

30 October 1972

READING 4

PART 1

As far as I've heard, so far, nobody seemed to have been specially upset by the ideal conception of the 'Way of the Householder' quoted in Reading 3. Some have even realised that it might be a practical and gradual way of approaching the Christian ideal. The lawyer who asked, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' was commended for his summary of the law, namely: 'Thou shalt love the Lord the God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself.'

But 'love' has many degrees; as neatly described by Shri Ramakrishna. The Master had gone into Samadhi at the playing of the Kirtan music, and emerged to answer a question about love:

There is one-sided love. For instance, the water does not love the duck, but the duck loves water. There are other kinds of love: in the first, which is ordinary love, the lover seeks his own happiness; he doesn't care whether the other person is happy or not. In the second, which is a compromise, both seek each other's happiness. This is a noble kind of love. But the third is highest of all. Such a lover says to his beloved, 'Be happy yourself, whatever may happen to me.' Radha, Krishna's bride, had this highest love; she was happy in Krishna's happiness. The gopis (milk maids), too, had attained this exalted state.

(The Gospel of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda Centre, New York, 1972, p.766)

And, for that matter, so had Mary Magdalene, and the apostle, John, 'whom Jesus loved'.

As in our ordinary education system, our own lives could be a slow graduation through primary and secondary school, university, technical college, career and family life, along this 'Way of the Householder': 'Let the Yoga of love, the lover, and the object of love (Param-Atman) merge to form one single identity. Then the mirage of time and change vanishes, and Param-Atman appears in its place.'

[Pause for discussion]

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PART 2. 'THE MIRAGE OF TIME AND CHANGE'

a) Just before the part of our conversations quoted in Reading 3, the Swami had dealt with this subject in a clear and convincing way. He was only describing in his own style, and from his own experience, what the Shankaracharya had been saying to us; but strangely enough his description was the key (for me) to P. D. Ouspensky's novel, *The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*, and some of you may like to read the 1971 paperback edition which I have put in the Library. Here speaks the Swami:

There are four states of consciousness:

1. Unconscious state of deep sleep.
2. Dreaming state or subconsciousness, where we are dreaming but *do not know that we are dreaming*.

3. The daytime state when we can be conscious of our dreams.
4. Turiya or Enlightenment, the awakened state in which there are no dreams at all.

On the blackboard he drew Figure 1:

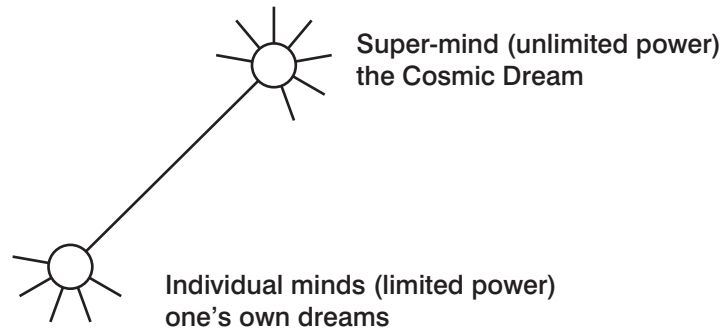


Figure 1

Question (R.A.). In talking yesterday about the stilling of the restless mind, you said that we should seek to become the 'witness of the eternal dream'. I find this is possible quite often when I am playing a passive role, for instance, when listening to a business discussion. But the moment my role becomes active, I find it almost impossible to remain detached. Have you any advice?

Swami. On the spiritual level there are only two tenses – past and future, because *the present is always here*. What is it which is always present with us? It is super-Consciousness, God, the omnipresent, the omniscient – whatever name you give it. This super-mind is the fulcrum of the balance between past and future:

He drew Figure 2:

Whenever we are thinking of anything, we are in the past or the future – never in the present. Why is that? Either one is thinking of the past where one might have done

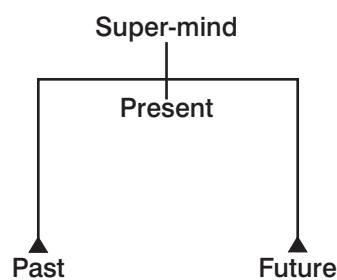


Figure 2

something different, or one is in the future where one is always hoping: 'I shall do... I shall get...' So long as our mind is engaged with either of those, the present is out of the picture.

In reality, the picture – the film – has already been made, and one is simply a witness among the audience at the cinema. If we don't like the film, we are always trying to change it; but if you went to a cinema and didn't like what was on the screen, you couldn't ask the management to change the film!

As soon as we realise that our physical life is just a film which has already been made and which we cannot change, we will realise it is the dream of the Cosmic Mind, and our little minds will lie down and rest in Consciousness.

[Only then will change become possible – but on the subtle and causal levels.]

The technique is to find out how to make our mind *not* revolve round the past and the future. The present is not in our hands – as soon as we try to touch it, we find it has gone into the past. You either have to sit through the film peacefully, or leave the cinema!

COMMENT

We have been told that, just as on the physical level there are deep sleep, dream state, and waking state, so the most active daytime state of the physical level is just deep sleep on the spiritual plane; the spiritual dream-state is the state of religious experience or of artistic creation, and in spiritual awakening (Turiya) there is only pure Consciousness, pure Truth, pure Love.

Creative artists are (with varying success) always seeking to depict that ‘cosmic dream’. Thus the poet Yeats wrote:

The wandering earth herself may be
Only a sudden flaming word,
In clanging space a moment heard,
Troubling the endless reverie.

(Song of the Happy Shepherd)

Or Dylan Thomas:

The force that drives the water through the rocks
Drives my red blood; that drives the mouthing streams
Turns mine to wax.
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.

(The force that through the green fuse drives the flower)

Pause for discussion

PART 2 cont.

b) And why do I assert that what the Swami was saying was, for me, the key to ‘Osokin’, or perhaps ‘Osokin’ was, for me, the key to what the Swami was saying?

First, the Russian edition of the novel was originally called *Cinema-Drama*; and in the current English edition there are several hints of this conception. For instance, Chapter 8, ‘The Past’, begins: ‘On the cinema screen are seen a series of pictures of school life’. Secondly, Chapter 9 describes a dream which the author was convinced was a real episode, but belonging to some other life of his, that was both in the past – and also in the future if he decides to go on living. ‘There is no essential difference between the past and the future,’ he thinks, ‘we only call them by different words: *was* and *will be*. In reality, all this both *was* and *will be*.’ [Later, he was to describe how ‘Time is a circle’, at the centre of which ‘there is time no longer.’]

Thirdly, all through the story Osokin is continually lost in thoughts of past or future, and this causes him to waste all his time at school and get expelled. He is always dreaming, as his school friends point out. Only when his mind is reduced to stillness, can he hear what the 'Magician', the super-Consciousness (which Ouspensky came to call 'Permanent I'), is saying about the *present* opportunity.

And lastly, the recently revised Chapter 27 called 'On the Threshold' has a special relevance. When he was engaged on rewriting this during one summer just before World War II, I happened to be spending a great deal of time with him, and we had fascinating discussions about how this important chapter could be expressed. Last week I made an extract from it (pp.196 to 200) which was read at the two groups who met at Colet last Thursday. Perhaps some other groups might like to read it this week?

Quotation from *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* (Faber paperback Edition, 1971)

'What I am saying seems strange to you,' says the magician, 'because you have never thought about these things in the right way. Besides, thinking by itself will not help. Here again, one must know. And in order to know, one must learn; and in order to learn one must make sacrifices. Nothing can be acquired without sacrifice. This is the thing you do not understand, and until you understand it, nothing can be done. Had I wanted to give you, without any sacrifice on your part, everything you might wish, I could not have done it.'

'A man can be given only what he can use; and he can use only that for which he has sacrificed something. This is the law of human nature. So if a man wants to get help to acquire important knowledge or new powers, he must sacrifice other things important to him at the moment. Moreover, he can only get as much as he has given up for it. There are additional difficulties due to his state. He cannot know exactly what he may get, but if he realises the hopelessness of his position he will agree to make sacrifices, even without knowing. And he will be glad to do so, because only in this way can he acquire the possibility of gaining something new or of changing himself; for if he does not sacrifice anything, then everything will remain the same for him or even become worse.'

'Are there no other ways?' asks Osokin.

'You mean ways in which no sacrifices are necessary? No, there are no such ways, and you do not understand what you are asking. You cannot have results without causes. By your sacrifice you create causes. There are different ways, but they differ only in the form, magnitude and finality of the sacrifice. In most cases, one has to give up everything at once and expect nothing.'

'There is a Dervish song which goes like this:

Through four renunciations
Ascend to perfection.
Leave life without regret.
Expect no reward in heaven.

'Do you understand what that means? Most people can go only by this way or by one of the similar ways. But here, now, you are in a different position. You can talk with me. You can know what you have to give up and what you may get for it.'

'How can I know what I can get? And how shall I know what I have to give up?'

'You can know what you may get through the realisation of what it is you want. For

some very complicated reasons which are all in yourself, you happen to have guessed a very great secret which people generally do not know. By itself your guess is useless because you cannot apply it to anything. But the fact that you know this secret opens certain doors for you. You know that everything repeats again and again. There have been other people who made the same discovery but they could make nothing more of it. If you could change something in yourself, you would be able to use this knowledge for your own advantage. So, you see, you do know what you want and what you may get.

‘Now the question of what to sacrifice and how to sacrifice. You say you have nothing. Not quite. You have your life. So you can sacrifice your life. It is a very small price to pay since you meant to throw it away in any case. Instead of that, give me your life and I will see what can be made of you. I will even make it easier for you. I shall not require the whole of your life. Twenty, even fifteen years will be sufficient. But during these years you must belong to me – I mean, you must do everything I tell you without evasions and excuses. If you keep your side of the bargain, I shall keep mine. When this time is over you will be able to use your knowledge for yourself. It is your good luck that you can be useful to me just now – not at once, certainly, but I can wait if there is anything to wait for. So now you know what you have to sacrifice.

‘There is something else which may be said. People who make the same guess that you have made have certain advantages and certain disadvantages in comparison with other people who guess nothing. Their advantage is that they can be taught what other people cannot be taught, and their disadvantage is that, for them, time becomes very limited. An ordinary man can turn round and round on the wheel and nothing happens to him until he finally disappears.

‘Again, there are many things you do not know about this: but you must understand that in the course of time even the position of the stars in relation to one another changes – and men depend on the stars much more than they realise though not in the same way as they think, if they think about it at all. Nothing remains the same in time. But a man who has begun to guess the great secret must make use of it, otherwise it turns against him. It is not a safe secret. When one has become aware of it, one must go on or one will go down. When one finds the secret or hears about it, one has only two or three, or in any case only a few more lives.

‘You must understand that, for reasons of my own, I am interested in such people in the same way as I am interested in you. But I can offer my help only at one particular moment and only once. If my help is not accepted, a man may not find me next time. It may sound strange to you, but the fact is that sometimes I see people who would like to come to me, walking along this street, but they cannot find my house. That is why I told you before that you may want to come to me again but not be able to.’

‘What happens to those people who cannot find your house?’

‘Oh, they have other possibilities, but you must understand that every possibility is always more difficult than the preceding one; there is less and less time. If those people do not find new guidance and new help very soon, their lives begin to go down, and after some time they cease to be born and are replaced by other people. You must understand that they become useless, sometimes dangerous, because they know the great secret and remember many things; but all that they know, they understand in the wrong way. And in any case, if they have not used their chances before, then each time their possibilities become fewer.

‘Now you must think about yourself. Fifteen years seem a long time to you because you are still very young. Later you will see that it is a very short time, especially when

you realise what you can get for it. So go home and think. When you have understood and put in the right order everything I have said, you may come here and tell me what you have decided.

‘I can only add one thing more. Like everyone else, you think that there are different ways of doing the same thing. You have to learn to understand that there is always only one way of doing a thing; there can never be two ways. But you will not come to this easily. For a long time you will have a great deal of inner argument. All this has to be destroyed. Only then will you be ready for real work. And understand another thing: only when you are useful to me will you be useful to yourself.’

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