

2 May 1966

READING 2

Returning to the central fact mentioned last week: 'In fact *one is never alone*. Always the Atman, that Observer which is one's ideal Self, is looking on'; we need first to confirm our belief in this above all. There are plenty of witnesses to it. Besides the writers of the Upanishads, the first Shankara and the long line of his successors, it is the central point of Traditions which have taken root in the West. The Stoic philosophy, for instance, founded in Athens about 300 BC by Zeno (probably a Phoenician from Cyprus) maintained that happiness lies in accepting the laws of the Universe and in promoting human brotherhood. After the first century BC, Stoicism became the philosophy of the Roman ruling class and its shining lights were Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Of these, Epictetus (for many years a Phrygian slave), is quoted as saying:

You are a distinct atom of the Essence of God; and contain part of Him in Yourself. Why then are you ignorant of your noble birth? Why do you not consider where you come from? ... You carry a God about with you, poor wretch, and know nothing of it.

Yes, why *are* we ignorant of this? Why do we know nothing of it? The explanation is simple once you recognise it personally. There *is* a part of the mind whose nature it is to be still and pure, and in its natural state will reflect perfectly the 'God' who is our True Self. Unless this mirror is performing its function, how can we realize this Truth upon which everything depends? It doesn't matter what you *call* this part of the mind; just get to know it well. In practice it is easily found by observations like these:

1. When we sit down to meditate and close our eyes, we often observe a hubbub of noise and restlessness and movement; after a time, if we are truly meditating, all this is still and quiet. The thoughts and movement are going on somewhere, but a long way off. This part of the mind which was noisy and is now still is the part we are talking about.
2. To observe the change from movement to stillness of this part, we don't need to sit still and close our eyes. It may be experienced at any time in the Mukabeleh, but perhaps most often in the fourth period of the Mevlevi Turning when the dervish turns on place and the lovely sound of the Ney alone is heard. It is experienced in our Movements to music even when 50 or 60 people are close together performing complicated and different movements and even saying certain words out loud.
3. It comes by chance at moments in the day when we have finished one job before we start on the next; it comes in the first moment of waking from sleep; it comes sometimes with a good impulse, a vision, or a new idea; it comes when we are suddenly aware of the beauty of Nature; with its coming happiness begins.
4. In human relationships (particularly that between man and woman), it comes when the Atman of one is aware of the Atman of the other, in complete peace and relaxation. Most human relations are spoilt by dualism, each person regarding his own ego as central and making demands on the other. But the True Observer suffers no such duality; as the Upanishad says:

Your own Self lives in the heart of all; nothing else matters.

It is always worth trying to bring a married couple back to this when they take to accusing each other.

5. We surely know very well this part of the mind which can change from movement to stillness. It is somewhere deep to the forehead. It is made restless by turning thoughts and unnecessary talking; by flicker vision, by conflicting desires, and in fact by any manifestation of moving centre – of the machine – overflowing into a place which does not belong to it. It is the rising of those things into our consciousness which spoils the mirror so that we know nothing of the God we carry with us.
6. There is, then, *only one small part of the mind which we have to keep still*; with practice all the other parts of the mind can go on with what they are doing. This part is the bridgehead by which we invade a new territory and conquer a new country. But this small part needs looking after, protecting, refreshing, keeping clean. In India, His Holiness says, those who are celibate and have no wife, love and protect this part as if it were their wife.

All change of Being depends on this process which must go on patiently, in depth, and for a long time. As much as we do this, we will know what those strange words *Buddhi* and *Atman* mean; all ignorance stems from ignorance of this mirror of the mind and the riches it ought to be reflecting.

SUMMARY

These and many other observations lead us towards a general Truth about which the oldest Teachings and contemporary pronouncements appear to say something in common.

Thus, some neurophysiologists are currently tending to regard consciousness as something *outside* those procedures (like electrical recording or chemical analysis) by which research on the mental machinery has been carried out. And according to the Vedanta,

... the mind is a material entity devoid of consciousness; but like a mirror it can reflect consciousness.

According also to the Nyaya System of philosophy (which described the Seven Steps of the Ladder of Self-realization), consciousness (for us) is 'produced only when Atman comes in contact with the mind'.

[A useful simile is that of the electrical mains supply of power which remains latent until connected with an electric light bulb or a heater.]

We have something similar in the most recently developed part of our brains which, if alerted to *attention*, can reflect the Light of the Observer into the depths of one's own mind or on to anything with which the mind may be engaged. There are many possible degrees of integration of this large area of the brain, and there are different degrees of Light as in His Holiness's simile of light bulbs of different wattage.

All experience shows that success in mundane, as well as in Spiritual things, depends upon cultivating this one thing, and all our failures are due to neglecting it. We return to it whenever we can during the day, and at night when we put our heads on our pillows we feel with the Sufis:

O my God, the stars are shining, and the eyes of men are closed; and kings have shut their doors; and every lover is alone with his beloved; and here am I, alone with Thee.

NOTE

To return to 'the art of living' – the ideal the Greeks called *Arete*; Christians also can recall that St. Paul obviously practised something of this sort to which his highlights of inspiration must have been due. Otherwise he could not have written as he did to the men of Phillippi:

4. Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, rejoice.
5. Let your uprightness (*epi-eik-es*) be known to all men; the Lord is near;
7. And the peace of God which surpasses all mental activity, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.
8. For the rest, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever honourable (*semna*), whatever just, whatever pure and innocent (*agna*), whatever lovely and friendly (*pros-phil-e*), whatever of good report; if in things there is any virtue (*arete*) and any praiseworthiness, these are the things to think about.
9. And what you have also learned and received and heard and seen in me, these things you must practise (*prass-et-e*); and the God of Peace shall be with you.

(Philippians 4: 4–9; literal translation from the Greek)

* * *

