

31 January 1966

READING 2

'REFLECTION'

We have been assured (and some of us have become convinced by our own experience) that all the most desirable things – Truth, Happiness, Love, Beauty, Inspiration, Self-confidence, etc., reach our Consciousness *by reflection* from that Ultimate 'I', the Atman.

At the present time, before anything else, we need to 'reflect' better. The level of integration of the psyche which was evolved in man especially to *reflect* the Atman[†] is called in the Shankaracharya's language, the Buddhi. There are no English or even Western equivalents for these words, so there is no need to waste time trying to juggle with words.

What has been found to be really profitable is to take one of His Holiness's descriptions and try to experience it *in depth*. Perhaps then the words will come – one's own words. Some rather promising experiments last week were based on trying in this way to experience the meaning of an answer His Holiness gave to a question (August 28th, 1964. Record p.124):

R. Different egos prevail at different times. Which should assign what to do or not to do?

S. One should look towards Buddhi; but, as we are, our Buddhi is not clear. It is so fast, busy and entangled that it can't properly exert its influence. We are always full of desires and doubts – both.

The Buddhi is provided to discriminate. It can discriminate only if it is still. The Light of Atman reflects through Buddhi, but Buddhi in movement is unable to reflect. One needs to still it, give it rest. A machine much used gets hot and needs rest to cool down. So does the Buddhi. After a good deep sleep one finds oneself fresh, and also after meditation one comes out with clear Buddhi. Only clear Buddhi can assign.

The result of carrying out these instructions had made such a deep impression on me in India and since, that the urgent need to give you the best chance to do the same thing was the real reason for the plans outlined last Monday.

Object: To find what these words mean to you personally that 'our Buddhi is so fast, busy and entangled'?

Anyone can start by himself or you can try in twos and threes to spend, say, a Thursday evening on the quest for what I call 'inspired stillness'. But don't rush it; think clearly how it would be best for you to begin.

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After you have become *still*, you may want an idea to think about or discuss. Here is one such. You will have noticed that many of His Holiness's stories start with someone going to a 'Holy Man' – like the story of the elephant in last week's paper. One day I asked him, 'What does 'Holy Man' in your stories represent?' He said: 'Man who is supposed to see things with the eye of the Atman; Buddhi reflecting Atman.' I suggest that a story is given you each week in its proper context (*that's* most important), and that you try to find the psychological meaning, find

[†]See note at end of paper

what it corresponds to in your own experience, and how to use it. It doesn't matter if you've heard some of them before! This one is rather topical:

Q. How to get rid of 'False I' in one's feeling when one knows one is approaching the Centre? One bounces off the place of transcendence when one knows one is getting near it!

S. One should look forward to the Real I with faith and enthusiasm and love. With that, if not first time or second, perhaps third time, the Real I will take you into the Centre and let your 'False I' drop away. Now a story:

There was a Holy Man who had plenty of disciples, all types, who used to flock around him every day to see him and get his blessing. He used to test out his followers in rather a peculiar way. One day he would close the doors and the attendant would tell all the people: 'No audience today.' Most of them would go off, but a few would stay on and just sit there; and after a long time he would have the doors opened and ask how many there are. Even if only a few were there he would ask them to come in and would hold his audience. This is an allegory in answer to the last question.

(24.10.1962)

Has that ever happened to *you*?

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[†]**Note:** This, if you remember, has the wider meaning given by Father Pierre in the section of *The Phenomenon of Man* which he calls 'The Threshold of Reflection' (p.164):

If we wish to settle this question of the 'superiority' of man over the animals... I can only see one way of doing so – to brush resolutely aside all those secondary and equivocal manifestations of inner activity in human behaviour, making straight for the central phenomenon, *reflection*.

From our experimental point of view, reflection is, as the word indicates, the power acquired by a consciousness to turn in upon itself, to take possession of itself *as of an object* endowed with its own particular consistence and value: no longer merely to know, but to know oneself; no longer merely to know, but to know that one knows...

Now the consequences of such a transformation are immense, visible as clearly in nature as any of the facts recorded by physics or astronomy. The being who is the object of his own reflection, in consequence of that very doubling back upon himself, becomes in a flash able to raise himself into a new sphere. *In reality, another world is born.*

[Comment: There can be *reflection without thought* or with thought. I would suggest omitting all this at the first reading of the material in order to keep the main thread.]