

A TEACHING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Who is our Teacher and Pupil; Teacher and Student (RL)

Who is our Teacher? This is one of the most important questions we must ask ourselves today; and it might help to delve back into the past a bit, to see if we can understand more about this question.

Our earliest teachers will have been our parents, and those we meet at school. Even here probably the most important quality in the pupil is a strong *desire to learn*. Where does this desire come from? Is there, even at the earliest, an element of Memory present? – which might help to maintain the pupil's interest in learning more: later on the subject itself probably provides the interest to keep going. Formal learning at school and college (apart from one or two teachers who have really inspired us) had perhaps left us disappointed, even discouraged, as though we have only had half the meal we expected – and leaves us in some way on the lookout for something more complete.

What is it in us that recognises, finally when we are first introduced the Work, or to the name of our original Teacher, that this might be *The Thing*? Is it a memory, recognition of something half remembered? Is it our Magnetic Centre awakening our Conscience?

*

Whatever it is, a great prayer of thankfulness is offered up as we recognise, right from the first meeting that we go to that this is going to give us our Liberty! For we find that we can totally trust our teacher; and our questions are answered in a way that is comprehensible to us as we are. These two qualities, the inbuilt desire to learn and total trustworthiness, seem to be the essential ingredients for teacher and pupil relationship.

Work – we soon find that we have to work for our freedom; the Fourth Way teacher makes it plain that the work that is demanded is suitable for a 'Householder' – and the household will take over if the work is not done! So the pupil (or disciple) has to have complete faith in the teacher; and the teacher must be exact in his teaching, and leave no doubt; what he says will connect with the 'Inner Circle' of humanity.

We have recently been studying, in our quest for Stillness, exactly what this work is for the individual, What other work might there be – for our Group, for the School?

*

Dr. Roles said (1979/23):

There are two types of School, according to Mr Ouspensky. The type where the teacher acknowledges the level of his Being and the type where he only shows the level of his knowledge. The Shankaracharya is publicly recognized as a fully Realized man. He doesn't have to say it. He wouldn't be made Shankaracharya unless this fact were felt and seen in every gesture he makes and every word he says.

Dr Roles went on to read from a letter from Nolan Hewitt reporting a discussion with Sri Narayan, our chief contact with HH. The discussion concerned the way HH dealt with his people.

NH letter. Those who come regularly and become attracted to him are the equivalent of our early groups. They hear his words, stories from the Mahabharata and other classics; they hear explanations of their inner significance; and finally there is his own presence.

Narayan said that those who go away and practice the work gradually become connected to him subtly. He knows who are his. It is this subtle connection that is known by both teacher and disciple. So no external connection of disciples is needed because it is done inwardly. So-called disciples gather around him but he does not recognize them as such. Narayan also told me that from time to time these disciples would come and talk to H.H. and they would explain what they had discovered from putting things into practice. Then Narayan said an interesting thing. He said H.H. had found that usually the person himself knew what particular discipline—spiritual discipline—they must practice and that usually H.H. just confirmed this and added a few tips or refinements. They would then go off and practice. From time to time they would stay at the Ashram, be strongly in his company, and then go off and practice their particular discipline.

Narayan said that the teacher or Guru is the Absolute manifesting in a personal form to guide the aspirant. The Grace of God takes the form of the teacher and to see the teacher is to see God. The teacher, they understand, is united with God. As such, he inspires devotion in others. His presence purifies. The teacher is seen as a link between the individual and the Immortal. He is seen as an ocean of bliss, knowledge and mercy. When Guru Deva was asked, “Why is it that everyone who goes in to see you comes out with something?” He said, “This is the storehouse of the Almighty. In exact proportion to what a man gives, so shall he receive.” They believe that the teacher is a fountain of joy, that he removes all troubles, sorrows and obstacles. The belief that the teacher is God is very powerful. They believe a word from him is a word from God. He need not teach anything for even his presence or company is elevating, inspiring and stirring. His company is Self-illumination.

They believe man can only learn from man so God teaches through a human body. The teacher is the gateway to Pure Consciousness but the follower has to enter through it. The teacher is a help, but the actual task of practice falls on the aspirant himself. Beginners need a teacher. To light a candle you need a burning candle. An illuminated soul can enlighten another soul. The blessing of a teacher is very important. These blessings are obtained by pleasing the teacher. A teacher can be pleased with his disciple only if he carries out his spiritual instructions implicitly.

In answer to a question about the qualities of a disciple, I was told: a disciple is he who follows the instructions of the teacher to the letter and spirit and now propagates the teachings of the Guru to less evolved souls on the Path to the end of his life. A true disciple is concerned with only the Divine Nature of the teacher.

Dr. R. This is very important. “A true disciple is concerned only with the Divine Nature of the teacher.”

NH letter (ctd). The teacher's actions as a man are not the disciple's concern. He is totally oblivious of it. To him the teacher is Teacher even if he acts unconventionally. Evidently true discipleship is meant to open the vision. It kindles the spiritual fire; it awakens dormant faculties. There are said to be four classes of disciple. The best disciple is like petrol or aviation spirit. Even from a great distance he will instantly react to the spark of his teacher's advice. The second class of disciple is like camphor. A touch awakens his inner spirit and kindles the fire of spirituality in him. The third type of disciple is like coal. The teacher has to take great pains in order to awaken the spirit within him. The fourth class of disciple is like a plantain stem (hard and rigid). No efforts over him will be of any avail. Whatever the teacher may do, he remains cold and inert. They say two things are necessary for a beautifully finished idol or image; one is a perfect, faultless, good piece of marble; the second is the expert sculptor. The piece of marble should unconditionally remain in the hands of the sculptor in order to be carved and chiselled into the image of God.

. . .

NH letter (ctd). There are different types of sages or gurus. H.H. corresponds to one called Purnayogi . They can initiate an aspirant in any particular path for which he is fit.

. . .

Dr. R. I'm reading this to you since Mr. Howitt wanted to know or look into that attitude of the people at the ashram around H.H. in India and compare it with another branch of the Fourth Way—they are both Fourth Way; namely our branch where we are told never to "surrender" ourselves to a man, an individual, and where both Mr. Ouspensky and his teacher went out of their way so often to stop people having a devotional attitude to them. They even deliberately provoked and then tried to destroy any such attitude. I don't think we should take the above account by its face value as rather primitive or naive. These people know the difference between a human being and God, just as if they worship a figure of Shiva, they know that this is only a figure representing what they experience on the Causal level as Shiva. So don't dismiss it as primitive. Nevertheless, we, I would say, have to realize that the Atman is the Supreme Teacher of the individual, and the Param-Atman—the Self of all creation—is the Supreme Teacher of the Atman, and that any individual may have to reach by a series of teachers of different levels and degrees of being and knowledge so that he finds the fully Realized man who can do all those things—mentioned in this account. We, here, claim to be at the most, "trainee teachers".

Dr Roles emphasised that in our branch of the Fourth Way, we are told never to 'Surrender' ourselves to an individual.

Is it perhaps more like this? If the Divine is in the teacher, a spark of the Divine is in each of us also, so we are told (have we found this for ourselves?). At present we rely very much on the experience and kind-heartedness of all those who are on the same journey as ourselves: if this Spark in ourselves could become a Fire then it must follow that we could become our own Teacher? Is this only going to

happen when we teach a state of Turiya or Enlightenment? We can surely encourage each other (by refining our Buddhi?) along this road?

And then, what is that we want to be taught?

* * *