

10 March 1969

READING 7

PART 1

I think that we will not truly understand the meaning of 'identification' or 'attachment' until one gets hold of the following picture:

S. There are two different types of world. One is the *physical* world, and according to the laws of this world we go to sleep in Tamas, dream in Rajas and wake up in Sattva to do our daily work. Being awake physically means only our bodies are awake and are being governed by the laws of the physical world.

Then we have another world which we may call *Spiritual* world. Here again we have three states of our being. To be only physically awake means asleep in the Spiritual world. This is the state in which most of humanity lives. The dream state of this Spiritual world is more like the subjective world of individuals where knowledge plays its part, but it is not the True Knowledge. The awakened state means being alive to the Eternal Laws which encompass the human race in Eternity. This is the real wakeful state. There is a shloka in the *Bhagavad-Gita* which says: 'That which is the night of all beings, for the disciplined man is the time of waking; when other beings are waking, then it is night for the sage who sees.' Those who are really awake, they see both the worlds in proper perspective. For such men all the activities of the world for possession and pride are futile, for physical laws have no influence on such people.

There are other aspects also. Just as when on the physical plane one sees the non-reality of the dreaming state, so does one see the non-reality of the physical world when he is really awake. Thirdly, a man on the physical plane never forgets even in his dream that he is a man and not a beast, so the really Awakened Man, having known the Atman, he never forgets even in the physical plane that he is the Atman and nothing less than that.

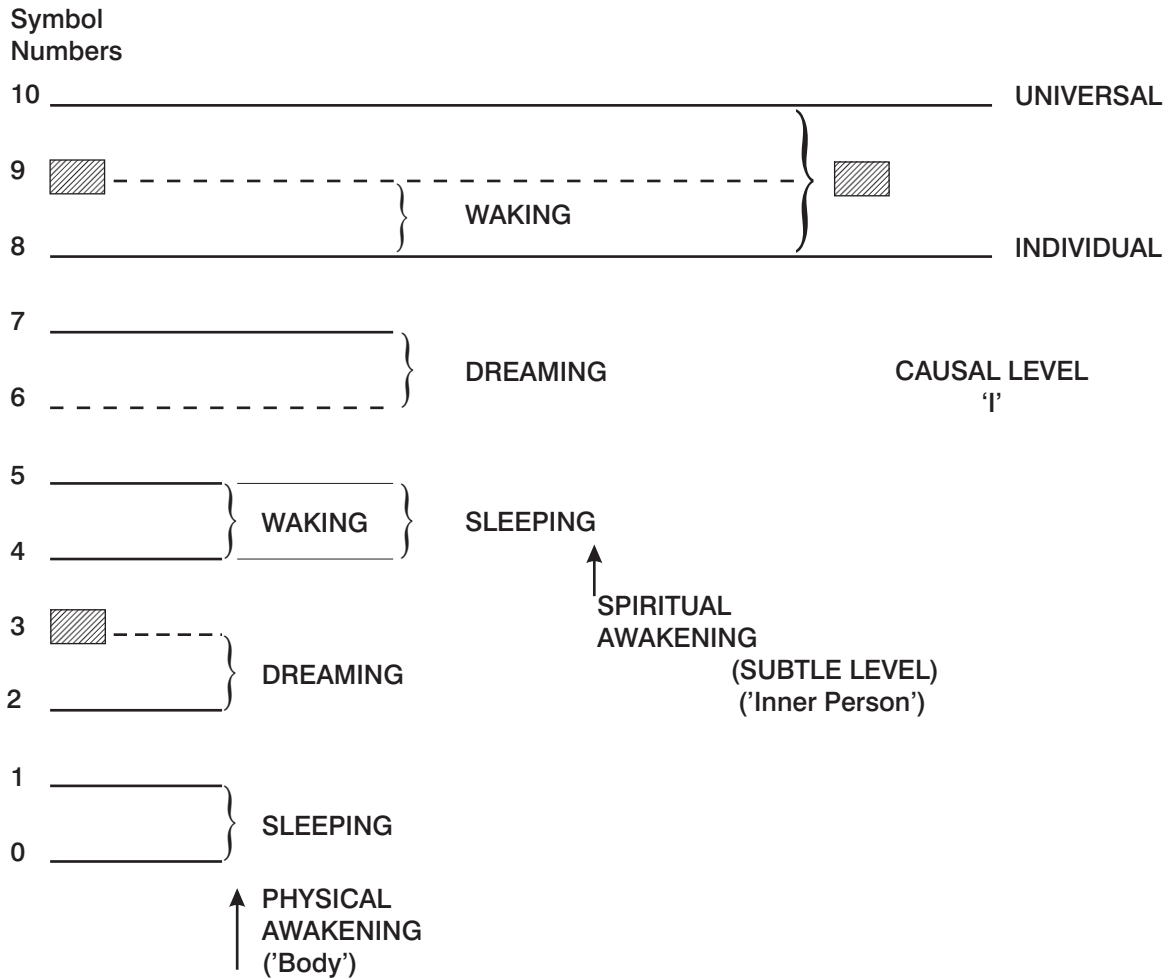
R. Will that be from the Fifth step of the Ladder?

S. That is so.

(Record, 21 October 1967)

The figure (overleaf) summarises the passage you have just heard, as well as other talks by the Shankaracharya. The cycle of waking and sleeping of the mind-body machine occurs every twenty-four hours of our lives and is therefore thoroughly familiar to everybody. At point 3 you get up and do something, and this physical activity produces the profound changes in the breathing and circulation which leads to the ordinary daytime 'waking state' – a state of maximum *activity* of brain and body.

But the 'Spiritual Awakening' must begin by reducing this activity to complete physical quiescence twice a day, at the same time remaining awake and receptive. One will then gradually become aware of the Causal Level, Real 'I', which is already perfect but not realized to be so by the mind. The word 'Liberation' refers to this level, and means that the Atman is freed from the bonds of individuality and merges with the Creator of the Universe. This is described in the following talk in 1967:



R. One hopes for a peaceful coexistence between the physical and Spiritual worlds like the 'two birds' of the *Mundaka Upanishad* (3: 1):

S. quotes the two verses in Sanskrit, which are translated like this:

There are two birds, two close friends, who have made their home on the self-same tree. The one pecks at the sweet fruit, while the other, not eating, looks on in silence.

The first is the human spirit, who feels sad, bound in by ignorance. But on beholding the power and glory of the Universal, is freed from sadness for ever.

S. These two sweet friends are the Atman and the Absolute. The Atman is involved with the Creation and its fruits. It feels as if it is seeing, eating, sensing, and part of Nature; and in so doing gets 'attached' to the world; whereas the Absolute, although in and with Creation, is in no way involved and only watches and enjoys the show.

One does not see and understand that the change must take place in man's nature (Prakriti) and not in the Atman which never changes, for if it were subject to change it could never be liberated. One who understands this becomes very light, and walks in freedom without carrying the load of the world. He is one who enjoys the drama in its true meaning, and never associates himself with the characters of the drama. Our job is simply to watch and play our appointed roles.

(Record, 4 November 1967)

NOTE: 'Identification' really arises from identifying the Spiritual with the physical world. Separate the two, and confusion and falling asleep will disappear.

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PART 2

The great gulf between the Causal World of the Spirit and the Physical World of the Body, is most movingly expressed in the *Apocryphal Hymn of Jesus*:

Then having danced with us,
The Lord went forth.
And we, as though beside ourselves,
Or awakened out of deep sleep,
Fled each our several ways.

I, then, when I saw Him suffer,
Did not even stay by His sufferings,
But fled unto the Mount of Olives,
Weeping at that which had befallen.

And when He was crucified on the Friday,
At the sixth hour of the day,
Darkness came upon all the earth.
My Lord standing in the midst of the cave,
And lighting it up, said:
'John, unto the multitude below in Jerusalem
I am being crucified,
And pierced with lances and reeds,
And gall and vinegar is given me to drink.
But unto thee I speak,
And what I speak hear thou.
I put it into thy mind
To come up into this mountain,
That thou might hear those things
Which it behoves a disciple to learn from his Teacher
And a man from his God.'
Having thus spoken,
He showed me a cross of light set up,
And about the cross a great multitude,
Not having one form:
And in it the cross was one form
And one likeness.
And the Lord Himself I beheld above the cross,
Not having any shape, but only a voice:

And a voice not such as was familiar to us,
 But one sweet and kind and truly of God,
 Saying unto me:
 'John, it is necessary
 That one should hear these things from Me,
 For I have need of one that will hear.'

[At this point we suggest five or ten minutes' meditation.]

Returning to the diagram, between the Causal World and the Physical World lies the confused junctional region of the Subtle World of human psychology (points 4–9). It is to this Subtle World with which School work (its 'three lines' and all disciplines like meditation) are concerned.

PART 3

The difference between Physical awakening and the (much rarer) Spiritual Awakening is very apparent on the large scale of human history. A good example was to be found in the second of Sir Kenneth Clark's talks on *Civilisation* on BBC 2 last week, *The Listener*, 6th March 1969, 'The Great Thaw':

There have been times in the history of man when the earth seems suddenly to have grown warmer or more radioactive... I don't put that forward as a scientific proposition, but the fact remains that three or four times in history man has made a leap forward that would have been unthinkable under ordinary evolutionary conditions. One such time was about the year 3000 BC, when quite suddenly civilisation appeared, not only in Egypt and Mesopotamia but in the Indus valley; another was in the late sixth century BC, when there was not only the miracle of Ionia and Greece – philosophy, science, art, poetry, all reaching a point that wasn't reached again for 2,000 years – but also in India[†] a spiritual enlightenment that has perhaps never been equalled. Another was round about the year 1100 AD. It seems to have affected the whole world – India, China, Byzantium. But its strongest and most dramatic effect was in Western Europe, where it was most needed. It was like a Russian spring. In every branch of life – action, philosophy, organisation, technology – there was an extraordinary outpouring of energy, an intensification of existence.

Sir Kenneth then led up to Chartres via Cluny (Hugh of Semur), Moissac, Clairvaux (St. Bernard), St. Foy, Vézelay, and St. Denis (Abbot Suger).

The very construction of Chartres Cathedral was a kind of miracle. The old Romanesque church had been destroyed by a terrible fire in 1197: only the towers and the west front remained, and the people of Chartres feared that they had lost their precious relic. Then, when the debris was cleared away, it was found intact in the crypt; the Virgin's intention became clear – that a new church should be built, even more splendid than the last. Once more the chroniclers describe how people came from all over France to join in the work, how whole villages moved in order to help provide for the workmen; and of course there must have been many more of them this time, because the building was bigger and more elaborate, and required hundreds of masons, not to

[†]About the time of the first Shankara.

mention a small army of glass-makers who were to provide the 170 huge windows with stained glass. Perhaps it sounds sentimental, but I can't help feeling that this faith has given the interior of Chartres a unity and a spirit of devotion that exceeds even the other great churches of France, like Bourges and Le Mans.

However, one must add that all the faith in France couldn't have rebuilt the cathedral if the see of Chartres hadn't been extremely rich. After the fire, the Dean and Chapter decided to put aside three years' income for the rebuilding; and their income in modern terms has been reckoned to be about £750,000 a year.

The building is in the new architectural style to which Suger had given the impress of his authority at St. Denis: what we call Gothic. Only at Chartres the architect was told to follow the foundations of the old Romanesque cathedral, and this meant that the Gothic vaulting had to cover a space far wider than ever before. It was a formidable problem of construction, and in order to solve it the architect has used the device known as flying buttress – one of those happy strokes where necessity has led to an architectural invention of marvellous and fantastic beauty. Inside there is no trace of difficulty or calculation: the whole harmonious space seems to have grown up out of the earth according to some natural law of harmony.

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Chartres is the epitome of the first great awakening in European civilization. It is also the bridge between Romanesque and Gothic, between the world of Abelard and the world of St. Thomas Aquinas, the world of restless curiosity and the world of system and order. Great things were to be done in the next centuries of High Gothic, great feats of construction, both in architecture and in thought. But they all rested on the foundations of the 12th century.

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One hopes that in the course of his remaining talks Sir Kenneth will indicate how he thinks tomorrow's Spiritual awakening (so urgently needed) will arise. It will of course have to be something entirely new; we cannot recreate or imitate the past in an atmosphere so different. My own belief is that the System of Meditation and related Knowledge can do this, if only there are enough people of a Being and a Spiritual Knowledge comparable with the leaders of Gothic times.

[It is expected that at least two weeks will be needed to understand the diagram on the two scales – that of the individual, and that of Western civilization today.]

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