

22 June 1981

## READING 4

Television programmes like the last of the 'Levin Interviews', namely the one with Krishnamurti yesterday, often raise fascinating questions. When P.D.O. knew this famous teacher before World War II, he described him as 'having a lovely "Being", like a fragrant flower', but warned him that he would need a 'System of Teaching' to help other people to learn how to be like him. This seemed to confirm that in responding to people's questions, surely we have more cards to play from the generous hand we have been dealt.

Let us test ourselves on this sample of the ordinary citizen's approach today to the fundamental question of the existence of some power which we have been accustomed to call 'God'. Here are some excerpts from an unpretentious article in last Saturday's *Daily Telegraph* by the journalist Paul Johnson entitled, 'A gift from Heaven'.

Recent opinion polls seem to indicate that the number of people who believe in God is increasing. I say 'seem' because it is fruitless to ask questions to which honest and accurate answers cannot be given... But if asked why I am so sanguine about God's existence I do not find it easy to answer... When I was a boy it was the notion that if you could have degrees of beauty as was evident, there must be an absolute beauty...

Nowadays I lean more towards the line of argument that the idea of God is essential to man's humanity. If... the image of God disappeared from our consciousness (as Marx falsely predicted it would do) then we would lose our humanity and revert to what, without God, we are – just clever animals. The danger of this approach is that it is liable to degenerate into the anthropocentric habit of reasoning and when that takes root all kinds of horrors become possible... Religion then becomes no more than a form of man's cultured self-expression, not merely self-conscious but self-centred, and ultimately committed to a monstrous transcendental egoism. When I come across such doctrines, I hear, like distant thunder, the fall of angels.

Certainly man and God are (in the words of Charles I) 'two plain different things'. Justice, as the Pope reminds us in his latest encyclical, is human, but grace is divine... That is the nearest I can come to answering the question why I believe in God. Faith is not something that can be acquired by cudgelling the brain... it is an act of Grace, a gift. That is why St. Augustine and the others couldn't quite describe it, and why St. Paul presented it as a miracle. And it is a miracle, though happily a very common one.

It should not be difficult to find words by the Shankaracharya which are relevant to such an approach so as to have confidence enough to give our own evidence in our own words. Here are two quotations of many:

1. From address to the crowds at the great Religious Festival in 1973:

The doctrines and scriptures of all the religions say that the universal Consciousness (Param-Atman) can be reached by going through some established system of discipline. Yet we see people who have tried them all and achieved nothing. The reason is that, for union with the Pure Consciousness of Param-Atman, we cannot lay down any laws as Newton and others have done for the physical universe, and then feel sure that

everything will go accordingly. The union with the Param-Atman is achieved solely by His grace, when His heart melts on seeing the rock-like determination of one of His devotees.

(Record, 29 January 1973)

But there is also a validity in Paul Johnson's boyhood approach which can be used successfully:

2. From an Ashram talk:

We want to think of (contemplate) the Param-Atman. As it is the source of all greatness, its own greatness must be infinite. As it is the source of all happiness, its own happiness must be boundless. As it is the source of all beauty, its own beauty must be – we do not know... But how could our minds ever embrace such a Param-Atman, whose qualities and nature are thus beyond the utmost stretch of human imagination?

This was the question put by Arjuna to the Lord Krishna, and the answer is contained in Ch. 10 of the *Gita* v.v. 20–43. All this implies that by thinking of the most powerful manifest thing as only a tiny particle of the Param-Atman's power; by thinking of the most beautiful object we can conceive and then treating it as a mere atom of the Param-Atman's beauty, and so on, we can gradually find our way to the Param-Atman. Thus starting from sensory objects and rising higher and higher, we reach a state where all difference between sensory and ultra-sensory, between definable and undefinable has faded away from us.

Then, what to ordinary people appear *different* forms and shapes, are to a fully-Realized person all manifestations of one and the same Param-Atman. What he sees then, around and within himself, is Param-Atman, and *not* the mirage that we call 'the world'.

(Record, 1 August 1970)

## CONCLUSION.

Many of us, I feel, would agree that while one is looking outward with the usual dominant hemisphere, one finds a constant debate going on about all such problems, but when looking inwards in silence after Meditation there is no doubt at all about the existence of God – here and now.

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