

19 May 1969

READING 3**THE BREAK-THROUGH****PART 1**

We certainly struck a rich vein last week; it is evident that many people know well the general characteristics of moments of Spiritual awakening and can express them in a vivid and convincing way. Though all agreed about the main hallmarks (different feeling of time, sense of liberation, change from excitement and depression to joy and love, light of understanding shed on people or on knowledge not previously understood, heightened sense of living and surroundings, unity, lasting memory, etc., etc.), all these were very variously expressed in your own words.

There were two reasons in my mind for reintroducing this exercise. One of course was to get some more firsthand material for a book on the 'Expansion of Consciousness'; and this you amply fulfilled. The more important reason was to enable you to find ways of using this experience for going up the Ladder of Self-realization more confidently and quickly.

I had in mind particularly a part of Mr. Ouspensky's Teaching which has been insufficiently explored. Some of you will remember that he used to say that, though we have no command over consciousness ('we cannot be conscious at will, at the moment when we want to'), we can 'start remembering ourSelves by the special construction of our thoughts'. By recalling, that is, our 'state of mind' in flashes of consciousness, we can learn to attract consciousness by arranging our minds so as to look at things in that same way. 'You must understand,' he said, 'that we have found the weak spot in the wall of our mechanicalness... Later on you will learn that the practice of Self-remembering... has not only a psychological meaning, but it also changes the subtlest part of our metabolism and produces definite chemical, or perhaps it is better to say alchemical, effects.' So all the rest of the time when we are not actually experiencing Consciousness we can train our minds to remember Consciousness.

[Discussion; can you decide on a group plan for putting that method into practice?]

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PART 2

It is useful to realise that the word 'consciousness' can be used in two quite different ways; the first is the neurological way:

When we consider consciousness there is an error we must beware of. Many people think of consciousness as something that is either there or not there. But it is not like that at all. Hughlings Jackson once said, 'There is no such entity as consciousness – in health we are from moment to moment differently conscious.' Consciousness is to be measured in degrees; and while we only notice the really big changes, as from sleeping to waking, our attention is not caught by the minor fluctuations which are constantly going on.

(Eliot Slater in *The Physical Basis of Mind*, Blackwell, 1950, p.36)

This is quite true (as can be easily observed) within the limits of ordinary physical states, but above those it creates another error worse than the first! His Holiness has made us realise that

above the subtle world of psychology there is such an entity as *pure* Consciousness, and what we receive of that Consciousness is a Grace, and not a reward for effort or anything like that. It is a free gift; and that, I take it, was the experience you were describing last week. By developing a love for the Giver of that gift – without expecting or demanding – we will be learning to fulfil some part of the plan of creation.

[Pause – Is this understood?]

PART 3

Provided always that one is seeking pure Consciousness in silent communion for a few minutes twice a day, there are still three more ways of putting these gifts of Grace to good use – plenty of choice! One of these can be applied, if at those moments you receive some answer connected with a question in which you are perennially interested, or have some branch of knowledge illuminated for you. Well then, go on holding that question in mind for a few minutes every day and the curtain will undoubtedly be pulled aside quite often but unexpectedly. This was how Mr. Ouspensky developed the whole field of the Law of Three Forces, six triads, six activities of man, etc., from the few hints he had been given.

Allied to this is to do something you love doing like painting or music or gardening, for which you get encouragement from those gifts of Grace. I expect you know what I mean; it is connected with His Holiness's definition of attention as 'applied consciousness' – seeming to speak of it in the way we speak of 'pure and applied physics or mathematics'.

Finally, if you want to make the moments of experience last longer, observe what happens when you get them. Why are they so momentary? You will see that the first thing that happens is *dispersal of the mind* which races from one thing to another gathering speed as it goes. The mind therefore descends from its pedestal of unity, and then it falls an easy prey to *identification or attachment*, your watchman having disappeared. Ordinarily we are always in a state of more or less identification; the only variable is the *object* of identification; the *state* remains. But in those moments of Grace you are free of it (that 'sense of liberation') so you can observe how the process starts. A very good example came last week in a letter from Dr. Ian Rose, who practises in Western Canada:

I was flying back from the Southwest States about two weeks ago and had to spend the night in Reno.

I went out and tried the gambling. I am always impressed and amazed at the 'identification' of people frantically working slot machines. For a while I can remain an interested observer. However, I started to play a dealer game, blackjack. Now, I'm not a big time gambler and play only for small stakes, but I suddenly began to win. That was it. I remember only feeling excitement until suddenly I was quite clearly back. I was aware of myself, the place, the others at the table, the furious aspect of futile movement everywhere around.

This very clear objectivity remained for a few minutes and then it *began to slip*. I could feel myself slipping into this background, which was coming round and immersing me. It was a sensation rather like getting into a very warm swimming pool. I was able to teeter on the brink of this immersion for quite a while. All the time of course the game was going on. I was playing efficiently and on the whole winning.

Perhaps it sounds rather mundane but was not. The sudden emergence into that state of objectivity was one of those very precious moments – well more like 15 to 20 minutes.

This reminds one of the recent simile His Holiness used about ‘attachment’ being like the ‘slipping of the clutch of an old car going up hill’.

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