

25 September 1972

READING 1

Dimitte debita nostra...

Over the years it has been increasingly difficult for me personally to forget that I have indeed led a very happy and fortunate life – not only materially, but chiefly in other, more important ways. For I was quite young when P. D. Ouspensky introduced me to a new world – a marvellous world containing many experiences of Self-remembering. Since then I have been surrounded by the kind of people I like to be with, and engaged on the things I most like to do. There was a feeling of my indebtedness to him, about which I wrote in *A Lasting Freedom* (particularly in Note 42, p.82). The New York lectures and the book were a poor attempt to repay part of that debt. But the past is now over and we should make a fresh start.

Later, there was the gift of the Meditation leading to what proves to be the greatest boon of all – continual access to a fully Realized man and a great and enduring Tradition. The impulse driving me now to my eighth visit to India stems largely from this feeling of the heaped-up debts which I seem unable to repay.

Recently I wrote to His Holiness something about ‘getting free of all those debts’ – I was thinking of the words in the Lord’s Prayer ‘Dismiss our debts’. His answer, as usual, took me by surprise: ‘You shouldn’t try to get free of your debts, but should be happy to repay them in full.’ This made me begin to see that my attitude to the whole subject and to that sentence in the prayer, has been too limited and analytical – whereas Mr. Ouspensky had said that it was the key to our emotional life – the transformation of negative emotions into Positive (love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness and faithfulness...).

All this sounds very personal, but the desire to repay (like the awakening of Conscience) has to start that way. So now, at the beginning of another ‘academic year’ – I want to ask those of you who feel much the same as I do for your help. I’ll begin by asking, ‘What (for you) is the emotional meaning of ‘debts’ and of ‘paying our debts’, and in what coin or currency can they be paid?’

[Pause for discussion]

There are several aspects of this question – first the *personal* one. Once a person accepts some Tradition or School or leader as his ‘teacher’, he incurs a debt; and its repayment, to the utmost of his power, is a central part of his Self-realization. As you know, many people come to us for a while, are glad of the help given, and then go off expecting to reap the results; they have thrown away their great opportunity which might never come again.

Next, there is the ‘*School*’, which was made for us to continue. We were given a job to do, and a fine house to do it in. Those who feel that responsibility realise, I think, that it brings to them many problems and situations which could only be properly dealt with by a fully Conscious person. When we realise that we fall short of that in any situation, we realise also that we are ‘in debt’ and will want to be more conscious in order to repay it – to be more effective ‘teachers’ or ‘guides’. Remembering, of course, that ‘example is better than precept’.

But the greatest teacher of all is the Divine Self, present in everyone – our ‘Good Samaritan’. Shouldn’t we long to repay that best of gurus? The nature of this Self being Happiness, Truth and Love, are we not in debt to Him whenever we are unhappy, ignorant or coldly indifferent?

The Gospels (and particularly the Lord's Prayer) point out that the only way we can repay that Spirit (which is perfectly self-sufficient already) is by helping other people... 'Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these My brothers, you did it to me'.

At the present time people in the world are starving for just those essentials, Happiness, Truth and Love. The only limitation on the work our Society should be doing is the cramped rigidity of our own nature and the prison of our past.

Say not ye, there are yet four months and then cometh the harvest? Behold I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest... And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye have entered into their labours.

(John 4:35-38)

The harvest truly is plentiful but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth more labourers...

(Mathew 9:37)

More fully Realized and Self-realizing people are needed at once.

(Discussion)

To return to our own Self-realization. Some of you may be acquainted with the Midsummer edition of the Programme (which we started at the beginning of the year, and of which the Shankaracharya showed his approval so warmly). In this latest edition, the approach to the Universal Self (Param-Atman) was described in two ways – Union by Knowledge and Union by Love (Bhakti). The last couplet there was, 'Let the Yoga of Love, the lover, and the Object of Love (Param-Atman) merge together to form one single identity. Then the mirage of time and change vanishes and Param-Atman appears in its place'.

How many of you have found that? How many are finding that the longing to repay a debt inspires love; love lends wings to meditation and Self-realization; and these bring happiness most quickly?

This version of the programme concluded with the familiar story of the man who went through the seven gates and duly received the keys of the Kingdom. People often ask why the first act of the new King was to arrest all those people who had taken goods without paying for them. Perhaps this is another aspect of debts unpaid, taken on the subtle level, all taking place among our many 'I's within.

Concluding question: What precisely is the contribution that our small group of labourers can give in this world harvest?

We are not out to convert the heathen – plenty of people are doing that! All we have to do from the fullness of our own experience is to remind all 'Self-realizing people' that the Divine Self is present in every person for their guidance through life; that it is near at hand, fully accessible by certain methods and Knowledge which we are fortunately able to give. The School can do this in proportion to how much its members become alive to the spiritual needs of others, however they may be expressed.

(Further discussion: How does all this apply to me?)

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