

22 October 1973

## READING 4

## PART 1

Last week people really started to practise something, so there were dozens of observations and questions about attention: useful, sometimes, to have all those different examples and facets to open up the subject. But don't stop to *analyse* it any more; we know quite enough about what attention means to start practising it regularly. 'Every schoolboy knows that, unless he attends, he will not remember.'

But once and for all, there is no such thing as 'surplus attention' – every extra drop of attention is to be used for progress up the Ladder to the Supreme Self – it belongs to Him.

Mrs. Glover. I find one doesn't necessarily start at the bottom of the Ladder, but remembers different stages at different times when one is observing...

**COMMENT** Quite true. One patiently does a little on the first two or three steps day after day without much result, but all the time the new energy of Sattva (waking up) is accumulating. When there is enough of it, one gets a wholly unexpected glimpse of the 'peak experience' like the famous one of Rupert Brooke in his poem 'Dining-Room Tea', of which we can only quote these few lines:

When you were there, and you, and you,  
Happiness crowned the night; I too,  
Laughing and looking, one of all,  
I watched the quivering lamplight fall  
On plate and flowers and pouring tea ...

Till suddenly, and otherwhence,  
I looked upon your innocence.  
For lifted clear and still and strange  
From the dark woven flow of change  
Under a vast and starless sky  
I saw the immortal moment lie.  
One instant I, an instant, knew  
As God knows all. And it and you  
I, above Time, oh, blind! could see  
In witless immortality ...

Freed from the mask of transiency,  
Triumphant in eternity,  
Immote, immortal.

Dazed at length  
Human eyes grew, mortal strength  
Wearied; and Time began to creep.  
Change closed about me like a sleep ...

The poet didn't intentionally 'give up' anything, his mundane point of view just faded like the murk when the sun comes out. No doubt he was regularly practising 'attention' in some way connected with his struggle to compose poetry in spite of being lionised by society in those pre-war days before his death at Gallipoli, aged only 28.

Such experiences begin from what we are calling *the fourth stage* which was described, you remember, as the one when 'Sattva begins to predominate, and this shows itself as a kind of waking up of warmth and serenity with a striking change of values.' They are well within the reach of all of us; we don't have to smoke hashish or opium with their sad aftermath. These 'peaks' are rare encouragements from the Supreme Self to keep us on our way without danger or disappointment. *No disappointment* because we are not expecting anything – just doing the job with as much 'attention' as we can remember to maintain.

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(Perhaps after Meditation)

## PART 2. BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

One or two remarks in the last fortnight demand that we try to establish certain key words in our discussion which will link our Western language with those Indian words that people find difficult, e.g.

Miss Cassini (new group). I have never been clear about the difference between the Soul and the Self.

Not only you, all unrealized people since Adam! If the 'Self' is a name for the 'Pure Consciousness' which is eternal and unchanging, then the Soul transmits the Light of the Self as the bulb converts the electric current into light. The soul ('causal level') is the whole human endowment when all the parts are integrated and experienced as One – just as a car may be seen as one whole to which all its mechanisms contribute, but are not acting separately.

In the Greek Testament there are two Greek words – 'Psyche' or 'Soul' and 'Pneuma' or 'Spirit'. In expressions like: 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death', the word is psyche; but the word 'pneuma' is used where 'body' and 'Spirit' are being contrasted without the intervening components of man's nature. The following literal translation into the vernacular of Christ's talk with Nicodemus gives the way 'Spirit' or 'Atman' can be used:

**Nicodemus.** We know that you are a teacher come from God: for no man can do the miracles you do, unless God is with him.

**Jesus.** Truly, truly I tell you: 'Unless a man is born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'

**Nicodemus.** How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? ...

**Jesus.** What is born of the flesh is flesh; and what is born of Spirit is Spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows as it will and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell whence it came or where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

**Nicodemus.** How can these things be?

**Jesus.** You, a master of Israel, and you do not know these things! We speak of what we know, and testify to what we have experienced, and you will not believe us. If you won't believe me when I tell you earthly things, are you likely to believe me if I tell you heavenly things?

(John 3: 2–12)

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### **Thought from the Shankaracharya**

This body (physical, mental, causal) is the vehicle and the Supreme Self is the rider. Regard the unchanging Self as different from the changing body. It is not easy to do so

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We practise by regarding this body as the Atman's property, not ours. This mind is His property, not ours. Everything belongs to the Supreme Self, not to us. In this way we free ourselves from all attachments, all constraints.

(Record, 1 May 1971)

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Next week we want you to hear how our Western System describes those constituents of the 'subtle level' of human nature which link the body of flesh and bones with the incorporeal Spirit.

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