

21 June 1965

READING 6

What for you is the most important Truth which, far from being self-evident in the ordinary way, stands out at moments in brilliant certainty?

(Pause for discussion)

For me just now it is the real meaning concealed in the ancient expression 'Know thyself'. What do you think it means? Do you realise what different meanings have been found in it? Have you discovered that your own sense of their meaning is a guide to where you stand on the Ladder on a given day?

(Further discussion)

The history of our own branch of this Work illustrates the steps in our Realization of the Self-evident Truth contained in these two words. After World War I, we came together as a group of people on a voyage of exploration prompted by our various 'Intimations of Immortality', and studied under Mr. Ouspensky the fragments of a System of Knowledge whose source was obscure. Then the most acceptable approach to a disillusioned generation was that 'Everything happens in this way because man is a machine'. As more and more people collected round him, Mr. Ouspensky developed a series of Psychological Lectures between 1934 and 1940. At that time the approach to this supreme question was put like this:

To know oneself – this was the first principle and the first demand of old psychological schools. We still remember these words but have lost their meaning. We think that to *know ourselves* means to know our peculiarities, our desires, our tastes, our capacities and our intentions, when in reality it means to know ourselves *as machines*, i.e. to know the structure of one's machine, its parts, the speed of different parts, the conditions governing their work and so on. We realise in a general way that we cannot know any machine without studying it. We must remember this in relation to ourselves and must study our own machines. The means of study is self-observation. There is no other way and no one can do this work for us. We must do it ourselves.

(Psychological Lectures – 3rd Lecture, p.35).

Mr. Ouspensky, of course, was well aware that these words 'Know thyself' concealed a bigger Truth (e.g., the Magician in his play *Osokin*); but he would only speak of it in private and to those close to him. After his death in 1947 we struggled on observing our machines until we met up with the Meditation. From the moment of the first meeting with the Shankaracharya in India (1961) a whole new meaning began to open up. 'In Meditation', he said, 'we begin to be what we are. But first we must come out of what we are not...' 'We must leave the darkness and come toward the Light'. We soon discovered that the Meditation was part of perhaps the most ancient Tradition in the world that is still alive today; a Tradition centred on the achievement of Realization of the 'Self'. As the original Shankaracharya wrote twenty-five centuries ago in his poem *The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom*:

Some say devotion is meditation on the nature of one's Atman... Who but oneSelf (Atman) is capable of removing the bondage of ignorance, conflicting desires and the bad results of one's own actions... Liberation cannot be achieved except by the direct experience of the identity of the Individual with the Universal Mind; neither by physical training, nor by speculative philosophy, nor by the practice of religious ceremonies. The form and beauty of the lute and skill in sounding its strings are for the entertainment of the people and not for the establishment of an empire in the heart through the good government of the King.

(verses 31, 55–57)

'To know oneself', then, means to know the King; study of the Universe is to know the Mind of the Creator; the only true religion is called 'Sanatan' – the religion of the Atman – and is the inner content of all religions as embodied, for example, in the Lord's Prayer of the Christians.

This is surely the most important Self-evident Truth of all, for *Atman is Truth* as manifested in His three characteristics: Unity, Happiness and Consciousness.

But we know that this Supreme Truth only becomes Self-evident in glimpses on the Fourth Step of the Ladder, and fully on the Seventh Step. Having oneself partly realized this Truth one can infallibly recognise its taste and can place accurately in relation to the Ladder of Self-realization (by their sayings, writings and actions) any man dead or alive who has any interest for us.

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; His Light is as a niche in which is a lamp, and the lamp is in a glass, the glass is as though it were a glittering star; it is lit from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, the oil of which would well-nigh give light though no fire touched it – light upon light! – God guides to His Light whom He pleases; and God strikes out parables for men, and God knows all things... Hast thou not seen that God? – all who are in the heavens and the earth celebrate His praises, and the birds too spreading out their wings.

Mohammed when he wrote this in the Koran (24: 35 and 40) stood at that moment high on the Ladder (far above all crimes done in his name); and he is at One with someone of so completely different a temperament and an external Tradition as Thomas à Kempis:

Happy is he for whom Truth itself is the Teacher, not by figures and words that pass away; but as it is in itself. Our own opinion and our own sense do often deceive us and they discern but little... Him to whom the Eternal Word is speaking is delivered from a world of unnecessary conceptions. From that one Word are all things and all speak that one; and this is the Origin, which also speaks to us. No man without that Word understands or judges rightly. He to whom all things are One, he who reduces all things to One and sees all things in One; may enjoy a quiet mind and exist at peace in God. O my God, who art the truth, make me One with you in everlasting Love.

(*The Imitation of Christ*, Chapter 3)

It is clear at moments when this Supreme Truth is self-evident to us, that it is as far from the average scientist as it is from those who make strife between religious sects and persecute heretics in the name of religion. That is why we don't discuss what is called 'Religion' and why we shouldn't spend too much time and interest on what is called 'Science'. As His Holiness said:

The wars in the name of Religion and the Sectarian differences are the product of confusion in Buddhi. When Buddhi is not related to Atman, these things manifest

themselves in the activities of these people. They are, after all, not supposed to be high on the Ladder; they are inferior people, and their inferior minds create all these difficulties for themselves and others.

We, ourselves, may before long learn not to indulge in 'Sectarian differences' in the name of our System, but each of us be united with the rest in pursuing a common aim in his own way. Then we shall discriminate without struggle and happily accept any breath of this Truth from whatever Source it comes:

The perfume of flowers cannot travel against the wind, be it the scent of sandal, tagara or jasmine; but the sweet odour of the good man travels even against the wind; the Excellent pervade every place with their fragrance.

(from the *Dhammapada*, 4, the Canto of Flowers, v.54)

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