

6 March 1967

READING 6

MEMORY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Those of you who are trying to get hold of the present-day psychological basis of memory may need some refreshment by looking at memory again 'from above'!

We probably all know by now that the relation between Memory and Consciousness was central to Mr. Ouspensky's teaching. In the 1930's in London he would say:

You will be astonished when you realise how little you actually remember. And it happens in this way, because you *remember only the moments when you were Conscious*. You will understand better what I mean if you try to turn your mind back as far as you can to early childhood, or in any case to something that happened long ago. You will then realise how little you actually remember and how much there is concerning which you simply *know or heard that it happened*.

In New York near the end of his life, he put it in very few words: 'Moment of Consciousness brings very vivid Memory'.

We know now that in a moment of Self-consciousness, the whole scene with all the contained sensations (scent, sight, sound, touch, sense of one's whole body etc.) and of ideas and emotions as well, are all stored in memory with absolute precision, and that all this is recoverable whenever a similar state of Consciousness recurs. Unlike dreams, such vivid memories include oneself objectively in one's true relation to the total scene.

They are obviously moments of direct connection with 'Real I' – that Ultimate Observer who never changes.

It comes as no surprise then, when we put together what the Shankaracharya has given us on the subject, to find he says exactly the same thing and connects it (like Mr. Ouspensky) with a change of our relation to *Time*:

Allahabad 1962. 19 October (1)

'Psychological Time' – Subjective Time

Q. What is the relation between our sense of Time and the state of Consciousness?

When we go to sleep at night, we lose all sense of time; in ordinary daytime state, there is no time for what we want to do; in moments of Consciousness there seems to be plenty of time; in Bliss again time ceases.

S. He says there are different categories of Time. One day we think we have very little time, but actually there is enough. Another day we think we have plenty of time, but really it is terribly short. Time mostly relates to the situation. In sleep we see a lot, we cover large areas of time; but as a matter of fact our dreams occupy very little of our time – a dream which covers a big area of time takes very little time to pass through our consciousness. This difference between dream and our waking state is a thing quite different again from our deep sleep. Time is different again in deep sleep; and of course in 'Bliss' as well time has a different measure, so time varies according to the measure.

He gives an illustration. Lakshman, the brother of Rama, told him that he would like to see the great illusion of Maya – the Maya which Rama was always talking about. Rama replied: ‘You will get into trouble through seeing it, so I shouldn’t bother about it.’ Lakshman replied: ‘I’m quite sure it won’t affect me, and I’m still curious to see it.’ So Rama said: ‘All right, you’ll see it by and by,’ and left the question open. They went to the river to bathe. When they had finished bathing and both were coming ashore, Rama said, ‘My brother, I’ve lost my ring, do you think you could dive for it?’ He went and dived for the ring; at that moment he lost his Consciousness. When he came out of the water, he was in a different land, it was a beautiful countryside. He met there a beautiful woman, and they settled down together, established a house and lived like householders. He begot four sons; and when he became an old man he caught malarial fever, developed a cough and eventually died. When his sons took him to the river, as the custom was, to immerse his body in the water, and as the body submerged, at that moment Lakshman again came out of the water, and out of Maya. He went to Rama with tears in his eyes and repentance in his heart, but still didn’t remember what had happened. But Rama said to him, ‘You wanted to experience Maya, Illusion. Now you have the experience.’

All the differentiation of time and space which we calculate in this world, is the illusion. In the Atman or in Brahma, there is no time, there is no space, it’s all *one*. We see a distorted effect of all this in our worldly consciousness or sleep. The differentiation of time is illusion, for it is (as I said at the beginning) *always different*, because it is illusion.

Allahabad 1962. 19 October (2)

R. The story of Lakshman has in fact answered my next questions, but I would like to hear what he will say.

Q. 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.

S. 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.

S. 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?

S. 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?

S. 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.

Allahabad 1965. 25 October (1)

R. Would you tell us some more about the idea of the Drama of Creation as a means of developing non-attachment?

S. The Creator starts the Creation as a play with the help of Maya. The relationship of the Creator and Maya is the same as that between the individual (Atman) and ignorance. The ignorance is a shadow of Maya, just as the individual is a reflection of the Creator. The Absolute plays with Maya and knows it to be play and thus amuses Himself; the individual doesn't know that because of ignorance; so he has to take recourse to True Knowledge. With this True Knowledge he recognizes the Maya, and then he understands that all that play in the Universe is only a drama. The knowledge of this is True Knowledge. Lakshman saw the dirt, and the speed of memory in his dip.

R. There is a moving aspect of memory and a still aspect. Is it so?

S. Neither the movement and dirt *around* the Memory in Consciousness, nor the stillness and clarity are properties of Memory itself. It seems possibly due to certain influences which we evolved in our Essence; and as long as they are there, this illusion of ignorance, dirt and movement will obscure our Consciousness and Memory... Once they are cleaned and still, one would see everything without being involved in it. One would see things as they are.

R. At Step No.5, or high on the Ladder, the Chitta would be capable of remembering the previous life?

S. The Step No.5 on the Ladder of Self-realization is a step where old influences from the past must have died down completely. Those influences are by now washed and cleaned away, so they no longer exist. In their place new influences have made their home, and those new influences are of a different order.

So it is only *before* Step No.5 that there is a question of remembering anything about what passed before.

The meaning of the story about Rama and Lakshman is that Lakshman is the

Buddhi with Conscious Memory, and that he was never dirty or involved in movement. He had never experienced the ignorance.

He was living in True Knowledge, but he had a curiosity and a desire to see how the worldly people – how the common people in the world lived in this ignorance. So just for a short time, Rama showed him how the common man lives, gets involved in the Maya and treats Maya as Truth. It was a little show put on by Rama for Lakshman just to give him a taste of what life in this world is like. In fact, his Consciousness was clean and still, and *when present* would always know that what was happening was nothing but a drama.

R. I've often recalled that story since you told it there years ago, and just in the last few days I seem to getting the sensation of coming out of Meditation into Maya like diving into the water, and then going into Meditation like coming out of Maya again!

S. This observation is very important. This will lead to clarification of yourself. This is seeing things as they are.

He then quoted a passage from the Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter 2 – variously translated:

‘The Saint is awake when the world sleeps and is asleep when the world lives.
For what is day to other beings is night for the Sage who sees.’ (Ch.2, v. 69)

He explains that it means: A disciple keeps awake while the world is asleep and sleeps when the common men seem to be awake and active. The idea is that the common men are asleep in the Conscious world, while the disciple learns to close his eyes to the material world when he wishes to.

[Note: It seems to be related to Mr. Ouspensky's belief that ordinary people live again and again without remembering. But a man of Higher Being can escape from Recurrence (like closing his eyes in the hour of death to everything belonging to the physical body.)

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