

11 June 1973

READING 4

A SYSTEM FOR 'SELF-STUDY' CONT.

PART 1

At this point we very much want the co-operation of everybody who is interested in formulating a practical System as a basis for Self-realization today. We tried to make it known before the Bank Holiday that we would start to do this immediately, but unfortunately a lot of people missed the first paper (Reading 3), and without that foundation nothing we say will make sense. So, to avoid getting ourselves into a muddle, I must ask everybody who has not heard it to take steps to do so and we will try and make the necessary arrangements. We cannot waste time by reading it again at meetings; and it's not much good reading it to oneself because nothing really 'goes in' without the special atmosphere generated by a group however small or big.

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For those, then, who heard Reading 3, let us begin this week with a brief recapitulation:

1. The highest product of the natural evolution of the Biosphere so far is this human nervous system, culminating in what are called the 'frontal lobes of the cerebral hemispheres' with their immediate connections.
2. This is the physical basis of 'Mind' as we feel and recognise it immediately behind our foreheads – the only part in which we can directly be aware of anything. It follows that, whenever we are aware of anything, this part is called into play.
3. Its function is not to think, but to set up and maintain *attention*; and this again is essential for *memory* – storage, feedback and recall. 'Every schoolboy knows that unless he attends, he will not remember'.

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Going on from there in the direction to which some of your questions pointed last week, we must recognise that this Mind of ours can work with many different degrees of efficiency from the mind of the moron to the mind of a genius, and even to that of an Enlightened man. Though it is essentially interested in achieving contact with the Pure Consciousness of the Divine Self, it is always being captivated by chance impressions, interests and dislikes, and is as changeable as a chameleon which takes the colour of anything it sits on and turns pink if agitated!

It therefore needs consistent care and protection. Who is to look after it? The individual himself (called 'Jiva' – you or me, John Smith or Liz Brown). This individuality is the most precious possession of all ordinary people, which makes each person unlike anybody else in the world from early childhood to old age. It is divided into essence and personality – 'essence' being what is inborn, and 'personality' what is acquired during our journey through life. Since these are so difficult to distinguish, we can simply call it 'I' (or use our own name), but realising that it is only a 'stand-in' for the real Self which lies behind.

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PART 2

It is quite impossible to distinguish for oneself the difference between these aspects of human nature without the help of a fully Realized person who sees the world with the eye of divinity. Our guide, the Shankaracharya, is bound by the terms of reference of his office to answer only the questions that people put to him. He can, therefore, speak differently to the leaders of any group or spiritual Tradition according to the questions asked. With us, all his recent specialised instruction seems to have stemmed from a question R. asked in August, 1970:

Q. Is there any further advice His Holiness can give on his statement that 'the Atman alone is real and looks on all the changing events and situations as a passing show, without getting involved'?

S. In order to appreciate the Self described in the Upanishads, one needs simple methods. Many such descriptions have been given in the past, but more light can now be thrown on the subject. The states of consciousness experienced in deep sleep, dreams, the daytime state, spiritual awakening, Samadhi, etc., are governed by the influx of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas from people, situations and events. These all undergo change, but the Observer who sees them all as a 'passing show', always remains the same. This Observer never registers any change in itself; if any modification appears, then this must happen to the individual ego ('Ahankar') since change is its very nature...

For example, pure gold always remains gold while its uses and shapes and forms are liable to many modifications. The sky remains the same, while storms, clouds, rain and snow keep on changing our view of it, and yet do not affect the sky in any way. [Note: One experiences this vividly every time a plane takes us up above the cloud ceiling.] The waves of the sea cause no loss or gain to it.

In the same way, all these passing shows of the Gunas do not change the Atman, but only provide variety in its appearance.

Since that time, he has not only referred all our own questions to this single idea, but it has pervaded all the private talks to his people at his Ashram, and also those of his public addresses to which we have listened or which have been translated and sent to us. We have a full volume of all this material, and I would like gradually to give you this systematically. But first we have our own contribution to make:

1. Everyone can help in this by putting into practice what they hear and asking their own sincere questions;
2. those who understand from experience the meaning of what he says, can try to formulate it in our current language; and
3. a few people, with the necessary technical knowledge, have to relate it to the relevant facts established by those sciences which relate directly to man's structure and nature, by a careful sifting out of the irrelevant.

It must be realised that none of this new material was known when Mr. Ouspensky received the System in Moscow in 1915 and taught in London and New York from 1920 to his death in 1947. It is, therefore, entirely new, and yet all these discoveries seem to take us only closer to the Shankaracharya's System provided we know how to begin where science leaves off.

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PRACTICAL

The first step of the new formulation of the Ladder of Self-realization (referred to in Reading 2), is called 'Good Actions'. This means *good quality actions* – one does one's job, and one does it as beautifully, economically, and appropriately to the immediate situation as possible. The culmination was described at a very early talk (January, 1971):

After constant meditation and work on oneself, the adept starts to realise that a man is not just flesh and bones, but he is also Soul, he is Consciousness, and he is Bliss. When he has fully realised this, everything becomes very simple for him. Whatever he does, the *way* he moves, the *way* he talks, is quite fitting to the dignity of Atman (Divine Self). But this stage comes only after Full Realization!

One cannot go wrong if one starts every morning with the resolution to do what one can in this way. Whenever one gets a 'good impulse' one observes *what* one is doing and *how* one is doing it. The further steps on the Ladder depend upon that.

A prayer belonging to our Western System:

O God the Creator and all who work with Him, help me to remember myself and thus avoid all involuntary actions, through which alone evil can manifest.

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