

1 February 1965

READING 2

We can start from the last part of the ‘conversation’ (which we owe to Colin Lucas and which was given out in full last week); the last few sentences were as follows:

- The System of fifty years ago was *one* formulation of this Truth, but now a new formulation is needed.
- And why is this?
- That old expression of the System was intended for a specific purpose at a specific time. It was given, if you remember, only to people of a certain kind – people who had ‘magnetic centre’. It was wasteful also – ‘many were called but few chosen’. And it was given verbally – it was never intended to be written down. One of the reasons for this was that the words in the System had to be specially learnt – their meaning could only be understood through practical experience.
- But later it was written down and published?
- Yes, but of course in this form it is worse than useless. As written material – as a series of published works – it confuses people terribly – it leads to all sorts of wrong ideas.
- So would you say the System is dead?
- That particular outward expression of the System is dead, but the Truth behind the System never dies. Just lately it is very much alive.
- And you feel it is this Truth which has to be reformulated?
- Yes, it is our job to do this – it is our job to reformulate what we understand of the Truth in a new way. Otherwise the Truth will be lost. Truth cannot remain unformulated for long or it is lost. We cannot afford to let all that we have understood be lost.’

As an example we can begin this week to try to develop the classical System idea of *Essence and Personality*. As an eternal Truth you can find the element of this idea in the Shankaracharya’s System dating back to the Upanishads; you can find it in the writings of Plato; in the Hebraic Scriptures; in the Gospel stories; in the Sufi Teachings. Today it underlies the whole of biology and physiology, though it could not be understood without the help of Higher Mind. Yet though the System gives a much more precise form to it, we can’t be certain to have touched more than its surface possibilities. But even in this introductory form on which we start to-day, it was found immediately acceptable recently to the few people to whom we could give the meditation among the tea-planting community high on the hills of North-Western Kenya. Moreover, for people with no other background than conventional Christianity, it seemed to lead quite directly and simply to the meditation:

Essence and Personality

Each of us can easily find two sides of his own nature, and all people in the world are the same in this respect. First there is what we are born with, what is strictly our own, which we call the *Essence*. All the rest (which we call the *Personality*) is what we have borrowed from other people since we were very small children. You can see your own children growing this Personality which is making them all rather alike, although they were born essentially quite different! Personality gets us through life, but it is fluctuating, unreliable and often false. Moreover, it tends to dominate the

Essence so much that the latter in most people remains like a child of six or seven, and may even die. Yet to develop and use our full potential, we have to find a way to make the Essence grow. That is what Traditions and special Teachings are designed to do; that is what the method of meditation you are being given can achieve more quickly and easily than any other provided it is sown into the Essence and not just the Personality.

The parable of Dives Lazarus (referred to at that Bible Reading the other night) has been interpreted as a description of Personality and Essence. 'Riches' can mean a rich and powerful Personality; the 'poor man' (the Essence) gets only 'the crumbs from the rich man's table'.

Q. So a powerful personality can get in the way?

A. Yes. In particular, we find that it is 'easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle' than for Personality alone to succeed with this meditation and find the Kingdom of Heaven within. Yet the Essence takes the meditation quite naturally as if it had always been longing for it. So we have to leave our Personality behind us on this journey!

Q. But how do we leave our personality behind when we need it all the time?

A. This has always been the great problem. Often in the past the Kingdom of Heaven has been regarded as only the perquisite of full-time specialists – the monk, for instance, has to give up his life, his career, his name even, and take the vow of celibacy. People have tried to kill out the Personality, just as they have done violence to their bodies in the name of God. But the great Tradition to which this System of Meditation belongs (which has existed for more than twenty-five centuries, that is, earlier than 600 BC) recently has proved that Spirituality and the ordinary life can go hand-in-hand. Two half-hours a day for the householder is sufficient, provided he genuinely and patiently does it exactly in the way he is advised (from long experience) to do it. We have the constant advice of one of the four Leaders of the Tradition in this matter. But in order to be allowed to give the meditation, I had to promise to give it according to the Tradition and therefore you must take part in a small ceremony of Initiation (more than twenty-five centuries old) for which you will have to bring a certain contribution (explanation given). In fact this ceremony has the effect of penetrating the Personality and sowing the good seed in the Essence.

(Pause)

In reality it is the *right relation* between Essence and Personality that is important. All our frustrations and limitations follow inevitably when Personality (which should be the servant) usurps the place of Essence and carries on as master or mistress of the house. This meditation is the simplest, most natural way of restoring the right relation, provided that for two half-hours every day we leave our Personality behind, and pour energy and nourishment into the Essence which will gradually grow to its full strength ready for the next life (whatever that may be).

Q. Has Personality anything to do with the actor's mask – the 'Persona'?

A. Yes, that is one of its functions besides the chief one of acquiring knowledge. A mask is necessary because it would be a mistake to expose our real feelings to all and sundry, to 'wear one's heart on one's sleeve'. But we believe in our masks and wear them so constantly that when they are torn off there is sometimes nothing behind!

- Q. Can the meditation be used to distinguish what is true from what is false or assumed?
- A. Yes, that's what it ought to do. But it often happens that Personality takes over the meditation, like everything else. Then you sit looking holy and pretend to meditate in order to keep up appearances or something. That's when some help is needed from time to time.
- Q. It often seems to me that I spoil everything by exaggerating the importance of whatever I'm doing. I've even thought of giving up music for that reason.
- A. That would be a silly thing to do. When you are playing the organ, you know, don't you, just when Personality takes over and spoils things?
- Q. Oh yes, it's very clear then.
- A. So the practice of music is an excellent way to keep Personality in its right place, if you set your sights on the Kingdom of Heaven and not on self-display!
- Q. Do the effects of the meditation look the same in different people?
- A. At first they look very different, so the meditation is best kept as a rather private individual thing, as Personality always takes over when we begin to talk. Take husband and wife, for instance – do they really know each other even after years of marriage? Day after day their Personalities just play over a few stale gramophone records to each other. But gradually with the meditation the real person, the person one fell in love with, begins to emerge again. The signs and symptoms of this emergence will be very different in each of you.
- Q. So the end-result is to be yourself?
- A. Yes, quite quickly one begins to rediscover oneSelf and this produces a wonderful feeling of certainty and happiness like meeting up with a long-lost friend. What's more, you only have to go a little way in the dark. You remember the parable of the Prodigal Son? 'And while he was yet a long way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.'

– – – Till to-morrow then.

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What do we still not know and understand, and why would it help us now to study this idea more practically?

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