

6 November 1972

READING 5

Most of the groups I have heard about read the whole of Reading 4 – Osokin and all – and found it rather chilling. But it was meant to be a spur – not a chill!

Osokin when, for the second time, he had come to the end of his tether, and intended (revolver in hand) to opt out of the cinema show, was given twenty-four hours to make a choice dictated by the Magician. This choice was the same that every one of us has to make every twenty-four hours until it comes to stay (Step 2 of the Ladder). Put in a nutshell: ‘Is one to go on pretending that one has free will and can do it alone, or is one to come to the Magician (the Divine Self) and do what *He* says.’

In practical terms, this resolves itself (as in Figure 2 of Reading 4) into finding some way of coaxing the mind out of its futile habit of revolving round an unchangeable ‘past’ or a non-existent ‘future’, in order to perform its right function of resorting to ‘that immense Source of Power, the All-knowing Param-Atman, who alone can *do* anything.’ There is no conflict here, for the *same decision* makes for efficiency in ordinary life and also in half-hour periods of renunciation.

Although perhaps convinced of the marvellous potential of this change of attitude, whenever one tries to do it one is overwhelmed by the apparent difficulty. Every moment the mind slips away from the present. A simile from the *Philokalia* can help:

A non-swimmer making his first attempts, feels that swimming is totally impossible – and yet some people swim! So he sets to and learns by patience and determination to acquire the art of swimming at will.

For this it has been found necessary (in addition to two half-hours) to read and dwell on the words of somebody who has acquired the ‘art of swimming’.

The best I can do, therefore, for the rest of this term’s material, seems to be to give you the questions put to His Holiness himself by your four representatives at their recent visit.

Most of you have already heard the answer to Q.1. (J. R.), but it can be had later.

Q.2. (M. A.) deals directly with the present subject:

M. A. The remembrance of Param-Atman during the day is an increasing comfort and nowadays everything is more pleasant, and even unpleasant things seem less important than before. However, one feels on a dreamy plateau where, because of the pleasant life, the *need* to keep moving on the path is less sharp. One is not complaining about the increased happiness, but though one feels the greater presence during the day, one’s Meditation does not seem deep enough and one seems more caught in a dreamy phase – can His Holiness advise?

S. One of the fundamental principles of life on this earth is the worldly illusion of being the independent doer – of having free will. It is very difficult to maintain that individuals are the doers of anything, for the whole creation is the manifestation of the Absolute who is the real Doer. He has made His whole show in such a beautiful pattern that it keeps changing from one moment to another, and must keep on multiplying also. The whole thing is going on by virtue of the creative impulse given by the Absolute; He is the independent one, He is the free one, and He is the real Doer.

Part of the show is our human nature with its capacities of memory and thinking which, if one takes the load of the 'past' and the 'future' on oneself, makes the journey hard and treacherous; for the 'past' and the 'future' appear terribly big, and it is very difficult to walk along the Path if one carries this load. 'If such and such actions were taken,' we think, 'then a particular result could be achieved'; or, 'if I hadn't acted the way I did, I could have saved myself from these effects.' One should always keep oneself light-hearted and free of that burden.

In fact, the load is on the mind (Buddhi) itself, because the physical body has nothing to do with it; but because the mind governs the physical body, the physical body also suffers.

One of the best examples is the shadow play of puppets. There is someone holding the strings and moving them, but they appear to be moving themselves and to be the real doers.

The whole of creation is very much like a puppet show, with the strings being held by somebody else.

In another simile he gives the example of the cinema show, where the film is being shown on the screen and the people keep on looking at these moving pictures. On the screen you see mountains, buildings, seas, and fights, love scenes and religious scenes. All types of scene are being enacted on this screen. Some people watching are like the puppets, and they get animated by the scenes.

One should be able to see the things which are happening in the world – but only as a silent observer. See all the pleasures on the screen, but don't be involved and moved off course.

All the exciting things which are shown on the screen do not colour the screen itself – the screen is pure white. It has no colour of its own – it just reflects the colours which are thrown on it.

So should we become like a screen where every part of the activity takes place – is allowed to take place, but we should become pure white and not be entangled with any of the colours of the world. It is not one's business to have any ambition or desire to initiate a new line of action. The flow of the Gunas – Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, should be experienced dispassionately.

Pause for discussion

Quotation continues:

You mentioned the dream state – there are five states – the Samadhi state, the day-time state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep, and the fifth one is total unconsciousness. All these five states are the mysterious creative art of the Absolute. Each of these states is part of the manifested creation for the pleasure of the Self, and in fact each state is a useful state for one or other purpose. There is nothing to choose between one or the other. One doesn't have to choose anything, but stand at the middle and see both sides. Just the passing life – the play of 'past' and 'future'. Each state is part of the Absolute, and one does not have to select one of these situations. One has to become the impartial and silent observer of whatever happens, may it be Samadhi, awake, dream or sleep. If that is achieved, it is beyond all these states of the world we live in, and in effect everything is Sat-chit-ananda – the Absolute. Even the most ordinary work, such as digging, then gives bliss or Ananda.

With the idea of enjoying the whole creation with this impartial attitude, one might ask where is the sense of being good – what is good and bad? – the question never gets resolved. In fact, there is neither good nor bad – it is simply our nomenclature. It is our preference for one or the other which makes one good and another bad – our impertinence which makes one good and the other bad.

If one could keep to this state of silent impartial observer, one would see that none of these things exist. One stays in the present, and one acts as the occasion demands and the whole thing passes. Wise men once discussed this question of deriving Ananda out of all the multifarious aspects of the world, and the discussion led to the conclusion that one should not entangle oneself with either side (physical or subtle), but should simply observe; because the Absolute is in everything, and this creation is a most efficient mechanical organism which is functioning by the wish of the Absolute, so one should always see the Absolute behind all these passing phases.

One of the listeners at this discussion went away, and on the road saw an elephant coming along. He remembered that the Absolute was in everything, so he thought: ‘the Absolute is in the elephant, so surely it won’t harm me.’ The man on the elephant’s back kept shouting to him to get out of the way, but the man on the road took no notice, and the elephant took him up and threw him on one side. He went back to the wise man to say he had been misinformed – he thought the elephant was the Absolute, and he was the Absolute and the Absolute would not harm the Absolute in any way – but he did.

Then he was told, ‘You did not realise that the driver was also the Absolute. Because you did not obey the Absolute when he shouted to you, you were punished. You, in fact, selected one of the two; do not select, do not show prejudice, do not make impertinent preferences, then everything will be clear and one will easily find one’s way without any hindrance.’

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Once Swami Rama Tirtha, who was from the Punjab, saw a black adder in his path; it was a puff adder with his hood open. He just smiled and laughed and said, ‘Oh my God, you have come before me in such a frightening shape – but, forgive me, I don’t like your shape this time, so please go away.’ And the puff adder went away.

This shows how to behave as an unprejudiced and silent observer who has no duality (no mental division into ‘good’ and ‘evil’).

(Record, 3 October 1972)

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[Don’t forget that all this answer was from His Holiness himself before Dandi Swami (D.S.) came on the scene at all. In what the Swami had to say later about puppets and cinemas, etc., he was trying to transmit, more or less exactly, thoughts he had not heard spoken.]

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