

9 October 1972

## READING 2

### PART 1

While on holiday by the sea we had a letter from Mr. Rabeneck in New York enclosing a question of his sent direct to interpreter Dixit and finally answered by the Shankaracharya on August 8th. This fitted in with our holiday mood so well and (when put into practice for a couple of weeks) proved so refreshing that I'd like you to have it and see how you can use it.

Here is the question – isn't it one which is much in the minds of many of us?

Q. When looking at the street, buildings and people under a changing sky or at clouds and trees, there comes a feeling of all this being moved by Param-Atman. Such a unity in my perception may last for about half-an-hour.

When complete silence comes in Meditation there is a vague feeling of an expanding and dissolving flow: there is unity for several minutes.

But in life there is no feeling that events in which 'I' am involved are a 'passing show'. An obstinate sense of separateness and of being the 'doer' remains. Is 'keeping the Param-Atman in mind as much as possible' all one has to do, or should there be more order and discipline introduced on physical and subtle levels, and how?

(You may like to discuss this question and see if you as a group, understand and agree with what he wants to know.)

And now the answer:

S. When looking at the street, buildings and people under a changing sky or at clouds and trees – and also when there is a vague feeling of an expanding and dissolving flow – what you experience is the WORLD. And the world has three stages, viz. creation, maintenance and destruction.

When we wake up from a sleep, the [sensory] world stands up before us as it is. When we perceive a dream, however, it is a dream-world that we see. When we go into a deep and dreamless sleep, then everything of the world merges into the Self, and only that Self is all in all. That is why we try to merge everything into our own Self in our day-to-day life.

The advantage of this would be that the thought of the past and of the future would weaken and you would find yourself in a special state of Self-consciousness. As this practice deepens, you would see the states of waking and dreaming more and more alike. With your eyes open or shut, it would be the same world before you. A condition of sameness would possess your heart. The mind (Manas) would shed its burden and become filled with joy instead. A feeling of perfection and limitlessness would supervene.

Mr. Rabeneck wrote about this: 'You will see yourself from the enclosed copy how fully and clearly he has answered my first question. And then he describes the further steps: what to expect and what to aim for. In fact, it is a programme of work for a long time to come.'

To be honest, when I myself first read the question and answer the thought entered my mind; 'Oh, but won't this make me more dreamy and less sharp in dealing with problems and situations?' However, I set to, tried to drop all preconceived notions, and learnt it by heart so that various sentences now come to mind whenever my attention is disengaged. I find that it has an effect quite opposite to my first thought – it can make one sharper, because less changeable in one's reactions

to the requirements of the moment. The remark, too, about the 'past and the future' has shown me how mistaken has been my point of view about 'Time' in relation to consciousness. For those who want it, Part 2 of this paper describes what came up as a result of this practice.

It cannot be understood intellectually or logically only; but those who can use it in conjunction with Meditation and the Programme about Param-Atman will, I'm sure, come to see it this way.

## PART 2

Why have we been so lazy about trying to realise what an enormous difference there is between the space-time of the physical, subtle and causal worlds about which the Shankaracharya so often speaks? How can we hope to understand him and change our point of view unless we get some reasonable way of seeing and practising the true point of view which he describes?

Let's consider those counting systems built in to the central nervous system of man (and all the vertebrate kingdom) by which the mind (Manas) counts and compares the *number* of any units that are presented to it. We can begin with the counting of time-units by the 'clock systems' to be found in our own organism (based on P. D. Ouspensky's 'Table of Time').

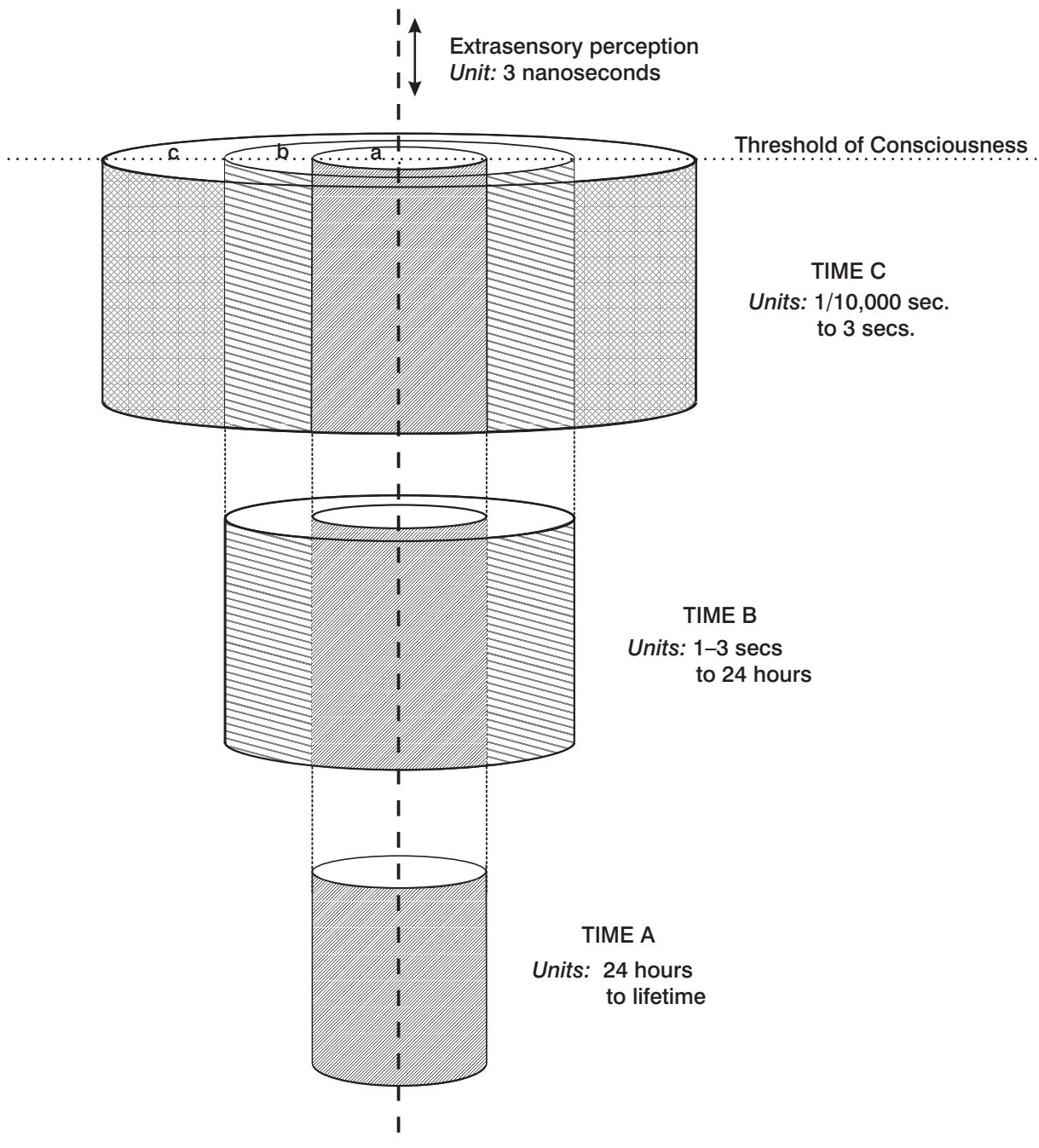
We can get familiar with the idea of 'different time-units' by taking a simple example: our wristwatches contain a triple mechanism by which we recognise different *measures of time*. The 'hour-hand' repeats its circuit in a 'diurnal rhythm', twice during 24 hours; during every hour the 'minute-hand' performs one revolution, and the 'seconds-hand' 60 revolutions. We only use the seconds-hand for very accurate observations, and we 'tell the time', of course, by the combined positions of the hour and the minute-hand on the dial with its twelve numbers. Each 24 hours most watches have to be rewound. The three systems are inter-gearred and commensurable with one another – that is, one *could* count in seconds all day, though it would be very tedious.

Our organism also has three main time-counting mechanisms, which (by contrast) though inter-gearred – are *incommensurable* because their units show a much greater difference than seconds, minutes and hours.

For 'Time A' the unit is a *day* of 24 hours (nearly 100,000 ( $10^5$ ) seconds) and is based on the intake and elimination of food. Using this unit the organism counts the repetition of those periodic bodily functions which are comparatively slow, but of long duration – diurnal, monthly, annual and even longer rhythms (like the so-called 'seven ages of man'). This is the only 'time' we recognise and upon it all our calculations and comparisons, our calendars, almanacs and history books are based. A human generation is one thousand million ( $10^9$ ) seconds – about 30 years; at the end of a certain number of days the body dies; though the individual length of life varies greatly, it practically never exceeds a century ( $10^{9.5}$  seconds), and the average expectation of life lies between 70 and 80 years (30,000 days).

The area of the brain shown at A which uses these big time-units for its counting, is that area which stays awake during the deep and dreamless sleep mentioned by His Holiness where 'the Self (central dotted line) is all in all'. The changes registered by this 'brainstem' are so slow that time seems to 'stand still'.

Coming to 'Time B', the part of the brain in charge counts in the far smaller units of its clocks based on the intake and circulation of oxygen (resting heartbeat of one second, and resting



breath cycle – 3 seconds). Its time-span extends from a second to 24 hours during which (like a watch) it is wound up again. Our dreams are always changing, melting one into another, and much too rapid to be recaptured by the logical mind when we wake into the usual daytime state.

But when we open our eyes and are at once engulfed by sensory impressions from the changing world of street, and people, changing sky and moving clouds, the brain's computers (Manas) have to count much more quickly using units far smaller still ('Time C', see Figure). Sensory nerves (according to Adrian) cannot conduct at more than a few thousand impulses a second, which is as much as to say that the brain is counting milliseconds.

The limit of one-ten-thousandth of a second represents the time taken by the shortest sensory impression to be received, coded, passed to the brain and recognised by the mind for what it is. Any time shorter than that must be 'extra-sensory' – and the 'good impulse' *is* extra-sensory and quicker than that.

## MEMORY

This interpretation of the diagram also explains much current psychological literature on long and short-term Memory. *A* is that area of brain which ultimately shows those long-term memories 'that are not affected by drugs or by electroshock and which no brain-washing can eliminate'. *C* is continually making and remaking short-term memories; *B* is intermediate in this respect. It's worth recalling that 'we sometimes complain of having a short memory, but if we were forced to stuff our heads with the entire maelstrom of faces, figures and advertising ("names and forms") to which we are subjected in a single day, we would go mad'.

Recall also that 'anything recorded in the brain must be reinforced by *repetition* if it is to be retained', and also the paramount importance of attention in selecting, storing and recall of useful memory. What can only be realised by experience, however, is that the only permanent Memory is the vivid memory that accompanies moments of pure Consciousness.

## PART 3

Now we should transfer our attention to the top surface of the diagram – marked 'Threshold of Consciousness' – to see what happens when (as in meditation) we *keep awake* but withdraw from all movements of the mind through those same areas of the brain (*c*, *b* and *a*) to the Self that *never changes*, which is perfect and always present. We all know that we first shut our eyes and withdraw our attention from all sensory impressions and from the thoughts set up by them. In time we pass from (*c*) to (*b*), becoming partly aware of heartbeat and breathing, of dreams and memories just like those we experience in the dream-state at night. It is exactly then that it becomes of great importance to pass from (*b*) to (*a*) by establishing the one-pointed attention of the arrow-maker. At first the world (*a*) seems completely *empty* but, as we were told, 'that emptiness sometimes becomes a fullness' – a feeling of the eternal presence of the Self, the source of Truth and happiness and love.

Looking then at the top level of the diagram, we see how *awareness* (not sleep) on the causal level of the Soul (Antahkarana) brings about the gradual change described in His Holiness's answer to Mr. Rabeneck which, perhaps, you might like to read again. 'A feeling of sameness would possess your heart; the mind would shed its burden and become filled with joy instead'.

The culmination of the last couplet of the midsummer version of the programme will have been reached:

Let the Yoga of Love, the lover, and the object of love (the Param-Atman) merge together to form one single identity. Then the mirage of time and change vanishes and Param-Atman appears in its place.

The time-unit of that Consciousness is three thousand millionths of a second (now called 3 nanoseconds) – the time taken by Light to travel one metre.

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