

CULTS AND DETERIORATED SPIRITUAL SYSTEMS

*‘Counterfeit gold exists only because
there is such a thing as real gold.’*

Rumi

Deterioration and Dilution of Esoteric Teachings

- o Many current metaphysical teachings are abbreviated and distorted versions of an originally complete and functional teaching. Such cults and imitative ‘schools’ lack developmental value. “They represent the survival of pieces of a comprehensive tradition, which cannot be carried on except by projecting the ideas afresh in each succeeding human community.”
- o The inner esoteric component of religion, which exists as a parallel stream to formal organized religion, is almost always subject to a process of deterioration under unfavorable historical or cultural conditions.

When temporal power, that of the State or of religious leaders who are in fact disguised power-seekers, becomes supreme, as often occurs in most communities, this inward religion, the gnostic one, has to go underground, and may remain for centuries as a parallel stream, waiting to come to the surface again. The initiatory current itself, under such unfavorable conditions, may also degenerate, giving rise to secret societies or weird sects. This is caused by the loss of the teaching succession. Due to the natural wastage caused by death, the succession of teachers may be interrupted, and others take over the system. When this happens the organization ordinarily shrivels and becomes a kind of deposit, a compost, which may nurture the next legitimate intervention from the source. (1)

- o Religious institutions have largely followed the inevitable path of decay and distortion with the passage of time. In the words of Jami: “The dry cloud, waterless, can have no rain-giving quality.”

Q: So contemporary religious beliefs and actions are not real?

A: They are a composite. There are some fossilized remnants of real things; some functions for the ordinary man, so that he may continue to behave in a certain way, some elements of misunderstanding, some built-in personal quirks of individuals who have sought to organize without understanding.

Q: What is the position of repetitious organizations, carrying on in the belief or hope that they will achieve something?

A: This will depend upon the organization. In general it may be said that such an entity is merely a self-perpetuating entity, not a teaching one. The more it tries to teach, the more the defects which will be transmitted. The blind cannot lead the

blind. Generally such organizations become soaked in self-esteem and lose humility. Few Christian leaders today would accept Jesus, for instance, if they met him. Instead of really knowing anything, they feed upon self-esteem, which develops into what we call the 'Commanding Self.' It is very terrible, because this is diametrically opposed to their real possible destiny." (2)

- o In general, spiritual teachings have obeyed the physical law of the planet which produces a constant warping towards repetitiousness as the original aim becomes lost. It is almost a natural law that the expression of an originally valid spiritual teaching will be vulnerable to distortion and misunderstanding when it enters the 'world.'

Q: If there is a single, original Teaching, how is it that it becomes confused and misused as it passes through generations and cultures?

A: There is a saying, 'Whatever goes into a salt-mine becomes salt.' The Teaching is the worldly manifestation of something, and as such a manifestation it is affected by the deforming character in appearance and operation of those who adopt it into their culture without understanding its inner dimensions.

The manifestations of the Teaching, in the form of tales and exercises, of actions and thoughts, will always be vulnerable, and is often betrayed and misunderstood by the base and the ignorant. (3)

- o Spiritual teachings are subject to a process of crystallization or fossilization whereby the inner dynamic element is no longer effectively functioning. The teaching then deviates from its original purity, purpose and intent. "When the doctrine becomes inflexible, when practice and observance take precedence over the aim or understanding, we are faced with a deteriorated system."

These individuals and their followers choose thoughts and actions which themselves smother most of the hope of success in human fulfillment. They may try to form a permanent organization to aim for enlightenment. They probably subject everyone to the same exercises and observances. Forgetting the original intention, they turn practices and illustrative tales into a sort of history, which they try to teach. If they possess literature and contemporary memories of teachers or 'masters,' they use them to bolster a belief in their own rightness and the correctness of their procedures. They frequently use but a single method of interpretation of literature and tradition, training people and not enabling them to become illuminated.

Concurrently, there comes into being over-veneration of men, groups and legend, and hostility towards others, and sometimes impatience. What was originally a unity splits into groups of varying interpretation or concentration, generally useless, and observations which are inaccurate. By this point almost all reality and potentiality have departed. The community has been effectively invaded and possessed without this development having been registered by its members. The truth may be obscured by the continued use, by the 'lame' community, of words and outward aspects, biographical reminiscences, and other facets of the original knowledge. Certainly its members will believe that by the tokens they are continuing on the right path. Their only hope of retrieval is the exercise of concentrated efforts towards sincerity. (4)

- o Many metaphysical and philosophical schools become repetitive institutions who continue to 'grind flour' without making any 'bread' and thus not progressing further. "Truth is not discovered or maintained by the mere repetition of teachings."

Classical Zen teaching is characterized by freedom from blind clinging to forms, employing forms as instruments rather than perpetuating them as idols, employing forms when, where, and as they are effective, discarding forms when they become obstructive.

The tendency to dogmatize and hallow the traces of temporary expedients appears again and again in history – not only in religious and cultural history, but also in the history of science. It is for this reason that so much of Zen teaching involves dismantling, superseding, and renewing in the visible dimension, even while its invisible aim remains constant throughout. (5)

- o The strong human desire to value and maintain outward forms can actually prevent real inner development. "The unusual tenacity of replication of mere form which is to be observed in religious transmission is evidence of human determination, not of effective content.

The outward form or husk may, however, persist and contrive to perform social or other comparatively less significant functions. The inheritors of these forms seldom, if ever, realize that the entity is 'organically dead.'

That is why almost the last place in which to seek the continuation of a spiritual transmission is in apparently well-established traditionalistic bodies. These are more effectively described as archeological relics, easily recognized as such by those who know their original intent and purpose.

They develop a sort of quasi-adaptability, or else a rigidity – or a combination of these. The consequences of these characteristics is to cause them either to seek support from new formulations or else to try to fight them. They always, however, lack real adaptability, consistent with contemporary needs.

This peculiarity arises when there is a preoccupation with preservation of archaic and anachronistic forms. Effective higher teaching, in contrast, always seeks to employ any form within which it can complete its mission." (6)

- o One of the indications of a diluted spiritual teaching is when the vehicle is mistaken for the objective. In decayed systems the container is more important than the content. Simplified or deteriorated spiritual systems often regard factors which are peripheral, transitory or secondary as primary and central. "All human groups, unless closely monitored, are subject to 'spiritual deterioration' when the objective is obscured through the over-development of easier-to-follow activities like prayer, or discipline and so on."

Skillful means – in Sanskrit, *upaya* – are things created with the intention of guiding people in their efforts toward Awakening. If these means are taken as ends, that is to say, as the description of Awakening or as Awakening itself, they cannot play their useful role; on the contrary, they become a sort of permanent prison. *As soon as one thinks that the finger is the moon itself, one no longer wants to look in the direction the finger is pointing.* (7)

- o The secondary features of a spiritual teaching tend to persist over time as a sort of 'outer shell'

which only partially represents the vital and essential inner element. The only function of the outer form of a teaching is to prepare selected individuals for higher spiritual experiences.

Nowhere is vanity so marked as in the supposedly diligent and virtuous observation of the norms and behaviour of tradition. Because a certain person did or said something, because a certain group of people followed a certain path, these things – when blindly followed or rationalized – are believed to confer sanctity, to be better than other things, to constitute ‘a Way.’ Few things are further from the truth. The truth, of course, is that vanity brings imitation. Imitation is not a way to truth.

Why is imitation not a way to truth? Simply because, where the truth is there, and someone knows the way to that truth, the ‘way’ is that way which is provided by that person. To carry yourself (or others) from one place to another is not performed by following the way which has been adopted by others, in different places, and under different circumstances. This is the great secret of the spiritual life: he who knows can do, and he who does not is unlikely to know if he is seen to be following something which was developed for a specific purpose. (8)

- o Without supersession and renewal there is no fresh growth. A teaching will merely reproduce effects designed for people of different time and cultural milieu. “Esoteric cults and formulations become superseded by time and other factors, becoming fossils which are nevertheless believed in as functional by unenlightened followers.”

Just as the teaching may vary in outward aspect according to cultural differences, so it remains essentially the same in its inwardness: ‘The clothes may vary, but the person is the same.’ This contention is useful in distinguishing imitators from the real thing. The deteriorated or repetitious cults tend to use outdated or irrelevant techniques, regalia, even clothes and languages, when they drift – or are imported – from one time or culture to another. This trend itself explains the many different forms of practice (and theory) which persist, long after their applicability has ceased, to the present day. (9)

- o The Mulla Nasrudin story of the ‘Duck Soup’ aptly illustrates how spiritual teachings become progressively watered down with the passage of time:

A kinsman came to see the Mulla from somewhere deep in the country, bringing a duck as a gift. Delighted, Nasrudin had the duck cooked and shared it with his guest. Presently, however, one countryman after another started to call, each one the friend of the friend of the “man who brought you the duck.” No further presents were forthcoming.

At length the Mulla was exasperated. One day yet another stranger appeared. “I am the friend of the friend of the friend of the relative who brought you the duck.”

He sat down, like all the rest, expecting a meal. Nasrudin handed him a bowl of hot water.

“What is this?”

“That is the soup of the soup of the soup of the duck which was brought by my relative.” (10)

Some Characteristics of Cults

“Deterioration: Evidenced by the acceptance of simplifications, contraction of activity. messianic and panacea thinking, hierarchical behaviour patterns believed to be sacrosanct, literal acceptance of the figurative and vice-versa, hagiography, providing social and psychological stimuli and reassurances, offering scope for personality-projection, assuaging desires for attention, substituting itself for diversions of a political, organizational, religious, psychological, social, academic, family and other grouping.”

Idries Shah

- o Imitation spiritual systems ignore the requirements of ‘time, place and people’ by failing to tailor their teachings to current circumstances. “If you are using two-thousand year old terms you may be trying to ‘work’ in a role suited to the people of 2,000 years ago.”
- o Progress in any teaching depends upon proper preparation and correct orientation. Cults tend to ignore important factors in the learning process, such as the individual characteristics, receptivity and sensitivity of the student. “Unless the teacher, the teaching and the taught are in harmony and alignment, only distortions leading to a cult or other low-level satisfactions are most likely to be the result.”
- o One of the causes of the proliferation of imitation spiritual systems is the sheer number of students and seekers demanding inner knowledge, thus creating a supply-and-demand type of situation with an almost commercial or transactional nature.
- o In deteriorated metaphysical schools the personality of the teacher becomes venerated at the expense of the living application of fundamental spiritual principles. “The theme of the temporary nature of the ‘cocoon’ is conveniently forgotten. Hence the constant need for a new exemplar.”
- o Certain metaphysical and esoteric schools which lack the knowledge and means of human transformation remain at the stage of preoccupation with ethic and virtue.

Many people practice virtues or associate with wise and great people, believing that this is the pursuit of self-improvement. They are deluded. In the name of religion, some of the worst barbarities have been committed. Trying to do good, man has done some of his worst actions.

The flaw comes from the assumption that mere connection with something of value will convey a corresponding advantage to an unaltered individual.

Much more is necessary. Man must not only be in contact with good: he must be in contact with a form of it which is capable of transforming his function and making him good. A donkey stabled in a library does not become literate.

The point is generally neglected by the reader or student. Talib Kamal said: ‘The thread does not become ennobled because it goes through the jewels.’ And: ‘My virtues have not improved me, any more than a desolate place is made fertile by the

presence of a treasure.’

A treasure is a treasure. But if it is to be put to work to recreate a ruin, the treasure must be used in a certain way. (11)

- o The decay and distortion of human learning systems and enterprises are largely due to human psychology.

Ignorance of human thinking processes has for many centuries caused otherwise admirable systems to be at some point shaped by the relatively ignorant into mechanisms for implanting and maintaining obsessions; or of maintaining information in the belief that it is knowledge, or of encouraging behaviour which is of sociological, charitable, psychological or recreational value in the belief that it is fulfilling some other function. (12)

- o One of the characteristics of an incomplete spiritual teaching is the absence of an actual living teacher or exemplar. “The vast number of types of allegedly mystical schools occurs when the director is dead, and the participants in what he had established as an ongoing and flexible rule feel the need for stabilization with the removal of the teacher as its center of gravity.”
- o One of the inevitable consequences of a spiritual teacher’s death is the appearance of divisions among the disciples and different interpretations given to his teaching methods. The followers who carry on the external employed by a former teacher, and who have no real mandate or appointed mission, are merely automata.
- o Those who are well-intentioned, but lacking in real knowledge, may interfere with and attempt to modify, and hence distort, genuine spiritual teachings. Mohammed: *‘By pious fools my back hath been broken’*
- o A cult comes into existence when misguided individuals distort the outer shape of a real spiritual teaching into something else (a religion, guru-worship, scholasticism) by catering to the emotional, intellectual, social and therapeutic demands of people.
- o When spiritual teachings lose touch with certain essential elements they no longer provide a real fulfillment for their followers. Metaphysical systems which are incomplete or wrongly developed can actually harm or cripple a person’s higher aspirations and spiritual potential.

Q: I am really revolted by all the occult mumbo-jumbo that I hear; and I really do dislike some of the people whom I meet who are involved in it. I think that something should be done about this contamination of our society. What are you doing about it?

A: The effects of spurious systems and crazy ideas on society are not good. Many of the people who follow them are in some way sick, and therefore, like perhaps lepers, they can be revolting. Now, if something is revolting, and the people who suffer from or through it are unpleasant, what does one do about it?

Leprosy needs understanding and treatment. In the case of the imaginedly spiritual people who are really only sick from the intake of bad ideas, we have to

understand that this is their condition.” (13)

- o It is not always advantageous to point out to members of cults that their beliefs and practices represent the deterioration of a once viable learning system. Disturbing their equilibrium without substituting a meaningful alternative can, in some instances, actually be harmful.

From the educational and general theory point of view, it is sometimes quite absorbing to look at the rites, beliefs and practices of many metaphysical systems and to note the stage at which the procedures have become ossified. How, for instance, sequences of words and sounds which were quite evidently once instrumental became invested with a holy or almost totemistic importance. How certain beliefs and even working hypotheses became structured into what is now thought to be legend or even literal historical truth. It is quite tempting to speak of this, even to publish on it. But there is a distinct disadvantage. Many of these schools or cults are social phenomena, strongly believed in by their adherents, who have more often than not stabilized their lives and their psychological equilibrium on the literal or allegorical truth of what someone else may see as vestiges, fossils, even, of a teaching school. To disturb such a situation can seldom have the kind of salutary results that some optimists might suppose. Apart from hostility, sheer depression can be caused. Quite often, too, nothing happens. (14)

- o There is a demand, on the part of some, for the establishment of authoritative bodies to regulate metaphysical and spiritual entities even though such regulatory bodies are rarely successful in any field.

People in the West are constantly asking why there are so many false ‘spiritual schools’ in Europe and America, and why the Eastern exponents of the authoritative and genuine traditions do not establish and maintain legitimate organizations which will show up and defeat these frauds and self-deluded entities.

Now, there are innumerable frauds and idiots practicing all kinds of medicine, say, and commerce, art, science, recreation, education, in the West, who make a good living in spite of the existence of regulatory institutions: so the existence and activity of such a body does not have the effect fantasized for it. So much for the official control idea. (15)

Retrogressive Western and Eastern Metaphysical Systems

- o In many countries in the contemporary world there are representatives of almost every cult and religion, every metaphysical teaching and system, in existence. The various spiritual traditions which exist today share many common elements, including the propensity to decay and deviate from the original teaching impulse and aim.

Q: What is the connection, if any, between the various metaphysical traditions?

A: There are, in your terms, numerous connections. The important ones to note are:

1. The world is littered with the remnants of genuine traditions, whose action has become vitiated or repetitious.

2. It is a natural law that teaching be renewed in conformity with the place, time, people involved and needs of the process.

Q: What form does this renewal take?

A: Simply this. A Teacher, dedicated to a certain kind of function, organizes and presents the teaching in a manner suitable to the conditions just cited.

Q: Does this mean that traditional teachings which we find represented in various countries are not now of any real function, because they represent survivals from a period when they enshrined real 'work'?

A: That is so.

Q: But how much reality or function do such organizations now have?

A: In your terms, these spiritual, psychological and other systems have three main components:

1. The component of reality, which is ultimate truth, which is more or less locked in by the human formulator.

2. The component of decay, which is what has crept in at the point where the effort ceased to truly act, perhaps on the death of the formulator.

3. The component of outside appearance, which becomes after a time, unwittingly, the main interest of the participants. This is the least useful but most attractive component.

Q: How is it known to the participants of such a group as to how accurate or meaningful their 'work' is?

A: There are no two ways about it. Either it is known to their teacher, if one still exists, in which case he will remedy defects, and they will not be perpetuated. Or it is totally repetitious, and the effort has become an *administrative* one. This happens when there has been no true succession of teaching, so that there is nobody at the top sufficiently developed to be able to diagnose the situation. In this case the group has become to a greater or lesser degree a prisoner of the automatism of the formal world. (16)

o When external observers examine typical Western religious and metaphysical systems they point out that the underlying basis is largely social, psychological and therapeutic, rather than spiritual.

It is worth noting the conclusions which an Eastern observer, steeped in his own tradition, but using Western methods, would draw from an examination of Western religio-mystical behaviour.

The first observation surely must be that the methods, organization and even terminology of 'Western' religious life very strongly resemble social, not spiritual activity. If you take away unsupported beliefs (indoctrination and folklore), subtract

emotional stimuli (whether sacred or profane), remove tribalism (group-behaviour), you will be able to say that you have stripped away those elements which can be challenged as externals and as merely the products of outward inevitability in human organization.

This situation, of religion-turned-tribe, is almost equally common in the East. But there is no shortage of people there who can see this clearly, and also of those who insist on the importance of original religion as a transforming force. (17)

- o The allure of many Eastern spiritual teachings is based on a superficial attraction to the novelty and outer forms in which they are expressed, not the inner developmental value they embody.

It is inherent to Zen, to say nothing of common sense, that people need not adopt an Eastern culture in order to understand and actualize Zen in one's own life.

One way to recognize a cult as a cult, in fact, is its superficial Orientalism. Changes in mood caused by environmental redecoration may occur, especially when combined with other forms of suggestion, but these are not actually Zen effects. Western Zen cults with an Oriental veneer neither reproduce Eastern cultures nor enhance Western cultures. Authentic Zen is not a sideshow; the teaching is to harmonize with the environment, as illustrated in the famous proverb, "A good craftsman leaves no trace." (18)

- o Researchers have identified and summarized the essential characteristics of cults and simplified metaphysical systems which act as barriers to spiritual understanding in both individuals and groups.

Among the characteristics of a 'false or misguided path,' are the following:

1. The claim that the organization is the sole repository of truth, or is the only 'path';
2. The mistaking of emotional for spiritual states;
3. Separation of the followers of the group from the populace at large;
4. Failure to do one's human duty to everyone, regardless of a person's faith, standing or position;
5. The emphasis upon hope and fear, upon reward and punishment;
6. Material richness of the organization, and especially of its leaders;
7. The uniqueness of a leader, asserting superhuman and other qualities or responsibility;
8. Secretiveness;
9. Inability to laugh at things which appear funny to people outside the 'path.';
10. Employment of stereotyped techniques and/or rituals and exercises not adapted according to the principle of 'time, place and people';
11. 'Idolatry': which includes investing people, animals or things with a special meaning;
12. 'Teachers' who are themselves ignorant. (19)

There are a number of major disabling factors in the path of spiritual development:

1. 'Traditionalism,' which often really means imitation or the servile copying of what are imagined to be valuable thoughts and actions;
2. Over-simplification: when a single formula is imagined to be enough to storm the gates of heaven;
3. Desire for emotional stimulus;
4. Compulsive collecting of information whether it is applicable or not at that stage of progress;
5. To use a parable or tale as the representation of absolute truth, when it is always only a facet of a whole: thus imagining the part to be the whole, instead of a conductor to it;
6. To seek to pursue artificially formed hypotheses of virtue;
7. Trying to teach oneself;
8. Trying to instruct others without the necessary perceptions for the job;
9. Failure to assess the needs of the learner;
10. Being prematurely discouraged;
11. The random mixing of teachings and techniques from various sources;
12. The mistaking of one thing for another. (20)

Social Groups and Conformity

- o People frequently confuse social and community behaviour with spiritual activity. Metaphysical groups can easily become a collection of people searching for a social circle, a 'tribe' or a therapeutic entity. A certain prior degree of social integration and stabilization is an asset for anyone approaching a spiritual teaching.
- o It is important to recognize the difference between the social or diversionary contact of people and the higher, spiritual contact. "If the intending student is himself in need of reassurance, adventure, catharsis, social and psychological equilibrium, he will only too gratefully and unquestioningly be attracted to the lower level of activity."
- o Individuals who lack family or other forms of companionship will seek associations with others as a compensation, even in settings or at times when these may not be indicated for spiritual growth and development.

The collection of assemblies, it has been rightly observed by a master, always tend towards what we call the forming of a tribe. Man likes to congregate. To encourage congregating is dangerous unless explicit is the knowledge of the prevention of mere associations and not the creation of a correct collection of people in whom can move the spirit. (21)

- o There is a powerful underlying dynamic in the formation and activities of 'spiritual groups' which is rooted in the basic psychological need for human contact and expression.

This phenomena is now well known and documented by workers in the fields of sociology, anthropology and psychology. But it is not yet well understood by the population at large. The reason is not difficult to find. When a number of people

combine for a common purpose, it is always taken as axiomatic that they are brought together, and kept united, by the label, the apparent aim of the group.

The reality is the other way about. If the desire to group were not there, nobody would think of forming a group. If the alleged purpose of the group were not there, another would be adopted. It is as simple as that.

People cherish their groups. They also have a genuine interest in the avowed aims of the group. Anyone who seems to them to be deriding or in any way threatening the group, even by raising legitimate questions about it, is perceived as hostile.

Psychologically speaking, then, there is a factor in group-behaviour which can have serious consequences for the group and its members, the most conspicuous being that people find it hard to get away from the group, even when it is not desirable for them to stay in it. (22)

- o Imitation cults and groups often provide release from tension and give assurance and comfort through the various techniques and exercises that they provide.

There is little question that such specialities as psychotherapy, hypnosis or meditation are useful, but the question remains: Can we truly expand our consciousness and develop by simply utilizing such approaches? The apparent answer is no. While such methods may help us reduce stress, allow us some personal insight, and improve our daily functioning, there is no evidence that these systems can produce spiritual development or higher consciousness.

In reality, most “ways” or “teachings” offered to students in the West today are useless, in the sense that they will not lead aspirants to higher development or spiritual illumination. They are useful only to the extent that they do offer certain benefits like security, stress reduction, social stimulation – in effect, group therapy. (23)

- o When metaphysical and spiritual studies are reduced to the level of sociology and popular psychology the result can be a certain degree of confusion and contamination.

There has been a confusion between teaching and the social or human function. To help or to entertain someone is a social, not an esoteric, duty. As a human being you always have the social and humanitarian duty. But you do not necessarily have the therapeutic duty; indeed, you may be much less qualified for it than almost any conventional professional therapist.

It is impossible to spend time with virtually any religious, philosophical or esotericist group, or even to read its literature, without seeing that a large number of the people involved, perhaps through no fault of their own, and because of ignorance of the problems, are using these formats for sociological and psychological purposes of a narrow kind. It is not that their spiritual life is right in these groups. It is that their social life is inadequate. (24)

- o Many cults pander to the natural demand for ‘togetherness’ in human beings, even though playing upon this tendency is unproductive in the work of spiritual development. “The great peril in study-groupings is that they become miniature tribes or families, cults and frames for finding social satisfactions, not learning, let alone understanding.”

Nothing highlights the non-spiritual but very social character of many relation-

ships so much as the need for contact, association, relationship. People feel that they should be near someone of sanctity; that they should impart their blessings to others; that some sort of frequent or constant contact has some spiritual dimension.

The fact is, of course, that there are times and places where it is more important for people with mutual spiritual interests to be apart rather than together. Those who understand this and have experienced it are the spiritual people. Those who have not, are part of a sociological phenomena: herding.

The origin of this desire to herd is not far to seek. Those who lead the herding are inadequate: they feel doubts and discomforts when they are not in contact with like-minded people. Those who flock at the behest of the 'herders' are equally inadequate. But, in their case, there is more hope that they can be taken to a position where they no longer have to be dependent upon others; where their inadequacy is cured, rather than being reaffirmed by herding. (25)

- o Teachings which advocate withdrawal from the world and the avoidance of normal human contacts are essentially unbalanced. They ignore the fact that only under certain specific circumstances is withdrawal from the world beneficial in the spiritual life. "There is function in temporary withdrawal for the purposes of certain parts of the work, but total withdrawal is nonsense."
- o Cults which advocate withdrawing from society and living a life of asceticism and monasticism ignore the importance of a healthy and constructive involvement in daily life, following the dictum: *'Be in the world, but not of it.'*

Everybody has someone to whom they are related, who needs them, who cares for them, who wants them. They have a place in a family and a function in society which they can and should perform as well as possible. They may say, "My function is to increase my spirituality, and I am helping this civilization, town, village, or whatever, by sitting in this cave in the mountain and developing my spirituality. This is my participation."

People who do this kind of thing are in fact abdicating their responsibility towards themselves and towards other people: they are no longer being tested by the fact that they have to earn their living, pay their telephone bill, pay their taxes or whatever. They may say they don't need these problems, but if you look at it in a reasonably balanced way, it is not much of a problem to pay one's bills. (26)
- o Random or haphazard groups are formed when a metaphysical school accepts all comers or tries to attract and recruit disciples. "Another way of deciphering the real from the false is to find out how easy or difficult it is to enroll in the teaching. If you are welcomed with open arms, without a reasonable period of preparation or probation, generally speaking, you have not encountered an authentic school."
- o Metaphysical and spiritual groups which are random collections of 'seekers' rarely develop beyond a certain point. "Groups should be organized only by people who have a special knowledge of the characteristics of groupings."

People collected at random, or merely because they want, for group-mentality reasons, to enroll, cannot in the Sufi tradition form for all practical purposes, a learning group. Merely collecting what are sometimes called 'like-minded people' does not lead to harmonization. According to the Sufis: 'Every gathering of people has its own potential. Those collected arbitrarily have only physical, mental or emotional potential.' (27)

- o Cults tend to accept almost anyone into their fold or try to persuade people to drop their current beliefs and embrace the cult's precepts. Random or 'accidental' groupings of such individuals can actually generate negative or even destructive consequences.

The right people at the right place at the right time has many reasons. One of the most important of these is that if you group people wrongly, you exaggerate their undesirable characteristics. Although not so rapid nor so publicly visible, you can get a similar effect to the proneness of a mass of people to become a mob. Just as a random collection of people assembled around an over-simplified issue easily becomes a mindless mob, irrational and even destructive, so may people collected together, without adequate preparation and safeguards, become a corroding factor in spiritual matters. They may damage themselves and others. Familiar examples are the abnormal enmities and exaggerated behaviour of members of coteries, whether these be scholars or professionals, in many societies, both current and ancient, as well as the numerous religious groupings which go sour. (28)

- o Self-appointed metaphysical groups which lack a real teacher are usually unable to assess the needs of the students and prescribe appropriate studies due to the absence of any real and technical knowledge of these matters.

If self-teaching has its severe limitations, the establishment of groups often leads to even more bizarre results. The reason for this is that the leaders of these groups, although frequently full of good intentions, lack the necessary expertise. Skill in 'running a group' is not a substitute for the perception of the spiritual condition of the group and all of its members, constantly monitored. The teacher, like any other specialist, can see the shortcomings of the supposed teacher, the individuals and the group in a way that they cannot. (29)

- o One of the consequences of ignoring individual differences in the makeup of spiritual groups is the habit of employing the same random exercises for everyone in the group.

Q: Some groups carry out frequent and regular exercises, 'dances,' and all sorts of activities in which everyone takes part. Why do you say that one should not do the things which have brought others into high spiritual states?

A: If one were a machine, and if all people and situations were alike, if people were pieces of wood to be shaped: of course one should neglect all the manifold attendant circumstances and apply exercises randomly.

This question implies that everything is always the same. By turning the matter over in one's mind, the question might become: 'Under what circumstances would

it be true that random exercises should not be carried out, or mechanical imitation should be shunned?’

One very good reason not to ‘steal’ exercises and apply them randomly (which means without insight and knowledge) is that this can have the same sort of effect, in its own sphere, as other, more familiar, forms of ‘theft.’ (30)

- o Certain higher teachings have retained the special knowledge relating to the correct grouping of people for purposes of spiritual attainment. Imitation groups have lost the sense of this ‘coming-together,’ producing instead a sort of pantomime of real spiritual group dynamics.

Self-Preoccupation and Self-Deception

- o When someone is fixated on their own personal quest for higher knowledge, forgetting the need for community and shared experience, they are effectively engaged in a selfish pursuit.
- o There is a tendency to confuse psychotherapy and the solving of personal problems with the path of spiritual development and the attainment of enlightenment.

Many forms of therapy begin with the assumption that there’s something wrong in the person seeking therapy, and therapy is about repairing that wrong. We carry this attitude – so widespread in our culture – into our own spiritual practice.

We assume there’s something wrong with our lives because we don’t feel content with ourselves. From our personal standpoint, something *is* wrong. What needs to be understood about this dilemma?

In particular, we want our personal selves to be different than they are. For example, we want to make ourselves “enlightened.” We picture being an enlightened self as somehow glorified, different, and separated from the rest of poor ordinary mortals. Enlightenment seems to us to be a great achievement, the ultimate ego attainment. That eagerness to become enlightened pervades many spiritual centers as an undercurrent of excitement about spiritual practice. It’s ridiculous, really. (31)

- o Authentic spiritual teachers have always pointed out that many people performing rituals and exercises are acting out of concealed vanity and self-indulgence.

When prayer, rituals and ascetic life are just a means of self-indulgence, they are harmful rather than beneficial. This is quite obvious to people nowadays, when it is widely recognized that fixations are not the same as valuable and laudable observances. One should not pray if that prayer is vanity; rituals are wrong when they provide lower satisfactions, like emotional stimulus instead of enlightenment; he or she should not be an ascetic who is only enjoying it. (32)

- o The over-use of words like ‘God’ or ‘Love’ is actually an expression of vanity and self-conceit as the level of the sacred is reduced to emotional or intellectual satisfaction.

- o Present-day cults which offer exercises, community and a sense of significance are largely ineffective because they do not first address the unperceived vanity and disguised greed of their followers. There is a saying: *'Humility has to precede instruction'*

Q: How is it that involving themselves in spiritual enterprises can cause so much sorrow and trouble to some people? Some become deranged, and worse characters than they ever were before . . .

A: The 'sorrow and trouble' to which you refer are due to an inner sickness. This sickness is one which is made worse by anything – even spiritual things -- which approach it, because when a spiritual element approaches certain forms of sickness, the ailment itself distorts the approaching element and misuses it. You can verify this for yourself, by noting how a perfectly salutary thing, employed in the wrong manner or at the wrong place, or with the wrong people, can cause damage.

It has often been observed that people who try to follow spiritual paths without the primary training of disengaging their pride frequently encounter sorrow and worse. (33)

- o The presence of negative human characteristics such as insincerity and self-importance, prevents the proper development of spiritual groups. When pride and vanity penetrates any religious or spiritual teaching they rob it of its inner transformational power.
- o It is very easy for a spiritual study group to turn into a power-system in order to gratify the desire of some to lead and others to follow.
- o Harmful human qualities like greed and vanity are generally unperceived as such and may even be strengthened in the context of diluted spiritual systems and cults. "When the vanity and the emotional life have not been observed and understood, these will then attach themselves to the social life now termed 'spiritual' and we have the formula for the myriad of cults which fill the earth."
- o Individuals who believe that they are enlightened or existing on a higher plane of consciousness and perception than other people are usually deluded and, in fact, are suppressing the real spiritual side of themselves. "It is flattering to oneself to think that one is following the 'right path,' that one is doing and thinking – and experiencing – those things which have been felt and thought and done by the great ones of the past."
- o Members of cults who believe that the path they are following is 'special' or 'unique' are cut off by their own self-esteem from perceiving other teachings which are ultimately of much greater value. "If the sense of power of would-be students is being fed by means of the suggestion that they are studying something that others do not know, they will get no further."
- o One of the causes of the fragmentation of true spiritual teachings is the assumption by half-mature disciples that they can set themselves up as teachers. This is rooted in vanity, pride and self-importance.

- o Individuals who are involved in spiritual groups, and many of those who run such groups, often lack the perception and objectivity necessary to understand what 'progress' or 'growth' in spiritual studies really means.

There is no doubt that certain kinds of experience and understanding can be acquired by being in a study group. The value of the group will, however, disappear very soon after its most elementary potential is exhausted. This is why people who join groups gain the impression that there is something for them there. There is. But what they do not realize, in general, is that this potential is rapidly exhausted without continuing insight by the director of the group.

The result is that many former members of groups either abandon them or try to form their own schools, seeking the teaching which, in the nature of things, they cannot find by such a method.

The world is full of people who have turned back from higher studies of the mind because they have not made enough progress.

They imagine that they have gained enough or else that they have gained nothing because there is nothing to gain.

Once more, the observer who has experience of such things can see both the difficulty and the limitations in understanding of these people, while they in general have no perception of their situation at all.

They can be seen, from the objective viewpoint, to be in the position of the man who decided to walk to his home, 25 kilometers from his work. When he had gone half way, he was so tired: so he walked the whole way back. (34)

- o The presence of vanity and self-importance in a pupil leads to an inability to distinguish genuine spiritual teachings from counterfeit ones.
- o The simplest criteria for assessing the value of spiritual schools is evidence of actual positive and permanent change in the adherents, and not short-term results which quickly dissipate.

It is not necessary to worry as to whether a mystical society is totally false, partially false, or anything else, when it is considered from the point of view of liberation and completion. What matters is: 'Does the teacher deliver the goods?' Look at your society and ask yourself the question: 'Does this school produce better people? Are they made independent of the school, so that they can go their own way, in turn completed and developed?' If the answer is 'NO' then the system is failing. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

The fact is that any system, any form of belief, however slight, can produce great results. The question is not, as so many people ask: 'Is this school not to be considered true, because of such and such a result?' The question is rather: 'Are these results permanent? Do they lead to the *detachment* of the individual? Has inner regeneration taken place? Are the people who are being regenerated apparently improved, or the sort of people who give *me* a sensation of hope and the possibility of fulfillment?' (35)

- o The teaching story of the 'Monkey and the Apple' describes the situation of spiritual seekers

who are basically unfulfilled and sense the path they are following is inadequate, but who are not willing to actually leave their present circumstance.

A story illustrates the predicament of people who belong to semi-mystical cults. A monkey sees a crab apple in a bottle. He reaches into the bottle and his hand closes over the apple. Now, because his hand has become a fist, he cannot get it out again. A man comes up and tries to tell the monkey to let go of the apple. The monkey, of course, refuses, because he thinks that this is just a trick to steal his apple. He does not realize that, although he has nominal hold of the apple, it is of no use to him. On the contrary, it has half immobilized him. Now he has only one hand to grasp other food with; and he cannot swing from tree to tree. The followers of what we call “remnant cults” are like such a monkey. They hold what they have, but they do not have much of it. And they cannot even be sure that the apple which they hold is sweet or not. (36)

Externals and Outward Appearance

*‘The essence of the reality is in the inner teaching, not the overcoat.’
Saying*

- o A common human tendency is to adopt the outer practices of people and institutions which are respected or admired. This can effectively disable the learning potential of an aspirant by diverting energy and attention to secondary manifestations.
- o The ordinary human mimetic habit leads people to copy the mannerisms, behaviour and even dress of those whom they esteem. Mechanical imitation of this sort is useless in terms of any real spiritual development and may even be harmful.
- o Tradition, ritual, colour, ceremony, symbols and so on have an undeniable appeal for most people. People often become attached to the superficial dimensions of an esoteric system simply because the practices, exercises and atmosphere seem so exotic. Things which are colourful, appealing or interesting because of their novelty are regarded by such individuals as significant for their spiritual life.

We can easily get carried away by the exotica of a spiritual practice. The Zen Buddhism tradition, for example, has great beauty, particularly for the Westerner who encounters it for the first time. It is like a drink of cool water on a hot day. What the Zen masters say has an austerity, a clarity; the meditation room has the sheer beauty of simplicity; the monks’ robes and bald head have an appeal; the posture has great dignity; the chanting, a power – and it is so easy for us to get swept away by the exotica, the trappings. However, we must pass on swiftly beyond the exotic; we are not engaged in a mystical activity in which we try to encourage a mystical state of mind above and away from the clash and clang of everyday life. Zen practice is not something we do now and again. Zen practice and life are not different. (37)

- o The typical Western ‘seeker’ who travels to the East is attracted to the outer facade, the emotion and the mystery, of Eastern mystical teachings. “The lure and mystery of the colourful East has for countless centuries obscured for the Western mind the fact that it is the human development which is aimed at, not the trappings.”
- o Many of the symbols and forms used by contemporary religious and spiritual institutions are the remnants of an original comprehensive ‘science’ in which their proper usage was properly understood.

When you see a traditional religious symbol today, you are generally looking at a piece of technical apparatus (or a representation of one), whose use has been forgotten – above all by the descendants of its own original designers. This is generally due to the growth of the superstition that a thing of beauty or associative significance has to invoke sentimentality, and that function is less sublime than emotion. The reverse, in fact, is the case. (38)

- o One indication of a degenerated spiritual or mystical school is the employment of clothing and dress for emotional and psychological, not esoteric, reasons. However, specific clothing or objects may, at certain times, be employed in a spiritual sense if they are functional and not merely assigned value as an outer indication of inner attainment.

“Transvestism,” dressing-up in clothes not of the period or of the country where the individual or group lives and operates, is regarded as a further example of the declining or impaired tradition. This behaviour is, of course, very common in almost all religious traditions. It is to be noted, however, that all such outlandish garb is imitative of the past – and indication of spiritual bankruptcy. People will, according to this doctrine, put on clothes as a compensation for a sense of inner emptiness. Clinical or morbid conditions, when cured, often first manifest their improved condition by the resumption of normal clothing. (39)

- o A common mistake made by those engaged in a spiritual quest is to confuse indications of external behaviour, no matter how praiseworthy, with inner spiritual attainment. The so-called ‘people of externals’ who judge others by appearance are said to be guilty of expanding their emotional life at the expense of their logical capacities and spiritual perceptions.

You will be aware that in traditional spiritual teaching we are told that we must make sacrifices, and we must hold back from gaining certain things which we want, we must not be over-ambitious. We must be considerate of other people, we must not make a great noise and must avoid pride, and so on. These are some of the virtues which we are expected to cultivate. There is a powerful psychological reason for trying to cultivate these abilities.

This is what we must now understand: that these virtues which we are supposed to cultivate have a scientific background, and they are necessary, not for our social happiness, but for our psychological integrity.

When this has not been fully explained, and when it is not understood, there will be serious mistakes in the development of a group of people. It is not rare to find such diseases – in many if not all religious organizations. For example,

people behave as though they are very humble externally, yet this is just a mask, this is a *persona*.

It happens when people judge others by their behaviour; ‘This man is very simple, he only eats one meal a day: therefore he must be good.’ They judge him externally, and that is because we have been taught to judge externally. How does he appear and behave, and not ‘what is he really like?’ (40)

Emotionality Confused with Spirituality

- o The over-active indulgence of crude and unrefined emotion leads to the unconscious assumption that ‘excitement must be meaningful.’ “In cults and other activities designed for pleasure rather than progress, the sensation is what is sought: and the most intense one at that.”
- o People often assume that things which emotionally stir them must be of great importance and significance. Individuals who are emotionally moved by, say, the Taj Mahal in the moonlight, often feel that they have experienced something transcendental and do not realize that their feelings may be entirely subjective.
- o Most people cannot perceive the different ranges or scales of emotion, and tend to regard any strong emotion which moves them as ‘profound’ or ‘deep.’
- o A common mistake on the spiritual path is to imagine that all experiences are useful, important or significant.

Some experiences may be useless, others are certainly harmful. In amusement-systems (whatever they call themselves) the emphasis is naturally on experience, because excitement and stimulus is what is really being demanded and offered.

In a true learning situation, however, as in all legitimate forms of education, what matters is the order of events and the preparedness of the learner, not the fact of the experience and what the individual happens to imagine it means, if anything.

The experience-cravers, of course, lack the perspective to see what effects the experience is having on them. (41)

- o Emotion is a powerful factor in all aspects of human life. The confusion of emotionality or sentimentality with spirituality is a fundamental mistake for many people. “What the ordinary person calls ‘spirituality’ is usually a vague aspiration towards something ‘higher’ or perhaps an indulgence in certain forms of emotion, hallowed only by custom, because of their historical or associative connection with what have been assumed or claimed for a long time to be spiritual things.”
- o Members of most cultures are unable to discriminate between emotional feelings of an undifferentiated kind and higher experiences of a spiritual nature. When people mistake emotional feelings for higher spiritual ones they are generally incapable of developing further such is the conditioning power of emotions. “Communities and individuals reared in the emotional and

conditioned use of rituals and other procedures have to undergo a reorientation before they can perceive a higher content in such observances.”

A rather more common deterioration of the instant awakening of Zen is mistaking an ecstatic experience or altered state of consciousness for this Zen awakening. There are many records of this in Zen lore, where it is sometimes described as mistaking a fish eye for a pearl. Since enlightenment may often be accompanied by a release of tension, furthermore, there are cases where people mistake emotional catharsis for awakening, or even deliberately induce excessive tension in an effort to produce an ecstatic feeling of release. Attempts to mime the Zen effect in this way can be observed in both Eastern and Western Zen cults; especially in recent generations. (42)

- o Self-deception operates when people regard experiences which are unusual as ‘spiritual’ or ‘mystical.’ The misunderstanding of subjective emotions can even lead some individuals to believe that certain experiences are ‘special gifts’ when in fact they may be the very reverse. “A large number of people can experience, or believe that they experience, quite extraordinary sensations which seem to be of a spiritual nature. Few people realize how easy it is to believe, or to make others believe, that something exceptional has happened to them.”
- o It is common to assume that activities such as service to others and the alleviation of human suffering are automatically spiritual in nature. In fact, they may be disguised pleasure-seeking or ego-enhancing pursuits.
- o The powerful feelings which are invoked by group cohesion and purposefulness are often interpreted as highly meaningful spiritual experiences when they are more accurately described as psychological and sociological phenomenon.

Q: There is a community of feeling and harmony which surely indicates that those affected by it are on the right lines. Have you any comment on the value and importance of this unity of people and experience, this communion with something higher, which surely must be the mark of true experience?

A: This feeling, in almost identical words, is expressed by members of human groups whose members express diametrically opposite and often mutually hostile ideologies. In history, it has been recorded both by the oppressors and the oppressed, on many occasions. Indeed, it has even been held by the oppressing community that it is this very feeling which makes it important to ‘bring the truth’ to the oppressed community.

In reality the social and subjective feeling which you mention is not the one to which people allude when they speak of a truly universal and cosmic experience. True gold, Rumi says, exists: that is why there can be false gold. The feeling that you mention is a form of what is described as ‘group spirit.’ It is valuable when employed for constructive purposes, but can be dangerous when accompanied by an ideological posture. To settle for this when there is something higher is a form of greed. (43)

- o Many so-called 'higher' experiences are merely forms of auto-intoxication without any real spiritual value. "Many people seek to attribute familiar sensations to a higher order of being, and assume that they are experiencing at least some measure of the divine or mystical in forms which are nothing more than grosser ones."

Q: As you know, there are many people, throughout the world, inducing experiences in others, and giving them thereby what are felt to be priceless endowments. Why do the true teachers not do this – surely there is an advantage in feeling exalted or in contact with the Higher Beings?

A: These experiences are subjective and deceptive. If you care to come and sit with me for a few days, you will actually meet long processions of people who call themselves spiritual, and who constantly bemoan their loss of these feelings, formerly engendered and so welcomed by them when 'presented' or 'given' by what they regard as higher sources, whether material teachers or immaterial forces.

The problem is that these experiences are assuaging greed, not replacing it. Simply because one imagines that something which one has is spiritual does not make one's experiences of it outside this world. (44)

- o Ecstatics are people who indulge in rapture or intoxicating experiences, but are generally out of touch with human life and remain essentially unaltered by their experiences. Seeking or indulging in ecstatic experiences has the effect of freezing the aspirant at a lower and more primitive stage of inner development.

Illumination cannot be sustained by someone who is not ready for it. At best it will throw him or her into an ecstatic state in which they are paralyzed, as it were, and unable to consummate the contact. That is why, although dervish poets speak of being 'mad for love,' they emphasize that this madness is the result of preview, not of genuine experience. It is recognized that genuine experience must take an active, mutual, meaningful form, not a form of useless intoxication.

Inebriation mystics are those who stop short at this stage, and try to reproduce the experience repetitiously, or approximate them on paper or in emotional art. This is the stage at which much experimentation in mysticism becomes bogged down. (45)

- o The need to experience higher states of consciousness can become an obsession for people who feed on powerful emotions and feelings to the exclusion of other life interests.

The importance of the spiritual contact has, rightly, been emphasized on many occasions. Naturally, of course, this has led to it being imagined to be the real secret, the only way, the thing which must be persisted in to the exclusion of everything else; so that we have very numerous people and organizations in all countries trying to establish and maintain this contact. The results of such lopsided efforts, of course, are to produce a large number of emotional or even sanctimonious people who *imagine* that they feel all kinds of things. They can usually be detected by observing whether or not they give *ordinary* people, those not interested in spiritual and esoteric matters, what is sometimes called 'the

creeps.’ If they seem weird, they probably are weird, not spiritual. Spiritual communication capacity is not to be grafted onto unsuitable bases. (46)

- o The desire for things which are special or secret is a common human characteristic. However, an inordinate desire for hidden and magical knowledge, for the unknown and the unusual, blocks real spiritual growth and development.

I once presented a collection of very important and entirely comprehensive materials, in published form, to a certain widely-respected man whose reputation as a spiritual teacher in some circles was impressive.

He looked at me. ‘Yes, this is all very well,’ he said; ‘but (and here he adopted a confidential, almost conspiratorial, tone and dug me in the ribs), what we really want is something which has *not* been published.’

Obviously, the sense of something secret, restricted, unpublished was greater than the presentation of something which actually was useful.

So marked is this thirst for the outlandish, whether it is useful or not, that in the West people adopt Eastern names before they try to teach their fellows; they claim to have visited remote mountain fastnesses, to have been commissioned by mysterious Orientals to take messages; they invoke the names and writings of people about whom they understand little, they adopt foreign customs and diets, clothes and exercises. (47)

- o One way of distinguishing real from spurious spiritual groups is in their attitude towards what are called ‘secrets.’ Authentic teachings do not talk about experiences which are essentially inexpressible in words, while the false school will regard ‘secrets’ as mysterious or prized.

Perhaps the outstanding element here is the group’s attitude towards ‘secrets.’ With a genuinely functional esoteric group, the ‘secret’ is ineffable; something which cannot be spoken or described, since this word is the technical term for the experience which can be induced only by the activities of the group. In diluted and secondary groups, this secret becomes secrecy, something prized for its own sake. (48)

- o The emotions produced by trials, suffering or tribulations are useful for spiritual growth only under certain circumstances. Suffering for suffering sake can easily turn into self-indulgence and masochism.
- o The common error of confusing emotionality with spirituality lays people open to the possibility of manipulation, conditioning and even indoctrination. One of the keynotes of cult-like spiritual systems is the induction of anxiety, or its opposite, the assuaging or reduction of anxiety. These two processes act as conditioning mechanisms for the followers of these cults.
- o It is a well established fact of psychology that when people who have been inhibited from showing emotion are allowed opportunities for expression they will feel better. Spurious esoteric systems take advantage of this human tendency.

Q: I attended one of the group meditations sessions, held recently in Bombay,

and witnessed the frenzy and self-abandon of the participants. Why do people go for such things?

A: These are all inventions of a restless mind pampering to people in search of sensations. Some of them help the unconscious to disgorge suppressed memories and longings and to that extent they provide relief. But ultimately they leave the practitioner where he was – or worse. (49)

- o Systems of human development which manipulate or pander to the emotions of their followers may actually be performing a disservice.

Much of what passes for spiritual teaching relies, in reality, upon increasing greed, emotion and acquisitiveness. Of course, this is not understood by those who carry out such teachings. They imagine that emotionality is the same as spirituality.

Any ordinary psychologist will tell you that people have expectations from anything in which they interest themselves. They will have a preconceived (though not always conscious) picture of what they will 'get' from anything. If they do not feel that they are 'getting it,' they will react. The sensible person, whenever experiencing this unease, will seek the real reason for the sensation. Unless on one's guard, however, the conclusion will tend to be flattering to oneself. The individual will think, 'this is not for me; it does not give me what I want.'

The contemporary world, which is largely based on advertising, on transactionalism, on exciting greed and on the stick and carrot, conspires with the primitive in human beings. And this pattern, of threat and promise, is visible even in some of the most respected of spiritual traditions, so over-simplified have they become by what can only be called the current practitioners. (50)

- o An important indication of spiritual sensitivity is the ability to work with subtle or refined perceptions and not just crude emotional impacts and stimuli.

Spiritual experience is difficult to register in the mind only for those who are too accustomed to cruder impacts: rather as the sound of the watch ticking will not be audible to someone deafened by a church bell or even listening to a factory whistle.

It is interesting that things which move people powerfully in an emotional sense are often taken by them to be spiritual things. Primitive or ignorant people, of course, actually worship (until they learn better) as miracles or divine, natural things like thunder or manufactured things like guns. Although historians, anthropologists and psychologists know this and have reported this widely, this primitive reaction lingers, especially in 'developed' countries. A sensitive or low-key experience is not sought, prized or understood where there is a cruder one. I would call this diagnostic of whether a person knows about higher perceptions: can he work with subtle ones, does he see the crudity of violent ones. (51)

Conditioning and Indoctrination of Belief and Behaviour

*'The bird which has no knowledge of pure water
Has its beak in salt water the whole year round.'*
Saying

- o A cult has been defined as a belief-system with fixed practices, exercises and habit-patterns based on the principles of classical conditioning and indoctrination.
- o The presence of an authority-figure, a hierarchy, commands and prohibitions form the basis and structure of a conditioning system. "Conditioning can be so all-enveloping that it takes over systems which were originally flexible and specific, generalizing them out of all recognition."
- o Mechanical systems and organizations come into existence when human beings are trained with threat and promise, tension and repetition and other conditioning factors. "Something which started out as a flexible and interacting school turned into an automatic one: with the same prayers, meditations, litanies, activities and so on imposed upon everyone regardless of need or potentiality."
- o The mechanisms of conditioning and indoctrination involve, in part, the alteration of reward and punishment, of tension and relaxation, and repetition.

Innumerable experiments, recent and ancient, have fully verified the presence and effect of these factors. They are: tension alternating with relaxation, sloganization and repetition.

Because most human beings are trained to accept these factors as part of their 'learning' process, almost everything which is presented to a human being to be learned is generally converted by him into material which he applies by these methods.

The test of a teaching system, and of its success, is whether (1) it is applied by these methods, knowingly or otherwise; (2) it develops into a system which uses these methods.

It is extremely easy to test the individuals who have developed (through no fault of their own) this 'conditioned-reflex' response to work-terms and other teaching stimuli. Such people always respond in a typical manner to approaches made to them, and in this respect they do not differ from people who have been indoctrinated into any static and linear system: political, patriotic, economic, religious, philosophical, where the extra dimension of understanding is weak or absent. (52)

- o Research has shown that the majority of any group of people can be 'trained' or conditioned, if then group is a random one and not selected on the basis of factors and characteristics which diminish the conditioning process. Many religious and metaphysical systems tend to emphasize conformity to an unexamined and preconceived model of 'spiritual' belief and behaviour.

It may be necessary to conform to certain kinds of expected behaviour in order to learn something. But when this conformism becomes the only, or major, char-

acteristic of the people, the teaching has stopped taking effect. Instead of learning, we have practice: practice of conformism.

Conformism has two possible evils: (1) that people will mistake it for 'higher' behaviour; (2) that people will believe that all they have to do is to appear to conform, and that as a consequence they will get 'a place in Heaven.'

We are all familiar with human systems in which either or both of these deteriorations are evident. They are so persistent, indeed, that conformism may be taken as the outward mark of organization. But not only need this not be so: it may be positively dangerous to the potential function of the group. (53)

- o Many so-called spiritual teachings provide a sense of order, structure and stability to their followers through over-simplification and mechanical thinking.

Systems which treat everyone alike are mechanical and degenerate. Many supposedly spiritual entities have become over-simplified to such an extent, after falling into the hands of imitators, that they have lost the power to do more than automatize their followers. This is an inevitable consequence of the effects of time itself. In other words, our desire for order and our haste to organize leads to a demand for over-simplification which causes teaching to become indoctrination, and originally meaningful activity to become ritual. It is difficult to reverse this process, and to reclaim flexibility because of a demand for order which is so powerful, that it grips its victims like a disease. (54)

- o When someone develops a comfortable belief-system they often have great difficulty giving up these beliefs due to the stability and reassurance such mental-models provide.

Believers hold onto beliefs and do not allow them to be modified easily, certainly not by experience, because they really seek a systematic formula to make themselves feel stable. The space in their minds is there for system, not for truth. It is such people who imagine that there has been a great change in them when they merely exchange one belief-system for another. They are not believers in the sense understood by a genuine belief-system, merely temporarily stabilized. (55)

- o Human learning systems which are based on training and indoctrination attempt to narrow the perspective and confine the attention of their students. "It is a common human desire to seek a reasonable 'system' – a limiting framework through which to work, an ideology which will apparently answer all the questions."

- o Many traditional spiritual organizations train and encourage people to hold certain beliefs and act in certain ways. In reality they are indoctrination systems which implant and maintain opinions, feelings and specified forms of behaviour.

The adherence to traditional forms is not a spiritual activity at all. Very many 'people of the spirit' are only religious in the sense that they have been conditioned to feel certain emotional responses. Such people are, anthropologically speaking, little else than members of a tribe. The supposedly devout are cultists but hardly people of the spirit. The use of authority figures, canonical literature, liturgy, exercises, special clothes, and similarly standardized elements, are now plainly

seen as ingredients in training systems which differ, one from the other, only in the ideas and symbols used. (56)

- o Systems which are based on training and manipulation condition their followers to repetitious stimuli. People are frozen at a certain stage of development with their intuition suppressed.

Q: Why do study groups become automatized in this way?

A: There are two very good reasons. First, where the desire for reassurance and repetition is stronger than the desire for knowledge, rules and repetition become the most important factor. This occurs when people try to learn without proper preparation. Proper preparation is to make sure that the people have a balanced mind into which to feed the seeds of knowledge. If the mind is not integrated, it will, naturally, seek to use whatever is fed into it for the purpose of balancing it. The second reason is that it is easier to organize and manipulate large numbers of people by using a small number of factors (exercises, beliefs, etc.), rather than by giving them proper attention. Consciously or otherwise, leaders of thought and groupings always seek the most effective methods of mass organization. (57)

- o Some people are screened from understanding and appreciating spiritual teachings if they are projected in ways which contradict their established, conditioned ways of thinking. “Where there is ideology, conditioning and indoctrination, a mechanical element is introduced which drives out the factor of extra-dimensional reality perception which connects the higher functions of the mind with the higher reality.”
- o The power of conditioning produces an active force which creates a ‘bind’ or ‘knot’ in the human being, preventing higher perceptions. This power is such that even the most sublime human thoughts and aspirations can become, through misuse or over-use, barriers or ‘veils’ to higher understanding.
- o It is essential in the spiritual field to learn how to discriminate the difference between knowledge (facts) and beliefs (conditioning).

If I *know* that it is ten past ten in the morning, or that there is a fly on the wall, it is absolutely unnecessary, lunatic, even, to describe this as a belief. On the other hand, the people that believe that something is true do not know it in anything like the same way. Why? Because if they knew it as a positive, objective fact they would not manifest any emotion about it: neither would they be so keen to make other believe. All human experience shows that it is only things about which there is doubt which are believed in this characteristic manner. Facts, true ones, are not subject to either emotion or proselytization. (58)

- o People who have become indoctrinated and obsessed are often sanctimonious, imagining that they alone are right or only their form of belief is correct. Strongly held religious or spiritual beliefs may reflect a mind that “has been coached to believe in the distinctiveness or monopoly of ideas of certain schools.”

- o The typical cult or deteriorated spiritual group is often stiff, overly-serious and lacking any real sense of humour.

‘If you want special illumination, look upon the human face:
See clearly within laughter the Essence of Ultimate Truth.’

This important statement by Jalaluddin Rumi, one of the greatest of all Sufi masters, directly contradicts such numerous sour-faced religionists as, in all persuasions, find that humour disturbs the indoctrination which is all that they usually have to offer.

It is not even too much to say that the distinction between the deteriorated cults and the real message is found in the answer to whether the supposed mystic has a sense of humour and works with humour. Plato, if you remember, said:

‘Serious things cannot be understood without
humorous things
Nor opposites without opposites.’ (59)

- o Certain important psychological attitudes, such as detachment, can easily be turned into inflexible guides to behaviour, thought to be applicable in all circumstances and situations.
- o Many people value ideas, books or even other individuals strictly on the basis of imagination and the power of suggestion. “Such is the suggestive effect of actions carried out in concert and at the behest of others, that participants in cults almost always develop an increased sense of awe, ‘awareness’ or belief in the leader and the system.”
- o It can easily be demonstrated that certain trance states of mind (subjectively interpreted as ‘contact with the Divine’) can be produced or ‘engineered’ merely by implanted belief and suggestion.
- o People who have been exposed to metaphysical systems which make use of, often unconsciously, conditioning and training find it very difficult to adjust to the requirements of teachings which employ subtle impacts and are not based on conditioning.

When people are collected together to be exposed to materials which will defy or avoid conditioning, they will always tend to become uncomfortable. This discomfort is due to the fact that they are not receiving from these materials the stimuli to which they have become accustomed as conditioned people. But since they generally lack the full perception of what *is* in the materials, such people do not know what to do. The solution to this problem which they will tend to adopt is some kind of rationalization. If they receive no accustomed stimulus of an emotional sort, they will regard the new or carefully selected materials as ‘insipid.’

Unfortunately people have been so trained as to imagine that something which is hard to understand or hard to do, in a crude sense, is a true exercise. Hence, people are often willing to sacrifice money, physical effort, time, comfort. But

if they are asked (say) not to meet, or to sacrifice the attention of a teacher, this they find nearly impossible to bear, simply because their training is such that they are behaving as addicts. They may want sacrifice or effort, but only the kind which they have been trained to believe is sacrifice or effort. (60)

- o Spiritual teachings of a higher order avoid using conditioned methods with their students and stress the importance of identifying the presence of conditioning and indoctrination in any teaching situation.

Certain traditional teaching-systems have continuously maintained the knowledge of this 'conditioning' factor. The essence of their systems has been twofold: (1) to stress the fact of conditioning, in order to redress the imbalance produced by it; (2) to provide study-formats and human groupings in which the conditioning cannot easily operate.

No such systems deny the value of conditioning for certain purposes: but they themselves do not use it. They are not trying to destroy the conditioning mechanism, upon which, indeed, so much of life depends.

This is the first lesson: People who are shown for the first time how their views are the product of conditioning tend to assume, in the crudest possible manner, that whoever told them this is himself opposed to conditioning, or proposes to do something about it. What any legitimate system will do, however, is to point out that conditioning is a part of the social scene and is confused with 'higher' things only at the point when a teaching has become deteriorated and has to 'train' its members. (61)

- o Western scientific researchers have verified the role of conditioning in modifying human behaviour and beliefs. This knowledge, much of it unfamiliar to the ordinary person, is crucial in understanding the nature and attraction of cults.

Western society has in the past few decades taken a great step forward, which gives its members a perhaps unparalleled opportunity. This has been due to the final recognition of the way in which people can be (and are) conditioned to believe virtually anything. Although this knowledge existed earlier, it was confined to a few, and was taught to relatively small groups, because it was considered subversive.

What remains to be done is that the general public should absorb the facts of mind-manipulation. Failure to do so has resulted in an almost free field for the cults which are the bane of Western existence. In both East and West, the slowness of the absorption of these facts has allowed narrow political, religious and faddish fanaticism to arise, grow and spread without the necessary 'immunization.' In illiberal societies it is forbidden to teach these facts. In liberal ones, few people are interested: but only because mind-manipulation is assumed to be something that happens to someone else. Yet the reality is that most people are touched by one or other of an immense range of conditioned beliefs. (62)

- o Educating the public about the role of conditioning and manipulation in the formation of cults is a formidable task. People who are used to thinking in certain ways find it difficult to accept

and integrate the new information.

The shelves of bookshops overflow with paperbacks explaining the mechanism of cult-formation and conditioning. So this material should be common knowledge to the readers of such books, which are published for the general public. More time may be necessary, and more educational effort, before the material percolates to the general level.

What can stop the cults? Only education. But before people can educate, they have to find a way of bringing to people the truth which is higher than, and a replacement for, manipulating them. (63)

Fragmentation and Simplification of Spiritual Teachings

- o The mystical current becomes 'warped' by the selective and fragmentary usage of spiritual teachings and knowledge. Many once valid spiritual procedures have been altered through time by a mechanical or associative substitution of other factors so that the original intention or force is lost.
- o Many of the spiritual ideas, practices and techniques which are widely employed today are actually outmoded, culturally specific and designed for a different purpose than that for which they are now being used. For example, yoga postures and exercises, while certainly of use in the world, are designed for a very much more important cosmic purpose which cannot be discharged without the presence of other elements.

Each teacher accepts, or invents, a method which suits him, applies it to himself with some earnestness and effort, obtains results according to his temperament and expectations, casts them into the mold of words, build them into a system, establishes a tradition and begins to admit others into his 'school of Yoga.' It is all built on memory and imagination. No such school is valueless, nor indispensable; in each one can progress up to the point, when all desire for progress must be abandoned to make further progress possible. Then all schools are given up, all effort ceases.

The true teacher will not imprison his disciples in a prescribed set of ideas, feelings and actions; on the contrary, he will show them patiently the need to be free from all ideas and set patterns of behaviour, to be vigilant and earnest and go with life wherever it takes them, not to enjoy or suffer, but to understand and learn. (64)

- o The vestiges of spiritual teachings in the form of fragments of knowledge and partial methodologies, removed from their original context and purpose, litter the earth. "Literature, ritual, exercises and other ingredients of study or observance as generally known very often represent deteriorations of what were originally specific functioning enlightenment factors."

Traditional usage of certain important materials in specific teachings has produced methods of study and has used materials which cannot be improved upon.

Unfortunately, in response to what operates in effect as a 'law' among humanity,

these materials have become misused, misunderstood, frozen into symbol, ritual, emotional and intellectual usage.

In legitimate traditions certain word-arrangements, called prayers in some circles, are artefacts which are intended to be used as exercises. In ordinary usage these have become little more than incantations. This is because of the loss of the knowledge upon which they are based, and because of the ridiculously random grouping of the devotees.

Certain items generally known as 'holy' or 'religious' objects, which have been adopted, chosen, made and devised for inner functional purposes, have become fetishes. At best they are used to elicit 'Pavlovian' conditioned responses on the part of the worshipers or students.

This adds up to the fact that such 'religious,' 'work' or 'teaching' attempts are carried out in this manner are next to useless. Worse still: the 'believers' do not realize that they are in fact being worked upon, while the scoffers who deride ritual and tradition are almost more right than the 'believers.'

We have to reclaim the correct employment, the conscious use of objects, procedures, oration and exercise to rescue these things from theater, mime and absurd fetishism.

In order to do this, we have to decondition students from the conditioned reflexes implanted in them, so that they do not see holy symbols as things which give them an emotional thrill; or ritual as something which they enjoy; or certain garments as evidence of the initiation of individuals. All ingredients of real traditions were chosen and employed originally for specific purposes.

Some such ingredients have outlived their usefulness; some apply only to the culture in which they were projected. Others are among our most valuable possessions. (65)

- o Deteriorated spiritual systems concentrate upon a restricted number of techniques and methods while comprehensive teachings concern themselves with a wider range of practices, regarding every 'movement, thought or impact' as significant in human inner development.
- o One of the major indications of a metaphysical teaching gone sour is an undue emphasis on 'systematization' and organization of ideas at the expense of the totality of experience and a comprehensive development.
- o Multi-dimensional teachings can be modified by excessive organization, over-simplification and a need for 'reductionist symmetry' to such an extent that they are no longer effective. The phase in which flexible and organic teachings become systematized through 'telescoping' and simplistic formulation indicates a deterioration of the original teaching.

When any part of a form of learning becomes available, it is standard procedure in the human community, almost compulsive behaviour, that people pick up pieces which appeal to them, for vocational or psychological reasons, and charge off in all directions (like Don Quixote) bearing these pieces, which they then elaborate, simplify and proclaim to be the whole thing, and something to be urgently transmitted to all and sundry. If you allow yourself to think, briefly, about what happens in familiar bodies of knowledge (say medicine, philosophy, social and even political ideas) you will see what I mean. The pattern is clear and

undeniable. (66)

- o Real esoteric teachings are multi-dimensional and contain layer upon layer of meaning. The student cannot pass to a second level until the primary meaning has been absorbed, a contention widely ignored by cults and simplified systems of so-called higher knowledge.
- o Over-simplification and reliance on a single formula or approach prevents progress in any field of learning, including the spiritual. “If you play with something complex, treating it as if it were simple, it will not operate to its real capacity.”
- o Deteriorated metaphysical systems offer either one special technique (such as concentrative meditation) or else a synthesis or amalgam of methods drawn from many disparate sources.

As we often encounter them today, the ancient esoteric traditions are accidental conglomerations of useful techniques and outmoded cultural trappings. In such an atmosphere, a reduced form of meditation can be mass-merchandised.

And for many, their entire association with the techniques of meditation has been with the most rudimentary and minor form, that of a concentrative repetition, divorced from any cultural background, and divorced from any other techniques that are organically associated with it. It is like learning how to spell, without ever learning how to read. (67)

- o Tools become chains when specific teachings and procedures, tailored for a given audience and employed as technical instruments under special circumstances, become ‘golden keys’ applicable to all. The followers of cultish systems are always looking for the simple practice, the ‘magic wand,’ which will provide instant illumination.
- o Blindly performing exercises and procedures which have originated from real comprehensive teachings and been passed down through time can give no useful results when practiced haphazardly and without expert guidance. “You have to be a real teacher, or be directed by someone who has already traveled the road to the end, before you can say that you are not working randomly.”

The teachings passing under the names of the ancient teachers do not represent their real teachings. They consist, at best, of those parts which it has suited others to pass on. The result is a system of imprisonment.

This is the reason for the constant need for real interpreters and men of insight who can scrape off the accretions and add missing elements. Not to speak of the need to suit the teaching to the requirements of the locale.

Simplification and systematization of ideas can only be done by people who are capable of it. These tasks are, however, almost always attempted by people who are not capable of it. The basic qualification for simplification is a complete knowledge of the materials. (68)

- o Cults ignore the facts that certain exercises, observances and studies are intended to be carried out only for limited periods and specific reasons by certain individuals or groups. Developmental teachings which have been projected for specific individuals or groups, or intended for

short-term purposes, are frequently misinterpreted as perennial truths and injunctions that are applicable under all circumstances.

When the knowledge of the distinctions involved in rituals and other processes disappears, ritualism takes over or else the limited use of such processes. When the use and possibility is limited, the effect is slight: it may even be harmful. For example, if people are encouraged to pray without certain elements (preparation, attunement), their prayer may become a psychotherapeutic tool, immensely valuable, but nonetheless at a lower level than its optimum function. (69)

- o Certain formulations and concepts may be employed as a part of a spiritual teaching in order to approach something else. When these 'working hypotheses' become valued for their own sake and not as conductors to a further stage of understanding, they can act as 'prisons' preventing spiritual growth.
- o Teachings deteriorate when the primary is overshadowed by the secondary, when the means become more important than the goal. "Things originally intended to be instruments – and once employed as such – become mere totems or symbols, bereft of dynamic function."
- o Higher understanding in the spiritual realm is based on experience and not just words or theory. *'He who tastes knows'* is the injunction of the Wise.
- o The viability of esoteric teaching can actually be impaired by the accumulation of facts and information as the expense of experience and perception. "The more you have, the cruder the result, and the inner content disappears. 'Doubling' inert facts only increases the dead weight of them."

Stimulating as the theoretical approach to Zen may be for the academic-minded and the intellectually curious, for the earnest seeker aspiring to enlightenment it is worse than futile, it is downright hazardous. Anybody who has seriously attempted the practice of Zen after reading such books knows not only how poorly they have prepared him for zazen, but how in fact they have hindered him by clogging his mind with splinters of koans and irrelevant fragments of philosophy, psychology, theology, and poetry which churn about in his brain, making it immeasurably difficult for him to quiet his mind and attain a state of samadhi. Not without good reason have the Chinese and Japanese Zen masters warned of the futility of the artificial, cerebral approach to the illuminating experience of genuine satori. (70)

- o Mystical teachings are basically experiential and cannot be adequately approached in a rigid theoretical or intellectual manner. "What a mystic has to say about his experiences, when repeated in words, almost always constitutes a nearly useless distortion of fact."
- o Simplified metaphysical systems condition the minds of their adherents through repetitive practices and procedures which create a sense of spiritual attainment without actually producing it. "In the development of the human mind, there is a constant change and limit to the usefulness of any particular technique."

- o The habit of mixing bits and pieces of knowledge, exercises and practices from different spiritual teachings is a common Western preoccupation which essentially leads nowhere. The different aspects of each inner teaching are not always compatible with other aspects or presentations. “Selective thinking and mixing together facts and theories from all kinds of sources and ideas means that all too often people are muddled and confused.”

There is a widespread tendency today for people to amalgamate beliefs and rituals from all spiritual sources. Truth is one and forms vary and cannot be amalgamated. These forms cannot be associated together because the forms date from various needs and epochs, and do not go together, any more than the wheel of a horse-carriage will fit a motor-car. (71)

Q: What is to prevent people from choosing the best ideas from all kinds of teachings, and adopting them?

A: What prevents ignorant people doing this is their incapacity. What prevents insightful ones is lack of necessity. People who know how to do it do not have to attempt it, because when one has the knowledge the activity is superfluous, because one then has access to the material which corresponds best to the time, place and people, without having to synthesize. Synthesizers are the half-ignorant.

The amalgams of various teachings which are believed to provide new syntheses ‘for modern man’ are mere conglomerations of formulations which, by producing a kind of mixture, have altered the dynamic of all of them.

The analogy might be with the assembling of pieces of formulae or equations or houses or instruments without understanding what part of each fragment has had to play. The result may appear interesting, but it is ineffective. (72)

- o Individuals who imagine that they can teach themselves beyond a certain point on the spiritual path are almost always mistaken. They invariably apply materials with a developmental function in a lesser manner, thereby effectively attenuating their own capacities to learn. There is a saying: ‘Those engaged in self-study should not have a fool for a teacher.’
- o Many people involved with imitation metaphysical schools develop eccentrically and out of balance with the larger evolution of humanity. The training and conditioning that they receive through concentration upon certain principles to the exclusion of others produces a one-sided development in which the aspirants ‘lean on one side.’
- o There are real dangers in meddling with certain capacities of the mind as happens so often in experimental mysticism. The random and selective importation of Eastern esoteric ideas and practices can actually have an adverse influence on the Western mind.
- o The over-employment of ecstrogenic techniques to facilitate altered states of consciousness is a sign of deterioration in any metaphysical system. “This follows a common pattern in enthusiasts, when the production of an altered condition of mind becomes an end and not a means properly controlled by a specialist.”

Significantly, nowhere in the teachings of the masters of the three great Asian religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam do we find mind-altering drugs advocated as a means to enlightenment. This all the more remarkable when we remember that hashish has been known and used for centuries in the Middle and Far East. No doubt individual teachers themselves have smoked hashish on occasion – for a specific purpose. But the weight of religious traditions is against drug use. (73)

- o Teachings which stress the importance of certain states of mind often ignore the necessary preparation and approach which alone makes such states meaningful when they are ultimately achieved.

Certain spiritual systems, possessed of a tradition as to the overweening importance of this stage [detachment] but evidently lacking the means to monitor and assist progress towards it, are characterized by striving to enter and stay in a ‘non-desire’ state. The result is a large number of people in a quietist condition. They have not reached the stage of ability to detach, but the state of the inability to do anything else, which rather than spiritual, is possible to describe as conditioning in apathy. This condition comes about because the previous stages have not been successively passed through. (74)

- o Higher studies must be comprehensive and directed from an authoritative source of esoteric knowledge. In order for spiritual practices to be effective they must be prescribed and monitored by someone with knowledge, experience and insight.

Neither can this question of *due proportion* be understood by people (teachers or pupils) who are not on a stabilized higher level of consciousness. There is no intuition, no delegation of authority, no painstaking research, no seniority in years, no other factor, which can substitute for the knowledge of what procedure to apply, with whom, in what manner, unless the specific attunement is there. (75)

- o Systems of knowledge are only useful on the spiritual path if they are applied properly by the operators of the system and received correctly by the intending audience. The proper application of systems of higher development requires precise technical knowledge and an overview of the path and the goal on the part of the teacher.

No system is any use if you merely possess it. Ownership requires operation. No system is useful if one can only experiment with it. For a system to be useful, it must be correctly operated. The means of operating a system must correspond with contemporary needs. It should not be imitatively traditionalistic.

A system may be complete for one set of circumstances, defective for another. Possession of a system, or any part of it, or an interest in it or in discovering one, should not be assumed to confer any license or capacity, to operate it.

Individual criticism of a system, incapacity to operate it, or dissatisfaction with it should not be confused with any shortcoming of the system.

Consistency in a system, like inconsistency, is always more apparent than real: because what is coherent in one frame of reference may not be so in another.

These points are intended to emphasize that information and familiarization

with a system are much more important, vital and urgent than to apply existing imaginings about it to any attempt to understand and operate it.

Experience comes before understanding and before capacity to operate. (76)

Misuse of Spiritual Exercises

- o One of the problems with the proliferation of spiritual methods and procedures in the world today is that, although there are many techniques available, few people have the knowledge or insight to choose which are the most appropriate for them.
- o The popularizing of spiritual exercises, and their attendant widespread usage by unprepared students of metaphysics, has been compared to the effect on language if “printing compositors were to start to believe that since all letters were indeed ‘only letters,’ one could be used instead of another.”
- o Many of the rituals, movements, exercises and dances associated with contemporary religions are a degeneration of a comprehensive teaching and knowledge of inner development which has been reduced to the service of spectacle, performance and superficial entertainment.
- o When people combine and mix various exercises and techniques from different spiritual traditions the result of such hybrid experiments are usually worthless from an inner developmental perspective.
- o Spiritual exercises are often used for lower-level purposes of a physical or emotional nature which negates their higher developmental potential.

If certain physical and mental exercises are practiced by people who use things for emotional, social or callisthenic purposes, they will not operate on a higher level for such people. They become merely a means of getting rid of surplus energy, or of assuaging a sense of frustration. The practitioners, however, regularly and almost invariably mistake their subjective experiences of them for ‘something higher.’ (77)

- o When spiritual exercises are not prescribed, but merely repeated automatically and without any insight, they become conditioning instruments which prevent the development of higher experiences and perception.

Q: Why do real spiritual teachers not teach meditation and other spiritual practices as a matter of course? Surely everyone can benefit from them?

A: For the same reason that good gardeners do not plant productive crops among, or on top of, weeds. (78)

- o Students should not perform spiritual exercises on their own. ‘Teachers’ who make everyone

do the same exercises are ignorant, and can even cause harm.

- o Spiritual masters who possess real knowledge have always warned against the indiscriminate use of exercises which, like medicine, must be prescribed for specific circumstances and applied in due measure to be effective. “For example, procedures such as meditation that were once part of a unique and individually prescribed pattern of development are now extracted from their original context and offered for consumption as if they were a kind of vitamin that was good for everyone, ridiculously cheap, and devoid of side effects.”
- o Cults and false teachings apply the same standardized techniques to everyone, ignoring individual differences. In authentic schools of higher development the teacher chooses appropriate methods in accordance with a knowledge and intuition of what will work for each individual or community.

Zen that is exaggerated into a meditation cult, in which meditation assumes the status of a value in itself, or attention is fixated on a given posture or procedure presented as inherently sacrosanct, is a characteristic deterioration. This is more of the nature of fetishism than enlightenment, as is particularly evident in cases where meditation is done ritualistically in random groups according to fixed schedules, even under pressure; such activity results in obsession, not liberation. This was not the procedure of the masters, and it is not recommended in classical Zen meditation texts. (79)

- o Imitative cults tend to use the same spiritual exercises and practices that previous teachers employed due to ignorance of the principle of ‘supersession based on changing circumstances.’
- o In authentic schools of inner development spiritual exercises and procedures are carried out only with selected students at certain times in a special order of events. Cults, however, apply exercises to large numbers of people irrespective of ‘when, where and with whom.’

In the traditional psychologies, one group may find that a certain technique works well in a given situation, be it relaxation, concentration, or movement. Its members may tend to apply the technique in situations or with people for whom it is inappropriate. Because the technique works for them, they come to believe that it *ought* to work for everyone at all times. The technique becomes the end and may become an obsession.

Those who are involved in using such a technique – whether it is a particular meditation technique, a certain breathing exercise, or a training procedure – can become fixated and restricted to what the technique can offer. The adherents may set up schools to teach the “sacred” ritual, forgetting that each technique has its relevance only for a certain community at a certain time. (80)

- o Performing certain rhythmic and repetitive exercises can sometimes produce mental states which seem to be ‘mystical’ or ‘illuminated’ to the participant. In most cases such experiences are preliminary, low-level ones and not genuine mystical states at all.

A sign of a deteriorated system is when the members seek only mystical

experience, “opening” (*fatah*) or illumination (*hal*) without realizing that this, if true, will have a certain effect upon them. As most masters warn, the false *hal* is worse than anything, because it is a deception which seriously weakens the individuality and power of development of the learner. The same is true of meditation. Meditation gives some sort of calmness. But it is a preparatory step, and gives calmness only as a “signpost.” When the calmness has been attained some people become addicted to it, and their progress is frozen at that point. They have become meditation addicts. (81)

- o Exercises which involve the control and directing of attention have been misused in many traditions due to faulty understanding of the proper application of such exercises.

Traditional philosophical and other teachings have been used to prescribe exercises in the control and focusing of attention. Their value, however, has been to a great measure lost because the individual exercises, prescribed for people in need of exercise, have been written down and repeated as unique truths and practiced in a manner, with people and at a rate and under circumstances which by their very randomness, have not been able to effect any change in the attention-training. This treatment has, however, produced obsession. It continues to do so.

Here and there proverbs and other pieces of literary material indicates that there has been at one time a widespread knowledge of attention on the lines now being described. Deprived, however, of context, these indications survive as fossil indicators rather than being a useful guide to attention-exercise for contemporary man. (82)

- o Many of the effects of meditation systems employed by cults have been shown by researchers to be the product of suggestion and the induction of auto-hypnotic states. “Reports by endless scores of students that such techniques have “changed my life” or “given me spiritual bliss” are more reflective of their own naivete, gullibility, and over-suggestibility than anything else.”

Unlearning or emptying of the mind cannot be accomplished on a time scale, nor by some simple technique, such as meditation. While various gurus and spiritual hucksters may try to convince us otherwise (taking our money in the process), such “Eastern” pastimes as meditation, yoga postures, or breathing exercises are *not* the means of achieving permanently cleared consciousness. At best, these random, piecemeal exercises are capable of providing some momentary relaxation and stress reduction, nothing much more.

It is not that these kinds of practices can have no function in learning how to learn, but they may or may not be indicated at any point in study. Genuine exercises are temporary aids, and not prescribed indiscriminately for anyone at any time. In authentic schools they are performed within a broad context of instruction and non-exotic learning experiences. (83)

- o In many cultures the emotional arousal produced by music, dance and movement is confused with ‘higher or spiritual experience.’ The spiritual use of music and dancing is very different from their employment by cults for excitatory purposes or to produce an emotional effect. The appreciation and perception of music by even the most cultivated and refined person constitutes only the lowest range of the sublime possibilities of music.

- o When music is enjoyed for its mere emotional or intellectual value it produces a taste for a secondary indulgence that veils the real usefulness of music as a means of developing the inner consciousness. According to the Sufi Muinudin Chishti: “Be sure that you do not train yourself to music, in case this holds you back from even higher perceptions

Music can be used, and has been so used, to increase the milk-yield of cows. This is a factor which operates in the case of cows. In other instances, where human beings are concerned, there is merely the sensation that the music ‘gives’ something. In some of these cases, what the music is ‘giving’ is a vehicle or instrument whereby emotional tension can be released. In order for music to exercise a function in the formative or developmental area, it must be composed and performed, and experienced, on the basis of knowledge of its value for such a process. This brings us to the question of the understanding of music as a very much more important phenomenon than most people realize. Music can be used, and is on fact sometimes used merely as a training or ‘conditioning’ element, linked with certain emotions. The individual writing, playing or hearing this music may conclude, largely through social habit, that he is deriving something from the music which may, in fact, be far removed from what he is actually deriving, or could derive. (84)

False Teachers and Pseudo-Mystics

‘How can the sleeper arouse the sleeper?’
Saadi

- o The contemporary world is full of self-proclaimed gurus who take advantage of the many gullible ‘seekers’ who lack the discrimination capacity to perceive the real from the false.

Under the right teacher the disciple learns to learn, not to remember and obey. *Satsang*, the company of the noble, does not mold, it liberates. Beware of all that makes you dependent. Most of the so-called ‘surrenders to the Guru’ end in disappointment, if not in tragedy. Fortunately, an earnest seeker will disentangle himself in time, the wiser for the experience. (85)

- o The majority of individuals generally accepted as spiritual teachers or mystical masters are actually engaged in social, tribal or community concerns – not spirituality. “Imitation gurus only imagine that they are ‘spiritual’ when they are only on the shallower (though certainly important) level of ordinary human life.”
- o Even famous and widely respected figures in the spiritual world may be performing social and psychological functions rather than spiritual ones. Being a source of worship or comfort to someone else is not a spiritual activity, but a social or emotional one.

Q: The dangers of personality-worship and the need for everyone to find his own way are the most attractive statements of a certain guru, who has many disciples all over the world. Should he not be listened to?

A: There is a saying: 'Do not fell a tree which is giving shade.' Many people imagine that such gurus as this are holy and useful. They are, in fact, providing a distinguished social (though not a spiritual) service. Those who need this 'shade' should certainly have it.

As for the others, they should be able to know what is shade and what is something else. The way to determine this is to look and see whether, in the words of another proverb, some people are 'Feeding a flame and crying "Fire"!' (86)

- o False teachers unwittingly provide an important social service for genuine teachers by attracting the self-deluded and immature spiritual seekers. This removes potential headaches for the real teachers and allows them to carry on their work with those students who can truly benefit.
- o Although the bogus 'mystical master' is often accused of leading their disciples astray, the adherents of such cults are partly to blame for attaching themselves and remaining with the spurious cult or group. People tend to get the teachers they deserve. *'If there were less receivers of stolen goods, there would be fewer thieves.'*
- o Many of those who are considered reputable spiritual teachers are anything but. People are drawn to the pseudo-mystics and charlatans following the principle 'like attracts like.'

Mountebanks, charlatans, pretenders and the deluded comprise, from time to time, the majority of those who are reputed to be spiritual teachers.

Because the pretenders are so common and numerous, people judge each and every sage according to whether he behaves like them.

They have adopted the wrong principle. You look at hundreds of oysters and this tells you how to recognize an oyster again when you see one. You cannot tell by the same method which oysters contain pearls. (87)

- o Some alleged spiritual teachers court large audiences and try to recruit many followers out of vanity and self-importance. At the low end of the scale leaders of cults may be frauds, charlatans or opportunists "combining the opportunity to indulge their vanity or lust for power over others, with a convenient and easy method of making money."
- o The famous or powerful personality who attracts thousands or, in some countries, million of followers is rarely a genuine sage. "People who attract really large audiences bring them together by a combination of things, such as the words, actions and appearance of the event." This sort of display is entertainment, not teaching.
- o The would-be 'spiritual' teacher may appear genuine because he or she will take pains to fulfill then image of what the disciple expects of a teacher. "The false teacher will pay great attention to appearance, and will know how to make the seeker think that he is a great man, that he understands him, that he has great secrets to reveal."
- o Teachers who cultivate 'saintly' appearance or signal by manner, dress or behaviour that they are 'spiritual' are usually superficialists guilty of imitation or obsession.

- o There is often a great disparity between the outward appearance, behaviour and repute of an alleged 'spiritual' teacher and their immaturity and lack of development in an inward sense. "The ability to endure pain, to impress others or to detach from ordinary connections with the world has little to do with enlightenment."
- o Many false teachers employ dramatic techniques and behaviour to impress or stupefy their followers, without the advantage of any real knowledge or suitable context. Real teachers act appropriately to each situation without drawing attention to themselves.

A genuine spiritual teacher takes his colouration from his surroundings. He can always appear to be ordinary, commonplace by the standard of the community in which he is operating. Ask yourself: "Would my old Aunt Maggie find him ordinary and acceptable if I brought him along for tea?" (88)

- o Authentic spiritual teachers exhibit a wide and flexible range of behaviour depending on the time, circumstances and audience. One of the hallmarks of partial or deluded teachers is a limited, static way of relating to the world, even though this may be perceived as 'sanctity,' 'detachment' or 'calmness' by followers and disciples.

This inner unification of personality, expressed through a diversity of ways, means that the true teacher does not resemble the outer, idealized personality of the literalist. The calm, never-changing personality, the aloof master, or the personality which inspires awe alone, the 'man who never varies' cannot be a real master. The ascetic who has attained detachment from things of the world and is thus himself an externalized incarnation of what seems to be to the externalist to be detached is not a master. The reason is not far to seek. That which is static becomes useless in the organic sense. A person who is always, as far as can be ascertained, calm and collected, has been trained to have this function, the function of detachment. He "never shows agitation," and, by depriving himself of one of the functions of organic as well as mental life, he has reduced his range of activity. (89)

- o Pseudo-mystics usually dislike humour and jokes, calling them superficial and irrelevant. One of the telltale marks of a false teacher is an overly serious, joyless demeanor and a distinct lack of a sense of humour.
- o Two salient characteristics of pretend or deluded teachers is that they seek attention and are always telling people what to do or think. The members of cults often form unhealthy dependency relationships with such teachers, or else become sources of personal service and material benefit to the leader.
- o Bogus spiritual teachers relate to their disciples in a manner inconsistent with the mutual honesty and respect inherent in any real learning situation. Attempts to impress or intimidate or mystify the student suggest that the so-called teacher is not genuine.
- o People with a desire to teach or dominate others will sometimes set themselves up as spiritual 'teachers.' One of the scourges of contemporary Western culture is that almost anyone can set

themselves up as a 'teacher,' even though they lack the proper background and training.

Briefly, the Eastern tradition that one learns until one is permitted by a teacher to teach (an ancient tradition perpetuated in apprenticeship and the granting of degrees in the West), is not adhered to in many non-academic areas in the West.

The reason for this is not far to seek. In the West, the prevailing culture's emphasis is on haste, on getting something and passing it on (e.g. products or ideas, after value-enhancing) and so on. This has taken the form, in spiritual, psychological and other areas, of people trying to teach, to expound, to treat or cure, to communicate, before they are properly fitted to do so.

The fact that, in the West, anyone can set up as an expert, a teacher, a therapist or adviser, compounds this error.

The 'Commanding Self,' always agile in sophistication, conceals from the individual that he/she is trying to run before being able to walk. When people start to approve of what the individual is doing, this is misread as a validation of his or her role.

This, indeed, is the aetiology of many cults and most examples of people who have become prominent beyond their true current capacity. (90)

- o One of the signs of a false or imitation teacher is that he or she will accept almost anyone as a disciple, regardless of capacity and preparation. "Where there is a demand from 'learners' for something which is offered by 'teachers,' there is always an abundance of 'teachers' and 'learners' who are not in fact carrying on any real teaching function or learning activities."
- o Many so-called mystical masters lack a basic understanding of the teaching and learning process and do not know the simplest facts about human psychology and physiology.
- o Researchers have identified and described some of the characteristics of deluded teachers and how the spiritual aspirant can learn to distinguish the false from the true guide.

There are certain ways to determine if a teacher or school is authentic or false:

1. Being given an ultimatum, or being asked to choose between two people or two courses of study or two forms of behaviour. Whoever asks you to choose between him and others is the false 'teacher.'
2. If you are told, or if it is hinted to you, that 'something important is going to happen soon,' know that you should abandon that group or teacher.
3. Any supposed 'teacher' wearing clothes or other apparel foreign to the country in which he is living, or which he visits, means that you should avoid such a person.
4. Any alleged teacher who claims or implies that he is 'on the Path of Blame' (deliberately courting unpopularity) is false, since the Path of Blame must be anonymously trod.
5. Anyone who says or does anything in your presence implying that he or she

has influence in the affairs of the world and is exercising it, is not a real teacher.

6. No real teacher will claim or imply Supreme Mastership or enlightenment.
7. The following signs are common when teachership is claimed by those not entitled to it:
 - assumption of importance;
 - convincing others that one is taking a deep interest in them, especially when they are ill or in distress;
 - mysteriousness and hinting;
 - tolerating the deluded;
 - confusing friendship with teaching;
 - organizing inconsequential journeys;
 - allowing one's hand to be kissed;
 - appearing on platforms with 'other mystics';
 - allowing exercise to be carried out without supervisors to intervene at appropriate moments. (91)

o Common sense is the best judge of who is or is not a real spiritual teacher.

Q: How is the ordinary individual to know when his or her teacher is false?

A: By applying the assessments of common sense to the problem, just as one does with anything else. It is not necessary for the teacher to behave in an absurd fashion in order to carry out his mission. But it *is* likely that a false, deluded or maimed one will.

Q: How, then, should a person interested in a spiritual group or teacher defend themselves against false, deluded or disabled teachers?

A: If there is anything about such a "teacher" which is regarded as abnormal, repulsive or objectionable by a majority of ordinary (non spiritually-minded) people, especially when they are informed of all the facts about this individual known to the followers of the "teacher," then you will know that he is undesirable. This is because, although the true teacher is other-worldly, he has as a major task the need to present himself as acceptable to the ordinary members of the wider community in which his work is set. (92)

REFERENCES

1. Chawan Thurlnas "Current Sufi Activity: Work, Literature, Groups and Techniques" in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 96.
2. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p.190.
3. Idries Shah Seeker After Truth (London: Octagon Press, 1985), p. 24-5.
4. Idries Shah The Way of the Sufi (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 303-4.
5. Thomas Cleary Rational Zen (Boston: Shambhala, 1995), p. 16.
6. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 223-4.
7. Thich Nhat Hanh Zen Keys (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), p. 47-8.
8. Fares de Logres "Vanity and Imitation" in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 251.
9. Idries Shah "Sufi Spiritual Rituals and Beliefs" in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 29.
10. Idries Shah The Sufis (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), p. 69.
11. Idries Shah The Way of the Sufi (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 297.
12. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 66.
13. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 266.
14. Idries Shah A Perfumed Scorpion (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 37.
15. Idries Shah "Current Study Materials" in The World of the Sufi (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1979), p.285.
16. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 185-6.
17. Idries Shah "Current Study Materials" in The World of the Sufi (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1979), p. 284-5.
18. Thomas Cleary Instant Zen (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1994), p. xii.
19. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 333-4.
20. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 276-85.
21. Idries Shah The Way of the Sufi (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 299.
22. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 33.
23. Stuart Litvak Seeking Wisdom: The Sufi Path (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1984), p. 29-30.
24. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 260.
25. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p.276.
26. Omar Ali-Shah The Course of the Seeker (Reno: Tractus Books, 1996), p. 120-1.
27. Idries Shah A Perfumed Scorpion (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 56.
28. Idries Shah Evenings with Idries Shah (London: Designist Communications, 1981), p. 15.
29. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 282.
30. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 276-7.
31. Charlotte Beck Nothing Special (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), p. 208-9.
32. Idries Shah Seeker After Truth (London: Octagon Press, 1985), p. 22.
33. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 263-4.
34. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 284.
35. O.M. Burke Among the Dervishes (London: Octagon Press, 1984), p. 138.
36. Desmond Martin "A Session with a Western Sufi" in The Elephant in the Dark and Other Writings on the Diffusion of Sufi Ideas in the West (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976), p. 151.
37. Albert Low To Know Yourself (Boston: Charles E. Tuttle, 1997), p.110.
38. Idries Shah Reflections (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 54.

39. Rosalie Marsham “Sufi Orders” in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 114.
40. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 13.
41. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 280.
42. Thomas Cleary Instant Zen (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1994), p. xvii.
43. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 143-4.
44. Idries Shah Evenings with Idries Shah (London: Designist Communications, 1981), p. 35-6.
45. Idries Shah The Sufis (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), p. 313.
46. Idries Shah A Perfumed Scorpion (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 36.
47. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 236.
48. Rosalie Marsham “Sufi Orders” in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 117.
49. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj I Am That (Durham, North Carolina: Acorn Press, 1982), p. 477.
50. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 240-1.
51. Idries Shah Special Illumination (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 5-6.
52. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 187-8.
53. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 117-8.
54. Benjamin Ellis Fourd “An Appraisal of Sufi Learning Methods” in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 50.
55. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 250.
56. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 4.
57. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 223-4.
58. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 245.
59. Idries Shah Special Illumination (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 5-6.
60. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 258-9.
61. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 257-8.
62. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 246-7.
63. H.B.M. Dervish Journeys with a Sufi Master (London: Octagon Press, 1982), p. 75-6.
64. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj I Am That (Durham, North Carolina: Acorn Press, 1982), p. 477-8.
65. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 196-7.
66. Idries Shah A Perfumed Scorpion (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 22.
67. Robert Ornstein The Mind Field (New York: Pocket Books, 1978), p. 121.
68. Idries Shah Knowing How to Know (London: Octagon Press, 1998), p. 206.
69. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 125.
70. Philip Kapleau The Three Pillars of Zen (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), p. 89-90.
71. Idries Shah Seeker After Truth (London: Octagon Press, 1985), p. 136.
72. Idries Shah Evenings with Idries Shah (London: Designist Communications, 1981), p. 17.
73. Philip Kapleau Awakening to Zen (New York: Scribner, 1997), p. 128.
74. Gustav Schneck “Three Forms of Knowledge According to the Naqshbandi (‘Designers’) School” in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 226.
75. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 209.
76. Idries Shah Caravan of Dreams (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 200-1.
77. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 261.
78. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 85.
79. Thomas Cleary Instant Zen (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1994), p. xiii.
80. Robert Ornstein The Psychology of Consciousness (2nd revised edition) (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 183.
81. Qalander Abdur-Rahman Siddiqi “Finding, Losing and Finding the Way” in The Sufi Mystery (Ed. N.P. Archer) (London: Octagon Press, 1980), p. 8-9.
82. Idries Shah Learning How to Learn (London: Octagon Press, 1983), p. 88.

83. Sturat Litvak and Wayne Senzee More Ways to Use Your Head (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,1985), p. 115.
84. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 320-1.
85. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj I Am That (Durham, North Carolina: Acorn Press, 1982), p. 478.
86. Idries Shah Seeker After Truth (London: Octagon Press, 1985), p. 139.
87. Idries Shah The Way of the Sufi (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 300.
88. H.B.M. Dervish Journeys with a Sufi Master (London: Octagon Press, 1982), p. 67.
89. Idries Shah The Sufis (New York: Anchor Books,1971), p. 394.
90. Idries Shah The Commanding Self (London: Octagon Press, 1994), p. 6-7.
91. Hoda Azizian "Observations of a Sufi School" in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 131-3.
92. Hoda Azizian "Observations of a Sufi School" in Sufi Thought and Action (Ed. Idries Shah) (London: Octagon Press, 1990), p. 134-5.