

11 October 1965

READING 2**MEMORY (continued)****Memory and the Gunas****PART 1**

Reading 1 was meant to show you that each of us has built-in to the mechanism a most complicated and highly efficient recording and playback system. Leave it alone, don't analyse it or interfere with it or try to alter it. The common expression, 'I've got a bad memory' simply isn't true. The defect, as in the example of Mrs. Eileen H., is simply 'not attending' to what she was doing at the moment. Unfortunately people setting out toward Spiritual Realization often deliberately produce this defect, dividing their attention by some artificial thought process called 'remembering God' or 'remembering yourSelf'. It shouldn't be that way at all.

But there *is* a way improving the state of affairs, and that is by acquiring a sort of instinctive taste for the Three Gunas. With a little practice, it becomes natural to notice whether your car engine is too hot or too cold. If it's too hot, just keep calm; if too cold rev it up by some kind of physical effort. We'll be giving you extracts of the practical way the Shankaracharya advises us to use this knowledge.

The same thought came to Colin Lucas's mind and he has just sent me this letter:

28 September

I wonder if you remember a conversation with the Maharishi about impressions? He took us all by surprise by saying that when you had a good meditation impressions didn't go so deep – instead of making a deep mark they glanced off, so to speak, and left no permanent trace. One thought, 'that doesn't sound right – what on earth does he mean?'

Then he went on to give us that analogy about the full shop and the empty shop – do you remember? A man has a shop with practically no goods in it. He goes round from door to door trying to sell what little he has. If he doesn't manage to sell this or that it matters to him terribly, for he will starve. But another man has a shop full of goods. And because his shop is full it doesn't matter to him particularly whether he sells this or that – after all, there are plenty of other things in the shop to be sold...

I remember thinking, this explains the whole thing. If the mind is filled with Sattva, the shop will be full – there are plenty of goods in the shop. And this or that little nagging worry will cease to be important any longer, for one sees everything in the right perspective. And so it doesn't matter what impressions fall upon the mind – if they are important they will go deeper, if they are less important they will glance off. What a tremendous relief.

PART 2

The Shankaracharya is also most interested in Stage 1 – the process of Registration or Input. In fact, he gave us last time I went to Allahabad a completely new way of studying memory; and as I shall be asking him some more about Memory, you'd better hear it so as to be ready for anything fresh:

- R. What is the relation between *Memory and Consciousness*? Moments of consciousness seem to bring very vivid memory of quite different nature from ordinary memory of details.
- A. The memory in a period of Consciousness is complete. You see and you remember everything as a whole. But memories depending on physical or sensory experience are never whole; so they are changeable, distorted and short-lived and never real.
- R. The sort of memory I mean, that is associated with Consciousness, is like the memory Lakshman lost when he dived into the water.
- A. He gives a description of three types of memory: Memory imbued with Tamas is lost immediately; you lose everything that you have observed; the impressions vanish out of the mind. Memory with Rajas is sharp, but short-lived, and may be distorted. It's always on the move, it's not *yours*, and will go away. The third type of memory arises from the Sattva. That is the memory that people hold, even in dreams. Most dreams we don't remember when we wake up (Tamas); other dreams associated with Rajas we remember some of them; and there are again certain dreams which we never forget. They are the dreams that come from Sattva. So Memory, too, depends on the Three Gunas.
- R. So the memory the aspirant must have for the Realized man – the most important kind of memory, being imbued with, and coming from Sattva, might persist?
- A. The aspirant's relation to the Realized man can have different flavours. If one word spoken by the Realized man to the aspirant is taken with Sattva (love) it will be fixed in the memory; if with Rajas some will be distorted or forgotten, but even what is forgotten will have gone deep into his heart and will arise sometime. They won't lose their power or effect. Even with Tamas, it may seem that some words have not been taken by the aspirant, but when a suitable time comes they will grow up like seeds and have the required effect on him.
- R. Even in ordinary human relationships memory can be important. One can hurt somebody very much by forgetting. Memory does play a part, doesn't it, in ordinary human affairs as well as in the big relation of aspirant to Realized man?
- A. These days forgetfulness has become a habit with people. But in the case of aspirants this is not the usual thing which happens. If it *does* happen, the Realized man will see that if he begins to forget things, he will be given a shock to get his memory back. A learner who goes to swim in the water is held by the instructor who holds him at a level suitable for learning to swim, but at moments the instructor lets him go down so he gulps some water. But the instructor knows all about it, and if something goes wrong he will simply pull him out. It's all for learning to swim. Just so the Realized man always keeps the balance of the situation in his hands and knows what's going on; if something begins to go wrong, he will see that everything is put right.

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