

27 January 1969

## READING 1

### KNOWLEDGE, BEING AND UNDERSTANDING

#### NEW ASPECTS

Recognising that the slowness of our progress is mainly due to deficiency of knowledge of ourselves, we tried last term to bring together all the Knowledge which lies concealed in the simile of the Three-storeyed house. Though interest was aroused and perhaps some people were impressed by the vastness and untapped possibilities of man's evolutionary endowment, yet there were many complaints that too much knowledge was given for anyone to *understand*.

This term we need to use what we can of this Knowledge to improve the other component of Understanding which is our Being; for understanding depends not only on what a man knows but upon what he *is*. From the attempts to practise the knowledge we preach, and from hearing the steps by which we have been instructed in this subject by H.H., you will see emerging a wholly new and much more practical idea of Being, which (before the coming of the Meditation and the Turning) had remained for us rather cold, remote and theoretical. Nevertheless the germ of this new idea was given on one occasion in 1915, in this remark: 'You must remember that you *are not* (he stressed these words); before a man can *do*, he must first *be*.'

#### PART 1

The first time the word 'Understanding' was introduced came in October 1962 during a talk about the three Gunas in the activities of man. At one point in the talk, the Shankaracharya was saying:

In the life of a disciplined man the chief problem is to make his mind (Buddhi) clean and precise so that he shall be able to distinguish what *is* from what is *not*. The mind is like your tape-recording machine; what comes out of it depends on what you feed in by the direction of your microphone. Pursuit of Truth cures and clears the mind; but if the direction is the other way, then the mind becomes muddled and the result is pain and suffering... An example shows this: Take a good piece of wood and give it to a carpenter or wood-carver and he would make a useful piece of furniture in a beautiful way, whereas a good piece of wood if given to a fool would perhaps be burnt or thrown here and there... The acts of an awakened Man are bound to be good whatever they may seem outwardly; but the acts of confused men whose minds are not clear, whatever their intentions may be, are bound to be wrong... And here the influence of training by a more experienced person is very great.

There are two aspects of any activity, the outer and the inner; and the interplay of these two determines the result of an action... A *man of understanding* unites everything; he is most attentive, can see all sides, can decide the mode of action and know the result as well. The undisciplined man who does not understand, acts like a machine; he sees no difference between the inner and the outer, the part in relation to

the whole. A Realized person knows the result he wants, and in relation to the whole adjusts the genesis of the action in his mind to the performance of the action, in order to get the desired results.

[Try to get the idea; it helps to find examples you have noticed (there are dozens in the newspapers every day) of three kinds of result: 1) An enterprise which (often surprisingly) is thoroughly successful; 2) if the motive is good and the action is wrong, there will be one kind of wrong result; and 3) if the action is correctly performed, but the motive is wrong, it will lead to another kind of wrong result.]

## PART 2

The next day we quoted back to His Holiness what he had said about 'A man of understanding knows everything and he has full attention', and continued:

Q.1. In our System great importance is attached to *Understanding* which is said to be brought about by a combination of all three sides of a man's nature – head, heart and bodily instinct. Do you agree?

S. He agrees with your description of Understanding and gives an example: Just as a good and efficient doctor knows everything about the disease and about the patient himself and prescribes the right remedy; so a Realized person, a man of full Understanding, knows everything about the world and can diagnose any situation any time.

Q.2. 'Further', we went on, 'Understanding is said to be the result of both a man's Knowledge and his Being – what he *knows* and what *he is*. If either is deficient or if the two are not balanced, would not his understanding be weak and limited?'

S. Of course there are two sides of Understanding – one is Knowledge and the other is Being. Without the coming together of the two, one could not have full Understanding. As an example taken from an ordinary person taking up a trade – he may know the theory of the trade, but not its practice though that is covered by the theory. Another person may be trained in the technique or practice but would not be able to explain the theory. Both of these are weak in understanding of the subject. But of the two the man with practical ability but without the theory is preferable to the theorist; which means that the man of Being is preferable to the man of Knowledge.

R. The same with an art like music – I'd much rather listen to a man who could play and sing, than to someone who just knew the theory!

S. Theory can help your desire to learn something; of course it has also its advantages.

Q.3. Does it follow that two Realized Men with full Understanding could not disagree with another? Isn't disagreement due to deficiency of Understanding?

S. There will be no disagreement between the two Realized Men, two men of Understanding. But there may be outward differences because of the individuality of the two men. A Realized Man might take the Way of the Recluse, get out of the world and meditate; while the other man might plunge into the world, do his work there and Realize his function within the world. But within themselves, in their hearts, they are really one. There wouldn't be any difference between these two except in the outward appearances.

It is a big step forward in practical living when we develop a permanent attitude that all disagreement is due to deficiency of Understanding on one side, or on both. Further, that since one is not a fully Realized Man oneself, one's own understanding of anything may be better or worse but *cannot* be perfect. Consider how much heat and hurt, how much negative emotion and waste of energy can be avoided by remembering this!

### PART 3

That conversation concluded on a bigger scale, which points to one of the functions of our School as a whole:

Q. From the point of view of Understanding, we said, our System describes all humanity as existing in two circles, an *outer* and an *inner*. In the outer circle are the common people and *there*, there can be no understanding, so it is called the 'Circle of Misunderstanding'. The Inner Circle, the Circle of Understanding, contains all the men at different stages of Realization, with the fully Realized Men at the centre.

S. According to the old Indian System, these two circles were brought together by a third one – not a circle but a few people coming in contact with the Inner Circle getting the Knowledge, so that by giving this knowledge to the common people it could keep them satisfied and guide them on the Way. He quoted Kings Dasharat and Jumma who always sent their children to learn from some Realized person who was a member of the Inner Circle, so as to get the full Knowledge and relate that Knowledge to the life of common man. By chance, that arrangement has been lost in India and the relation between the Inner and Outer Circles has been broken. Conditions in India today are bad only because of that; there is no longer any contact between them. He says that he has observed that some of the Western people who find that material progress is not leading towards Realization, are looking towards the Inner Circle, and he foresees that they would be able to gain a lot; but in India today the situation has not yet come to the point where the old relation between Inner and Outer Circles can be easily re-established.

All the above quotations are from the first talk on the subject, which will be continued.

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