

WHAT IS TRUTH?

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'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' (John XIII: 32)

When Pilate asked Jesus *'What is Truth?'* (John XVIII: 38) it was probably a rhetorical question. He may have thought that truth was too elusive to grasp and, in any case, how could Jesus have given the Roman Governor an answer that would have meant anything to him, for Truth is One, without countless opinions, arguments, prejudices or imperfect faiths? Even the disciples had received but a little knowledge of what was ultimate and absolute, whilst those 'outside the circle' gained something, perhaps, from the parables.

The *whole truth* is too sacred to be given out indiscriminately. It must be hidden away from the eyes of the profane as it cannot be comprehended under its true light... veiled, to protect it from desecration and selfishness. Hence we are left with relative truths only – make of them what we will – and hence, too, the foundation of the Mystery Schools and their rites of initiation, to preserve that which is too dazzling and profound for others to distinguish and describe. This led to the motto of the true Occultist: *'to know, to dare and to KEEP SILENT'*.

So Jesus remained speechless, for absolute truth cannot be divulged in a world ruled by conditioning, contradictory doctrines, dogmas, scheming politicians and corrupt governments. How could Pilate, a tool of the brutal Roman Empire that worshipped many gods and a 'divine' emperor, be told 'thou art THAT', which is beyond status, egoism, worldly wisdom, nationality, time and space ... devoid of name, form, qualities and defects, the range of all speech and objects of consciousness – remaining pure, absolute and eternal?

Final knowledge is to be found only in ourselves; supreme illumination lies within. *'To reach the Sun of Truth,'* says HPB, *'we must work in dead earnest for the development of our higher nature.'* (Collected Writings IX: 32) Such latent powers and perceptions develop slowly and grow steadily towards that immovable, unqualified truth which is not of this world, with its limitations and illusions. *'Man, know thyself'* was the greatest truth ever taught, for inner perception is the only way to eternal truth when all outer, sense-based living has been left far behind.

'And who loves truth in this age for its own sake?' HPB asks. To search diligently and live according to this 'symbol of Eternity' is practically impossible in a society whose highest values are built on appearances – not on reality... on self-assertion – not on intrinsic values. If you doubt this, tune into the dozens of TV channels in this country. Channel-hopping is a sure way to gauge the population's general level of consciousness. In the words of the Maha-Chohan: *'Between degrading superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism, the white dove of truth has hardly room where to rest her weary unwelcome foot.'* The world is in such a poor state morally that none of its religions and philosophies can offer the solution to the many problems crowding in on it. Nor have they ever possessed the TRUTH and nothing but the TRUTH, whilst *'the lethal emanations of modern civilization kill all goodness and truth.'* (HPB)

Where are the unprejudiced minds, the pure spiritual consciousness in a world whose inhabitants live at an ever-increasing speed, seemingly dominated by stress, greed, violence and corruption? Is truth ever honoured in such a world? Yet, if truth is absolute it must also be omnipresent and universal, underlying every world-religion if searched for, but only at its roots and initial growth, never in later dogmatisms and sects. Thus it must be filtered out, purified and freed from error. Only the esoteric science of Theosophy contains this essence of Truth, which is One and Universal.

The motto of the TS, 'There is no religion higher than Truth', stems from those Alexandrian philosophers who were called 'lovers of the truth'. Theo-Sophia, Divine Wisdom, is a synonym of truth; a beacon... *'the pure colourless sunlight and shoreless ocean of eternal truth without the illusory veil of the senses'* as HPB put it. This truth, which lies behind and beyond deceptive appearances, is reached only when we are complete masters of self, able to control all our physical and psychic senses, thus awakening to consciousness our divine nature.

The Viveka-Cūdāmani also points out that *'the nature of the one reality must be known by one's own clear perception and not through (any) learned man'* (56) and Śamkarācārya stresses, too, that if the supreme truth remains unknown, the study of the scriptures is useless; *'even if the supreme truth is known the study of the scriptures is useless, for the truth must be sought out by intuition.'* (61) This is true spiritual liberation; in the Upanishads it is called 'destruction of ignorance'. So let us pay heed to what the great teachers have said about Satya, absolute truth. Again, the Maha-Chohan: *'All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory, apparent self, to recognize our true self in a transcendental divine life.'* And we should perpetually remind ourselves that *'the things of earth are but appearances and imitations of truth... The things of earth are not the TRUTH!'* (Pimander) Thus *'the wise know that... the supreme truth... is absolute consciousness, in which are united the knower, the known and the knowledge, infinite and unchangeable.'* (Viveka-Cūdāmani, 241)

And what of the future? What lies in store for humanity? A repetition of the present, only darker and more terrible, as some would have us believe? Or shall we move to a new dawn for humanity – pure sunlight and truth, charity and happiness? Will HPB's prediction, that in the 21st century the earth will be a heaven in comparison with what it is now, be fulfilled? The answer lies with those declared theosophists and theosophists in all but name (who knows how many?) who strive for Truth against the Powers of Darkness. For such selfless efforts will lead to Satya Yuga, the Age of goodness, truth and purity, for happiness cannot exist where those elements are absent. And it is our present duty to take part in such work, to try to alleviate human misery whenever possible.

The Society's sole mission is *'to rekindle the torch of truth so long extinguished for all but the very few, and to keep that truth alive by the formation of a fraternal union of mankind, the only soil in which the good seed can grow.'* (CW VI: 333) Are we up to the task? Let us remember that there are many starving for truth out there and that *'...there is not a single member in the Society who is not able to do something to aid the cause of truth and universal brotherhood; it only depends on his own will, to make that something an accomplished fact.'* (p. 336)

So we should cultivate VIRYA, *the dauntless energy* spoken of in The Voice of the Silence *'that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH, out of the mire of lies terrestrial'* (211)

leading to SAT, the one eternal and Absolute Reality and Truth, all the rest being illusion. And never forget that the TS is the chosen corner-stone, the foundation of the future religions. *That* knowledge alone should spur us on to greater efforts. Meanwhile, let us meditate constantly on Brahma-vidyā, *sacred* knowledge, the central truth of the Upanishads, summed up by 'THAT thou art'. This is the final truth, the goal of all wisdom. There is nothing more than that, it is the ultimate truth of all truths and the final experience of all experiences.

TRUTH (from 'PARACELSUS')

TRUTH is within ourselves: it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all
Where truth abides in fullness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception – which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error; and to KNOW,
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. *Robert Browning*