His Holiness wrote to us recently, these contacts are increasing.

There seem to be two types of contact being made.

The first is with leading scientists who are involved in a change in world thinking to a more unified view, and who seem to recognise the need for contact with True Knowledge.

The second is the increasing meetings together of spiritual organisations working for unity. These do not involve a mixing of ways but a recognition of our common aim, and love and unity seem to follow from this coming together.

May we take it that His Holiness would encourage our participation in both aspects, bearing in mind the need to preserve the purity of the True Knowledge?

H.H. All the wealth and fortune of philosophical knowledge which has been collected through the years should be distributed freely. Open the vaults for anyone to come and collect. The mystery of this opening of the vaults is that if it contained material wealth it would be exhausted very quickly, but this being intellectual and spiritual wealth, the more it is given, the more it increases. Once acquired and given it is never exhausted. So there should be no barriers retained, no boundaries and no prohibitions. Just give as much as possible.

There are examples when people hesitate to give what they have collected or hoarded. It is certainly true on the material level, but it can happen on the intellectual and spiritual level as well. All wealth belongs to *Sacchidananda* and no one should covet it, particularly spiritual wealth. He is called '*Sacchidananda Ghana*'. *Ghana* means solid. So this expression of consciousness is solid and limitless, and there is no one in the universe who can exhaust it. So establish as many contacts as possible and provide them all plentifully. Knowledge of truth is rather crystalline and a bit brittle and sharp, so it can sometimes create a little difficulty when passing it on to others, particularly as fixed ideas. But if it is offered with love and sympathy, without a call for conversion, then it may be well received without friction or fracture. There are people who collect spiritual knowledge like material wealth, and feel in their mind that, if they give their spiritual knowledge to others, the others will become equal and the chance to be superior will be lost forever! This is a fallacy and delusion. The fact is that knowledge is limitless; the deeper one goes, the deeper still it

becomes. The more one gives, the more it grows of its own accord. The process of knowledge is eternal, it is freedom, it is limitless. So there cannot be an end to the pursuit of knowledge. So, if contacts are established, one need not be miserly in offering knowledge. It comes from the Absolute, so give it to the Absolute in others.

M.A. We have felt that it is only when it becomes natural that it comes through with love. We felt the need to spend a long time trying to make this knowledge natural. Then it could be given with love rather than having the feeling that we know something other people do not know. We are trying to keep it pure.

H.H. Assimilate it first, then make it available to others when it becomes natural after assimilation; spare some love and distribute it. But one should not wait for that moment when everything has been properly and thoroughly assimilated. Whatever is assimilated should be offered then, and in this way assimilation and distribution will progress simultaneously.

A teacher learns and assimilates more than the student, so one need not worry too much. Process of giving in itself provides the possibility of assimilation, and in this way the giver remains one step ahead. [Record 23.10.89]

There is a sense of urgency about this, perhaps HH sensed there was an oncoming crisis in the affairs of men or in the affairs of the Society.

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There is the question of safeguarding precious knowledge, about which HH had previously been very firm. Here is the complete text from 1964 about the three caskets:

HH. There are three levels of people:

1. The Realized men, who enjoy their unity with Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, and lead others.
2. The Special men, who are on the Way; they desire Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, and work to get it; and
3. The people who want some other things but not these.

Therefore True Knowledge can be given only with discrimination, and has to be preserved in three caskets.\* An ordinary wooden casket is for the simple part of knowledge which can be given to anyone who is searching; it can be spoken of at any meeting open to the public, without fear of its being misunderstood or misused. A silver casket is kept for knowledge which can be given to prepared people who are on the Way. And then there is a very special Knowledge of Mysteries which the Realized Men keep in a casket of gold – very precious, and never to be given away free, because it would be bound to be spoilt or distorted. (At a later time he has also said that this Knowledge cannot be put into words and has to pass between conscious people on the subtle level). This is important. You should never give to other people without careful discrimination the Knowledge the Shankaracharya gives you. A story illustrates this:

A rich landowner was pleased with one of his employees, a gardener by profession. Wishing to reward him for faithful service, he gave him one of his gardens to tend

and use for his own profit. This garden happened to contain some sandalwood trees – the most valuable wood in India. The gardener, being ignorant of its value, started to cut down the sandalwood trees one by one, burn them up, and sell the charcoal in the common market. By-and-by the merchant paid him a visit to see how he was getting on. To his horror, he saw what he was doing and shouted at him: “My good man, do you realize that if you took one small piece of just one of those sandalwood trees, and polished it up, it would fetch a far higher price than all the charcoal made from burning all the trees!”

So you must be particularly careful to whom you give the True Knowledge.

\* In Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice, these are called “Lead, silver, and gold”, and the simile is applied in a different way. [Record 1964. p.137]

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Finally, the idea of the three caskets is related to the coverings that have to be removed in the individual. Again, here is the complete text:

R.G. As it is late, would you thank H.H. very much and say that Lord Allan’s unexpected death has produced a new situation in our organization in London, which affects its future. We would very much like to bring questions to H.H. tomorrow, exploring the principles governing School work, especially in relation to His Holiness’ s tradition. We hope to have H.H.’s approval for this.

H.H. gave his approval.

[Next day]

R.G. I would like to start if I may with something Dr. Roles said to Lady Allan just before we left. He said that with a change of management, fundamental questions should be agreed on, so that there is no disruption or disunity on his departure.

M.A. He is referring to his own departure, Dr. Roles’s departure, not Bobby’s.

H.H. If the members understand the fundamental principles and keep to them, then although changes in the world do take place from time to time, there are some elements which never change and these elements are the fundamental principles. If we remember this we need not worry about any disunity or discord in the future.

M.A. Before 1934, Mr. Ouspensky wrote that there was an oral teaching which lay behind all the yogas and from which they had arisen, but which had certain teachings and principles not contained in any of the yogas. He refers to ‘fragments of this unknown teaching’ which he had come across. So what we learnt through Mr. Ouspensky and Dr. Roles before 1961 have been these fragments. As I understand it, Dr. Roles was given the task of finding the source of this system and the method which Mr. Ouspensky had not had. So it seems very wonderful that Dr. Roles found His Holiness and in 1962 he called this ‘the return to the source’ when he went over the main ideas we had learnt from Ouspensky with H.H. and got them confirmed. It would seem that our system – or what we have now via H.H. – means that it is no longer fragmentary, because here lies the

‘whole’, and no longer unknown. Could H.H. confirm this point of view, because it would help us in the future?

H.H. These things are agreed; this is right.

R.G. The idea of hidden or secret knowledge played a big part in Mr. Ouspensky’s teaching. H.H. has spoken of the wooden, the bronze and the golden boxes or caskets, in relation to knowledge. Does he think a School should be built round these levels of knowledge? Can a School function without the golden one?

J. H.H. says that he does not recollect when he spoke about the wooden, bronze and golden boxes. If you could give some leading points, then perhaps he may be able to recall it.

R.G. I remember reading in the transcript (Lucknow 1964 p.137) that he spoke of the wooden casket as being ordinary knowledge available to everybody, and the bronze casket knowledge of a special sort available to disciples, and the golden casket, very special knowledge which was really only for the masters.

H.H. There is a reference in Isa Upanishad about the teaching having a golden covering. The disciple prays to his master to remove the golden covering from the pot, so that he can see the face of the truth. The golden covering is the brilliant form which one comes across in this universe. The whole creation is brilliant and shining like gold all the time, and it attracts our attention. Because we get attached to these shining, brilliant and attractive forms created by the Absolute, we do not go beyond them to the truth which lies behind these brilliant things. This uncovering of truth is done only through the teacher. It is with the help of the teacher that this golden cover can be taken away, so that the disciple can see the Truth. Basically, true knowledge is the same, whether it comes from the ancients or from the present age; but the power within those who hold this knowledge may differ, which means the true knowledge may not be so forcefully put into action as it was by the ancients, or it may differ according to one’s being now. Some can do it better than others.

There are three aspects of knowledge – tamasic, rajasic and sattvic and this can relate to the three types of casket – wood, bronze and gold. We have something called *Mala*, *Vikshepa* and *Avarana*<sup>1</sup>. *Mala* is the tamasic aspect, which is like a wood covering or casket for the Self – the Self is imprisoned in this wooden casket, and the knowledge arising is not true. *Vikshepa* is the bronze casket and the *Avarana* can be related to the golden casket. This *Avarana* is the sattvic covering, or golden, and there is a Sanskrit saying – *sattvat sanjayate jnanam*<sup>2</sup> – which says that very close to *sattva* is the Truth, and yet it forms a covering – even *sattva* is a covering – a golden covering, which has to be removed, so that the Truth is made obvious to the disciples.

*Mala*, as we have been previously told, is a hard layer which prohibits understanding of Truth under all circumstances, and people who have this sort of *Sanskara* never even raise a

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<sup>1</sup> In *Mala* (impurity) there is such a thick covering that untruth is mistaken for truth. In *Vikshepa* (dispersion) the mind wanders. In *Avarana* (cloud), there is ignorance.

<sup>2</sup> *Bhagavad Gita* 14.17

question. They do not feel they lack anything; they never want anything, so they never raise a question.

But those who have *Vikshepa*, which is not very thick or opaque – a bit translucent and also opaque – this describes the disciples who do feel the need of questioning, and so they go to a teacher and ask questions and try to remove this *Vikshepa* which is the rajasic aspect in their being. The sattvic aspect is the *Avarana*, which is the golden one, but even this sattvic covering ought to be removed one day, with discourse between the disciples and the teacher.

R.G. How should a School attract new members? We used to be taught that it was only those people who naturally had a “magnetic centre” who would find a School, and, conversely, it was only such people who would be accepted. Should selective care be taken over the choice of new people or should the knowledge be made readily available, allowing for wastage to take place?

H.H. agrees that there are two ways to spread the message or available Truth – one is by resorting to public means and propaganda, so that it is declared to everyone. We invite them and place our teaching before them, and it is true that among the crowd a number will be attracted, – they will come and listen – but ultimately it seems that through natural wastage only five to ten per cent will stay. The other way is that we look for those who have a “magnetic centre” – who are sincerely looking for something – and we hold them together and give them our message. If there is strength in the message which we have to offer it will do something good to those who have come to us because of their “magnetic centre”. If they have found something good they will become our agents of proclamation and will spread the word and bring in those who have lesser magnetic centres. Take the example of the medical profession – if someone is cured by a doctor he never stops stating the fact that he has been relieved of his misery and sickness by this particular doctor, and he becomes his agency of publicity and he attracts people to the doctor, – so one way is by publicity and the other by precept, by practice, – practical application of the knowledge or real development of the individual who comes to you. Both these can be applied but, personally, H.H. prefers the second.

The conversation then went on to the question of language, which we might return to.

Please study these statements during the week and think about which caskets the various facets of our teachings belong to. Note also RG’s (unanswered) question about whether a School can function without the gold casket.

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