

25 April 1966

## READING 1

## 'COMPLETENESS'

The Tradition of this Work stresses the need to keep in view the big Aim (the highest ultimate Aim that we can conceive), at the same time bringing the small day-to-day aim gradually into line with it.

What should we set as our highest Aim in our work during these Summer months? I would suggest that the following is a good formulation of the highest and final Aim:

There is no more excellent source of Joy than silence free from mind-images...  
drinking in the joyful essence of the Self.

Whether walking, standing, sitting, lying down, or in whatever state, let a man possessing wisdom freely dwell, rejoicing in the Supreme Self.

Neither place, nor time, nor posture, nor position, nor any other rule is the cause of release from bondage; ... the illumination of the Supreme Self is the only rule of life...

(*Crest Jewel of Wisdom*)

This is for the man at or near the top of the Ladder; we must ask ourselves what is necessary to bring us to that happy state? If discipline, what is the minimum discipline required, how directed and how applied? Granted that the individual desires with all his heart to get as near to realization of the Self at some time or times every day (which is his own affair), in what way could belonging to an organisation like this, by linking him with the Inner Circle, assist his efforts?

His Holiness has said that good company is very important, and *that* we must all have in some form or another, though it must leave sufficient time for private quiet. But there is another point which he stresses as necessary, and which is, I think, being rather neglected at the present time, and that is the *conduct of one's living*, the way one behaves not only when one comes to this house but at other times; for one's life is just as much a part of Self-realization as is any technique one uses.

The only way to achieve this *sincerely* (without putting on some sort of 'act') is to encourage the recognition that, in fact, *one is never alone*. Always the Atman, that Observer which is one's ideal Self, is looking on. With Him putting on an act is no use at all. For He 'understands my thoughts afar off'; 'He is acquainted with all my ways'; 'there is not a word in my tongue but He knows it altogether'. Cultivation of this attitude gradually abolishes that 'inner considering' in the presence of others which spoils all our relationships. 'This above all, to thine own Self be true...'

In connection with the external aspect of behaviour (that part of our nature which we reveal to other people) there was an idea that might be brought more into use, which was a central point among the great men of Greece for at least two centuries, and that is what they called *'arete'*,<sup>†</sup> the nearest equivalent of which would be 'completeness'. The first Greek poet we know of who centred his work on this was Tyrtaeus in the middle of the seventh century BC.

---

<sup>†</sup>**Note:** The meaning of *arete* (Liddell & Scott): 1) goodness and excellence of any kind; 2) like Latin *virtus*: manhood, prowess, valour; also manly beauty, dignity; 3) excellence in art and workmanship, skill; 4) in moral sense – goodness, virtue, reputation, merit.

He asks wherein lies the *arete* of man, the fulfilment of his nature, and he suggests various alternatives as if this was a matter of common discussion... Though the seventh century BC saw the emergence of the individual in Greek poetry, it related him to something larger than his own circle and his own honour, and insisted that in the end he found himself in fulfilling his duties to his city.

(C.M. Bowra, *Landmarks in Greek Literature*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1966, p.72)

Two centuries later Pindar revived this idea:

His supreme hero was Hercules, who, after a life of self-denial, prodigious labours (and a most painful death), became a god and dwelt on Olympus. Pindar does not expect his athletes to become gods and expressly tells them not to aspire to that; but he believes that in their moments of success and glory they enjoy a special felicity which is otherwise known only to the gods... For him success is proof of a man's worth; and this is his version of older ideas of '*arete*'... In this vision of mankind... what counted was *the realization of a full human being to his utmost limits*.

(ibid p.110)

[NOTE: It is perhaps this special 'felicity' that people who attain their peak during a Mukabeleh so often try to describe.]

That was just before the golden period of Greek literature ended with the uprising of democracy, the overthrowing of aristocratic rule, and finally the surrender of Athens to Sparta in BC 404.

The word *arete* does not occur in the Greek Gospels, but it does come into the Epistles, particularly in Peter:

And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith *virtue*, and to *virtue* knowledge.

(2 Peter 1:5)

The Latin word *virtus* is considered to have been the equivalent of that Greek word centreing on the completeness of a man as an individual. In this Work as we try to go up the Ladder of Self-realization, we should try to develop a completeness which includes the ordinary obligations of the householder, and live to an ideal with an orbit larger than that of the 'common life'.

\*

The relevance of this idea to the life of Society today can be seen from some of Mr. Ouspensky's words in the 1930's, which are even more true now in view of the public acclaim of the fashionable forms of incompleteness:

In modern thought people ignore the idea of *being* and different levels of being. On the contrary, they believe that the more discrepancies and contradictions there are in a man's being, the more interesting and brilliant he can be. It is generally, although tacitly – and not always even tacitly – admitted that a man can be given to lying, he can be selfish, unreliable, unreasonable, perverted, and yet be a great scientist or a great philosopher or a great artist. Of course this is quite impossible. This incompatibility of different features of one's being, which is generally regarded as originality, actually means weakness. One cannot be a great scholar or a great thinker or a great artist with a perverted or an inconsistent mind, just as one cannot be a prize-fighter or a circus athlete with consumption. The widespread acceptance of the idea that inconsistency

and amorality means originality is responsible for the many scientific, artistic and religious fakes of our present time and probably of all times.

*(5th Psychological Lecture)*

Quite recently the Shankaracharya has also been stressing the idea of 'completeness' as the best thing to aim for: 'In whatever respect you feel yourself incomplete, then the Meditation (for example) will give you that very thing'. It is better to set this aim for ourselves and other people, rather than to aim at any *one* quality like Truth or Goodness, Happiness or Love, because any of these might have a different appeal at different times or for different people. Some might feel they already had enough of one of these things. 'If one feels oneself incomplete therefore,' he says, 'one should look for completeness and allow oneself to be attracted towards that'.

We know very well what he means; in the Atman, one's true Self, alone lies completeness; and to reflect that completeness the mirror of the mind must be clean and still and untroubled. Go for that first.

It's the same thing that's at the heart of all true religion; and Christ's 'Sermon on the Mount' is really all about how to do it. 'Therefore,' He says, 'don't keep fretting about the future, saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or how can we get the clothes we want? ... For your Heavenly Father knows perfectly well that you have need of all these things. But seek first His kingdom and learn to practice His Will, and then all these things will come along'. We keep forgetting what treasure we have, so we have too 'little faith'.

#### **PRACTICAL**

The function of any groups of ours, small or large, centres on the aim of reminding each other of this simple Truth, rekindling this 'faith,' and abolishing our ignorance by saturating our minds in True Knowledge. Analytical talk about details just adds to the 'Cloud of Unknowing'. Each person has to find his own way in his own particular kind of life, and no two people are alike, so that is each person's private business. So in meeting, either practise something together in order to enjoy life to the full and to find the right questions; or bring together material which will help to solve some important question for the work of spreading the True Knowledge in this present age.

\* \* \*

