

17 February 1969

READING 4

PART 1

Several of us have been feeling, while trying to recall this part of the System (about the Circles of Humanity, influences, and the Staircase up to the beginning of the Way) how beautifully clear and simple it all seems – like a map which shows the ‘far country’ and the direction of the journey.

But, judging from the remarks, questions and difficulties passed to me by telephone, exactly the same thing happens to the people who take it literally as happened over and over again during the last 35 years. While we just repeat it with small variations and argue about it, all of it remains remote from practical life and seems a very long and chancy process. Why?

Because all great Teachings like that, which were originally given as C Influence, had to be expressed in the language of the coarse physical world of clocks and calendars and geography in order that people should apply them to the Subtle and Causal worlds where everything is quick and fluid and different.[†]

One uses a process of thought described by the novelist Henry James as ‘dropping an idea into the deep well of unconscious cerebration’, and more important still, fishing for the different aspects of its meaning over a few days and nights while trying to put it into practice. Out of that process will come unexpectedly perhaps an hour or so of total view. Then it is clear that all this – Circles of Humanity, Influences, and the Way is equally inside oneself: thus, the Inner Circle of Humanity is the Fourth Room in one’s own house; the Fully Realized Man at the centre is an image of the Atman in each of us. The ‘well of unconscious cerebration’ is the Manas or ‘mind of turning desires’; while our understanding, the Buddhi, has to observe and distinguish between the three kinds of influences we constantly meet with. It is *my* mind that is full of doubts and that may fall down the Staircase until it finds the Way. If we learn all we can about these same ideas on the two scales, thinking of Humanity, say, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and watching oneself at other times, we shall find that each throws light on the other.

For we have got into bad habits, so that the two sides of life have lost touch with each other and when we reach the silence we are at a loss. It was well put in 1964:

Q. What part of one is it that seems frightened by the silence?

S. The moving mind of Manas. Our whole mind is the go-between uniting the outer and the inner worlds. It has to interpret those worlds to us. The whole of our mind has for so long been associated with the outer world that it has forgotten the existence, let alone the language of the Inner world. So when in meditation it is confronted with the Inner world, it is unsure of itself, can’t interpret and becomes frightened.

(18 August 1964)

[†]NOTE: Relative coarseness or fineness depends both on magnitude and time. Man’s size is noted in metres; nuclei in the brain are a few millimetres across; but across a single cell, microns (millionths of a metre) are the units. As regards time, what would take a man a year to do, takes less than twenty minutes on the Subtle level, and 1/30th of a second on the Causal level, therefore appearing instantaneous.

What is the language of the Inner world? It is, first, the pictures and scenery of dreams. On a rather higher level it is in stories and allegories, and higher still in terms of Cosmic Laws, of Symbols and symbolic expressions.

We learn this language by becoming well-versed in the idea of the Three Gunas, learning to distinguish different mixtures by taste and 'smell'. Thus what our System has called *a* influences have very little Sattva, with a higher preponderance of the others. At times like the present, Rajas is greatly in excess showing itself as violence in all forms of mass media and the mass behaviour which results. The *b* Influences, which are rapidly being lost nowadays, originally had mostly Sattva but have become mixed with the others so as to lose their impact and power to create Magnetic Centre. In our work we recall them and purify them on the way to the direct or C Influences which can only be received by the pure Sattva, though they come from the Causal region which is beyond the Gunas. This inner taste gives us the power of quick recognition and distinction and a shorthand means of communication.

After we had quoted to the Shankaracharya the Gospel passage about 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... ', he said:

The bad influences in the world are like moth, rust and thieves; once you have let yourself be surrounded and attached to them, your treasure is being eaten up. Through discipline one gets free of all those influences; but it is also possible that a partly disciplined man may fall into the hands of thieves and forget the real treasure.

[In your discussion would the group-takers please keep the two scales clear and distinct?]

PART 2

A principle reason for the slowness of our progress seems to arise in the confusion about Self-liberation which is summed up in the question, 'Who is to be liberated? What self?'

Mr. Ouspensky pointed out (in his *3rd Psychological Lecture*) that man, being unable to distinguish between the imaginary and the real in himself, has come to believe 'in the possibility of a simultaneous and mechanical development of *all* human features':

Think for a moment, of a caterpillar imagining itself a butterfly, or of an egg imagining itself a bird, or of an acorn imagining itself an oak. The result of these imaginings will be a big caterpillar, a big egg, and a big acorn – and this would be an approximately true picture of a human being imagining his next phase. I say approximately true, because a caterpillar, an egg and an acorn are comparatively passive beings... while man can speak, he can write books, he can invent social theories, he can start wars, and all this on the basis of lying to himself and to others.

Lying was defined as 'speaking about what you don't know as if you knew and could know it.'

We see this in one of the more recent representations of man's next phase, that is a sort of James Bond figure, with guns, expensive tastes, flashy big car, tough but compliant girls and all! So much depends on the rightness of the picture that one is now forming of the being one hopes to become.

That is why it is worth recalling the story of the parrot, in order to find the equivalent in oneself and answer the question, 'Who is to be liberated?' You remember:

There was an intellectual who went to meetings two or three times a week with a Wise Man for instruction. He had a parrot, a beautiful and accomplished bird, who began to demand, 'Where do you go so often and what do you learn?' At the answer, 'I learn about Liberation,' the parrot kept asking him, 'Please enquire from the Wise Man how I am to be liberated?' But the intellectual kept forgetting, until one day the parrot was so insistent that he remembered to put the question. Thereupon the Saint fell down in a swoon to the great distress of his followers. On his return to the parrot who asked him the usual question, his master had to tell him that he had got no answer as the Saint had fallen down as if dead. Next morning the parrot was found dead in his cage. Full of solicitude for his dead friend, his master opened the cage whereupon the parrot zoomed up to a nearby tree, calling, 'You yourself would get along quicker towards liberation if you actually carried out what the Teacher shows you.'

[**Discussion:** 'Do you recognise in yourself the intellectual and the wise man, the parrot and the cage?' Don't guess, but keep asking yourself the question until you know.]

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