

LETTER 42.

Box 863, Johannesburg, S. Africa  
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My dear Friends:

We have just come to the end of a truly glorious Convention, the best yet in South Africa. You will not be surprised at that when I tell you that our Guest of Honor was the beloved Brother Sri Ram. We call him the "Theosophical Saint," and that indeed he is. We also had a second Guest of Honor, the English lecturer, Mrs. Olive Stevenson-Howell, who charmed everyone with her naturalness and friendliness. There was a little mystical play at Convention, a dramatization of "The Sayings of the Ancient One." It would not be very easy to get that as it is out of print I think, but it is the remarkably beautiful and mystical words of an ancient sage which have come down from Atlantis, and were found in an ancient Bantu tongue. They remind one very forcibly of Light on the Path.

The South African Convention always adopts a key-note. This time it was some words from The Voice of the Silence, "Thou art thyself the object of thy search." I had suggested words from a prayer of Socrates, "Give me inward beauty of soul and may the outward and the inward man be at one," but the other was shorter and more to the point. Our National President, Mrs. Stakesby-Lewis, therefore, put me down to speak on these words of Socrates. Perhaps I can make it into a Letter one day. Now I will fulfil my promise and write on that wonderful last chapter of Mr. Sri Ram's latest book, An Approach to Reality. The chapter is called "The Path to Reality," and without indicative marks I will largely quote his words.

He begins with noting the many ways in which men search for what satisfies, in all manner of things that offer escape and oblivion from sorrow, difficulties and responsibilities. All are found to be false leads. The time comes when the individual begins to search for a Reality beyond these.

What is that Reality? It cannot be truly described for it is beyond and above our normal experience, though intimations come to us at our highest and loveliest moments. "Reality," says he, "can only dawn upon us when we are ready for it. It is there and shines all the time. It will shine upon us only when we turn ourselves round, revolve our nature to receive its light."

An approach to Reality which is merely mental must necessarily be superficial. For with all of us mind is one thing and life is another. The mind knows only inferred knowledge, based on the report of the senses. In what direction then shall we proceed? This is defined by the motive which also determines the end. All hidden support for maintaining the self, such as power, position, even affection, binds the consciousness to things. The only motive which results in an enlargement of the consciousness is love in its purest, most selfless, non-dividing sense.

How is this love to be evolved? We cannot create love. For "we" are the mind which creates the very limitations that are a denial of love. (Cf. V. of the S., "The mind is the great slayer of the Real.") But life, which is a never-ceasing mode of action, has in it an inherent capacity to love, when it ceases to be distorted by the antithesis of self and others.

In the Indian books the Way to discover the Reality takes the form of a repudiation, a casting-off of forms which are unreal, and by becoming detached from them. It is comparatively easy to separate ourselves from our physical bodies, but quite another matter when it comes to our psychological states, constantly molded by impressions received consciously and subconsciously. Discrimination is really a kind of peeling off of numerous coats of limitations in which the self has become wrapped.

Fundamentally it is desire which creates the unreal. But one can experience the acutest of sensations and yet remain unaffected by them if the consciousness is just conscious in the true sense of the word, and does not react to the sensation in a manner which brings into its nature forces which remain there. The sense of "I-ness" of self and self-seeking, arises from desire. Before we can rise out of the "I-ness" we have to become conscious of how it enters into the whole range of our thought and feeling. The process of freeing oneself from desire is as much in the scheme of things as the earlier involution in them. Desire is killed neither by indulgence nor suppression. Indulgence allays the action of craving, but only for a very short while. Suppression buries desire without killing it. The ghost of it remains, awaiting the cycle of re-emergence. We can best wither up desire by exposing the truth about it to an intelligent willingness to see things as they are without any wish to see them otherwise. If we can be absolutely objective with regard to ourselves, we can be aware of the nature, origin and effects of every desire in ourselves. This may be described as studying the lower self in the light of the Higher. When the mind is colored by desire, the self-awareness centred in the mind mistakes the color for itself, and thus is formed the notion of the separative self. When all desires are gone the mind is purged of its impurities and becomes a pure, crystalline lens through which shines the light of Buddhi. When the identification of the consciousness with the desire-mind and body comes to an end, the long partnership between Manas and Kama is dissolved at last. It is then Buddhi-Manas. (Cf. H.F.B.'s statement that Antakarana, the bridge between the lower and the Higher Self is Manas purified of personal bias.)

The Path to Reality obviously lies not through the seeking of gratifications of any sort, which is an endless process, nor through the mind which has been molded by desire. The search for it must be an absence of desire and of all wishful thinking and the presence of love. Without love, all seeking is self-seeking. The Christ sounded the note: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." If we can only do this as sweetly as it sounds, we will know the Reality for ourselves. It is by giving rather than by taking that we are flooded with the waters of life.

Nearly all the above is Sri Ram's own words. Recently I had a letter from one of my Group members which made me very happy. I hope she will not mind if I quote her words. "Your letters have taught me so many lessons that even you would be astounded. I have learned to love everybody--I never thought it was possible until I tried; and now I find that my capacity for loving everybody and everything is endless." Now isn't that enough to make one feel happy? Dear friends, it is not by understanding things with our minds that we grow, but by living them in the little things of everyday life. The Little Way of St. Therese was taking everyone of the little events of life as they came along. Through them God speaks to us, and we speak back to Him. Let me close with Tennyson's words from Morte D'Arthur: "And so the whole round earth is every way, Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Your affectionate friend,

CLARA CODD