

5 November 1973

READING 6

'MYSELF' – THE FIVE LEVELS

We talk of 'Self-development' and of a 'change in level of being'[†] (upon which the capacity for intake of Knowledge depends); but when we notice how often we are in doubt, and realise how changeable we are, we begin to feel rather hopeless. So it is a huge relief to realise that the only 'change' that is needed concerns the right *relationship* of those five levels – Body, Personality, Essence, Soul and Spirit – which give a complete description of a human being. All these are naturally good, desirable and necessary. In all normal people (such as we are), these are fully endowed with all essentials; it is only our wrong view about them and their mutual relationships, that needs changing. At 'street level', the Body and the Personality appear very big and important; but the rest of our endowment is unseen, not known about, totally neglected.

There is no doubt that people hope for great things from these meetings – they come regularly, at considerable personal inconvenience. Why do they keep coming? That's difficult to answer; but some of you do express it very vividly. Let's take it that there *is* some important treasure to be discovered by coming, and let's be sure we go the right way about getting it so as not to waste time and energy.

From long experience we find that the best way of discovering this treasure is by digging for it – a process of elimination – the same as we adopt when we enter a half-hour of Meditation. In one case, we listen to the rhythm of the Mantra; at a meeting, we follow the Knowledge which is given in a carefully chosen sequence intended to help us to attach less importance to what is less real and less reliable, thereby uncovering what is more real and more permanent in our nature. We shouldn't try to jump too far at a time.

Part of a public talk the Shankaracharya gave last January is very relevant here:

People invariably go to a Realized man and say, 'Sir, be good enough to show me the Param-Atman (Supreme Self). That is my greatest desire.' But the poor Realized man has to do a tremendous amount of spadework before he can do that; and for this spadework people have no patience.

An example: A ruler of a Himalayan state went to a famous teacher and asked him: 'Swami, can you show God to me?' 'Yes. But before I do that, can you tell me exactly what you are? Are you the person who does the talking? Are you the body that I see? Or are you something else?' 'Oh, I can't say exactly.' 'Well, when you are so ignorant that you don't know even who you are, who can show you the Supreme Self?'

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So let us begin with what we can observe at first hand. At a new group Mr. Hammond gave a couple of first-rate observations about Personality.

1. I have a blanket picture of myself as benevolent and on the whole desirable, but last week I had to take a party to the West of England, and when some people got out at Winchester and hurried off I found myself revealing a most irascible nature. Noticing

[†]See story, page 171.

this I felt uncomfortable, because it did not fit into the picture I had of myself; and it did not go away immediately it was observed.

2. When I went to a party where the atmosphere didn't improve during the evening, I noticed that my chameleon-like nature was tending to take on the colour and it was unhappy. Nothing violent happened, but it became undignified; and some people were very put out by the silliness and went away. I did not go away, but I was a bit worried because I do know I can very easily take on the colour of someone else, and this is disturbing.

Now this is an excellent beginning! How much better to *know* than *not* to know that this Personality, though a useful and essential servant, is changeable and unreliable, and takes the colour of whatever company it is in. But instead of worrying about it, immediately start digging for something which is more reliable, more true, more yourSelf – e.g., the one that noticed and felt uncomfortable. That's the one that these meetings are primarily for; that's the one that welcomes meditation and finds it perfectly natural. That's the one that is prepared to give up anything in order to find that universal human nature, the Soul, the vehicle of Pure Consciousness.

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Again, the Shankaracharya in a private talk at his Ashram (22nd February) described the Soul from the point of view of power or light:

As compared with the lower animals, the development of power is more marked in the human being. This 'power' resides in the Soul (Antahkarana or inner organ).

Now take the case of an electric light bulb. (The unit of power, as we know, is the Watt, and people have a 60 watt bulb in their bed-side lamp; 150 watts in the living-room, etc.). In spite of this difference, the source of light – the main current – remains the same.

Similarly, the difference in power displayed by different human beings depends upon their Souls, whereas the Supreme Consciousness, the Source of Power, remains the same always. From poets the same power expresses itself as poetry, from scientists as scientific discovery, from lawyers as law, from soldiers as strategy and valour, from athletes as athletic prowess, etc. Some manifest the power more and some less, but the Power itself is neither more nor less from case to case.

This picture, incidentally, has received remarkable confirmation in Western neurology during the last two decades, and you can hear more about that if you like.

So whatever the individual wants in his life, he can be helped to attain it by the Meditation and the true Knowledge (given gradually at these meetings) if he listens patiently, and learns to uncover his true nature by practising what he hears and what he discovers for himself. That way, we learn to see these 'five levels of 'Myself'' the *other way up*, both in terms of power and permanence. This is Self-discovery.

Remember: 'Unless a man is born *from above*, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'

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†A story from the great Persian poem, the *Mathnawi*, illustrates the difference between Knowledge and Being:

A self-conceited grammarian embarked in a boat and said to the boatman, 'Have you ever studied grammar?' 'No,' he replied. 'Then, my good man, half your life is gone to naught.' The boatman was very upset but, at the time, he refrained from answering. Soon the wind plunged the boat into a whirlpool: the boatman shouted, 'Tell me, do you know how to swim?' 'No,' he replied complacently. 'Then, grammarian,' said the boatman, your whole life is naught, because the boat is sinking in these whirlpools.'

In Persian there is a pun on the word MAHW (self-effacement) and NAHW (grammar): If you are dead to your little self, you can plunge into the sea without danger.

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