

14 June 1971

## READING 6

The account of those early struggles of Mr. Ouspensky seems (as one hoped it would) to have roused some groups to link them and the Shankaracharya's talk with their own experience.

Thus Highgate:

Mr. W. For me Self-remembering has changed; it is more an inward process than an outward one.

Miss P. recognised how panic and near-hysteria about an urgent job kept pulling her into the 'spin'. By quietly attending in the moment and to detail she had the sensation of gradually climbing upwards, and finished the day with renewed energy.

Mr. H. The alerting mechanism, when 'forgetting' seems to happen naturally after a shock, but could become more active in dull circumstances?

Mrs. W. Is not a stronger sense of urgency needed for practising this 'Remembering'?

'Sense of urgency', yes. But the urgency now is to acquire more knowledge of oneself – knowledge available now, but not known at all in Mr. Ouspensky's day. Such knowledge would spare us an immense amount of fruitless 'spiritual warfare'. It's a matter of the 'Anatomy of thought' and is difficult to describe in simple non-technical terms; but we must make the attempts, because at last week's meetings was heard on all sides the burning question, 'How to hold the Param-Atman in mind all the time?'

There is in the forebrain a narrow track (which could be called, as in another context, a 'Final Common Path') along which thoughts and desires have to proceed in single file before they enter our consciousness to disturb it. It's a kind of 'mental mouse-hole' which the cat has to watch, if (like Miss P. as above) you are detached enough to recognise something deep in your nature 'pulling you into the spin'. What is needed is to set up a permanent 'cat' or attitude which will act in a flash at the point where a mouse has once made its appearance!

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Let's suppose that the 'alerting mechanism' has operated, so that for a moment one is remembering the Param-Atman with a certain sense of urgency due to past experience having taught us that anything may catch us and 'pull us back into the spin'.

*This* moment we are observing (with 'detachment') sensory impressions from outside; and, from within, thoughts, desires, bodily sensations. We watch them arrive quite impartially. But something suddenly attracts us – one is tempted, but there's still time to draw back. Maybe one resists the first two or three of such 'temptations' but, just as one is congratulating oneself, one falls for the next one and 'wakes up' several hours or several days later. This is the process called 'identification', in which state undisciplined people spend practically all their so-called 'waking' lives. It is falling spiritually asleep, or 'forgetting'.

There are four definite stages described in great detail by several authors of the *Philokalia*, but now forgotten both in the East and in the West. The first is the free stage, when you are observing impressions impartially; the second is 'temptation' when the attention is being led

away into captivity, but from which there is still time to draw back. In the third stage (which is described by the Greek term for sexual union) you have lost your identity and *become* the object of your infatuation. By the fourth stage ('evil' or 'suffering') you are back 'in the spin' – a habit has been formed and you repeat the same process again and again with less and less chance of escape. The Lord's Prayer summarises the process in the words: 'Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil'.

You remember His Holiness said, 'it doesn't much matter if you do something wrong once, but what's important is that you don't make a habit of it'. Another time he said, 'that to get rid of some bad habit you have to put the opposite good one in its place'.

Here is another part of the talk from which we quoted last week, in which I have cleared up certain difficulties arising in translation:

The world is a great show, which God is staging around you in the shape of this universe. But it is a mere show. Your birth is a show, your death is a show. Actually there is neither birth nor death. Know that, and you would be happy.

The common outlook is that the world is everything, and that Param-Atman is nothing. It is a crime to hold this view, and the punishment for it is to be imprisoned in this machine of body and mind. You cannot be happy while undergoing a term of imprisonment.

Our mind has the property of thinking something or other all the time; it cannot remain idle. If it does not reach up towards the Param-Atman, it would fall back into thinking of the world. Remembering Param-Atman leads to happiness, and thinking of the world leads to unhappiness.

It is true that people do not find it easy to recall the idea of Param-Atman; the reason is that the habit has not been formed. But that habit certainly can be formed. A baby cannot eat solid food in the beginning because the habit is not there. But this habit comes quite easily later (when he gets some teeth). Forming the habit of remembering the Param-Atman is as easy as that.

Someone went to a Mahatma and said that he would like to serve him, but he added that he must have something to do all the time as he could not remain idle. The Mahatma asked him to go and cut a long piece of bamboo. When he did so, he asked him to fix it in the ground. This done, he asked him to climb to the top of it, then come down, climb again, come down again, and so on. Thus he had constant work to do. Similarly, keep the idle mind occupied, otherwise you would go mad at imagining or *thinking about* the Param-Atman.

(Record, 7 May 1971)

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To show one of the many ways that are being tried in relation to controlling the idle mind, I quote part of a letter from one of the new turners (Herbert Cohl, a college student) to Mr. Rabeneck which has just reached me from New York:

I have memorized the 98th Psalm and have been using that as a repetition. I find that the value of the repetition comes not only from keeping my mind occupied and stopping imagining, but also from the fact that it acts as a connection with other Work ideas. When I am repeating the repetition, I find it easier to remember the Work if something develops which might cause me to become identified in a certain way. I see

this in connection with the question of losing the School: the repetition helps me to remember the School and not lose it during the day.

After about a year, I find that the value of the Meditation continues to grow for me. I do it regularly and very rarely miss a half-hour...

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But all such dodges would take second place if we acquired the crucial knowledge about the 'Causal level' where all man's functions are integrated into One. The lawyer (Luke, 10:27) was commended for quoting the Law as saying that to inherit Eternal life 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' There is only one area of the human mind where such a thing could be possible. We need to know a little more about this area; about 'the Lord our God' – the Param-Atman who already lives there, and about who is our 'neighbour'.

An aphorism of our System says: 'To know all one needs to know very little, but to know that little one has to know pretty much.'

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