

4 August 1974

## 'MIND'

Great confusion has always existed as to the meaning to be attached to this word which is one of the most important in psychology. In current European languages a host of words are used to describe some aspect of Mind, but certain favourite words like 'mind' in English, 'esprit' in French, 'gemüt' in German, are so loosely used that they can mean anything. The same confusion has always prevailed in Indian philosophy, and shows a sharp distinction between definitions arising from the experience of Realized men, and the changing concept of scholars.

Briefly, there are two chief words that continually occur in His Holiness's discourses, but for which our translators habitually use the same word 'mind'. Recently there has been some clarification of the subject which brings it into line with Ouspensky's psychological System. He described the 'mechanical parts' of all the separate functions – intellect, emotion, sensory motor, etc., as proceeding without any attention; emotional parts where the attention is roused and held by strong feelings of like or dislike; and, finally, the same functions in their 'Higher' or 'awakened' aspect when the Attention is roused and held on one object by the Will.

In His Holiness's terminology we can safely say that the word 'Manas' refers to the mechanical and emotional parts, whereas the word 'Buddhi' (which, by derivation, arises from the root 'Budh' meaning to 'awake', or 'recover from a swoon') refers to the intellectual function when awakened and in the state of Attention.

The following recent talks and correspondence can shed light on what is meant by the first of these, namely the Manas:

R.A. (56) When one has acquired some bliss, why is it easier to retain it doing physical work than it is to retain it when doing mental work?

Can His Holiness help us to retain it longer *whatever* we are doing?

S. One can take this example:

When a master is personally present, then his rule prevails everywhere – all the servants obey his commands and do exactly what is expected of them. But when he is not there himself, then the rein is slackened a little, the servants are apt to relax, and sometimes they don't attend to what is necessary. This is very natural.

The same applies to us: when the Self is known to be present, the physical work is done well, but when He is overlaid by some form of mental activity, then the attention is lost and the work is not properly regulated. All one need do is to feel the presence of the Self.

If one can call to mind the Self when engaged in mental activity (an accomplishment acquired by habit in the course of time), this will bring in attention, and one will experience the bliss not only when engaged on physical work, but during mental activity as well.

There are two types of *servant*: one is the 'personal servant', of whom there is only one; while the others are general servants, and there may be many of them. The personal servant has established some kind of union with the master, whether he is present or not. All he is concerned with is looking after his master's interests. Whatever happens, he will not evade his work. The master knows this, and trusts him [he doesn't have to be watched].

The general servants are chiefly concerned with their own benefit, and this they derive above all from the master's pleasure. So, when he is present, they are

only too eager to work to please him; but when he is absent from their minds, they are more concerned with their own interests, the master's being forgotten.

The same applies to us when the Manas, Buddhi, and all the complex internal functions behave like 'general servants'. Similarly, the senses can give pleasure when something is demanded of them; but when the Master is not there to keep them in order, they will be like the 'general servants' and follow their own interests, doing whatever they please for themselves.

If, however, they are trained in such a way that they become personal and devoted servants then, whatever happens, they will all the time work properly for the Self.

(Record, 24 February 1974)

Following up this idea of the 'personal servant', we wrote for further information and received the following answer on the 19th May:

S. The reliable personal servant is your own purified Manas. The purified Manas brings happiness both in practical and Spiritual fields, while the polluted one is the source of the various troubles. Dedication to the service of the Param-Atman (and to other people) in thoughts, and actions, at all times and in all circumstances is the way to stabilise your mind in your own great Self.

He was amused by my own comment on this that, at seventy-two, I found my old 'personal servant' constantly taking the views it had forty years ago and refusing to admit anything new!

In a letter dated 25th June we had a further valuable comment:

S. We should handle our faithful servant – the Manas – very gently and encourage it daily to make progress, using methods of love and Sattvic ideas. In spite of being a mere servant, its powers are great, though it is very small as compared to the Atman. If we use force or fear to reform it, we cannot attain the same success that we would achieve by love and holy thoughts. We should all the time keep on reminding this servant of the fact that the Atman is eternal, whereas sensory pleasures are only momentary.

Of course, difficulties do arise in the course of changing the addiction of the Manas from bad to good company; but, ultimately, we can win. We should never allow ourselves to lapse into a state of helplessness, and should always be the master of our own house. In the *Gita*, Chapter 2, verse 3, Krishna urges Arjuna to shed petty weaknesses of the heart and get ready for the impending battle.

Thus, we should always see ourselves in our full stature, which is very great. The old servant can really be trained to give up its old habits, just as a civilised person would not put decayed food into his mouth.

You remember the story of the fight between the mongoose and the snake? When the snake bites the mongoose, the latter runs away to smell the herb which neutralises the poison; and then comes back to fight so that, finally, it is always the snake that is killed.

In the present context, sensory pleasures are the 'poison' and awakened thinking the 'medicine'; and it is the Atman that wins the battle.

I send you my good wishes to win your battle; and, this, in itself, is a medicine!

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Nearly everyone in the West takes for granted that this front half of the brain which we have been discussing is 'the organ of thought' and that its proper function is thinking. Recent advances in neurophysiology make this idea quite untenable. Much evidence shows that even functions like digestion or breathing are complex and involve many levels of the nervous system in a series of interwoven circuits which – while they are to some extent self-regulating – are integrated together to form a whole functioning system at the service of the individual.

Far more complex than these bodily functions, are those psychological functions which have been clearly recently evolved as part of human (as opposed to animal) nature, such as desires and emotions, thinking and planning, the control of involuntary actions, and the relation of attention to thinking, feeling and willing.

'Thinking' is now known to be one of the most complicated of all human functions, being of many different kinds, involving many different levels, and involving so much of the brain that there cannot be said to be any single 'organ of thought'. The frontal lobes of the brain are now considered, on the evidence, to be constructed as the final court of arbitration, where everything that comes into consciousness is meant to be seen in its right relations so that a decision can be reached by the conscious observer. If it is full of thoughts and conflicting desires, or if it is clouded by illusion or prejudice, or limited by a selfish rather than by an overall view which can take all relevant things into consideration, then it is far from performing the function for which it has been evolved.

Particularly when the word 'mind' is used in so many different senses, we cannot get far towards a firm basis for a system of normal psychology. In ancient languages, such as Sanskrit, and to some extent Arabic, Persian and Greek, there are separate words for different aspects of mind and different levels of mental operation. Such words *are* available in modern languages like English, but they have to be thought out and redefined. Taking Sanskrit as an example of one of the most ancient of languages always associated with Self-observation and Self-realization, we can use it under guidance to clarify the subject sufficiently to experiment through our own practice.

You who are taking the trouble to study the recorded accounts of the Shankaracharya's conversations and stories, can gradually help in this work. Some of our confusion is caused by the fixed habits of those who have tried to translate for us. Thus, they tend to use the word 'mind' for two quite different levels of mind, namely *Manas* and *Buddhi*.

*Manas* is, as it were, the 'personal servant' of the individual which, at the subconscious level, is very rapidly converting nerve impulses – either from within or from the outer world through the sense organs – into experiences in his consciousness; so each individual's 'world' is different from anyone else's, though each educational system or culture is producing its own overall shape.

*Buddhi*, on the other hand, which has been invariably interpreted as intellect, reason, or some function of thought, really means something different. According to one reliable source, the verbal root 'Budh' means: 'to wake, to come to one's senses or regain consciousness; to recognise, understand, or to reflect (light). *Buddhi* then means a returning to consciousness, recovering from a swoon, also presence of mind, purpose, discernment'.

The difference is brought out very clearly in quite a large number of the Shankaracharya's stories where a 'servant and a holy man' are contrasted. It has been explained to us that the holy

man can be seen psychologically as the awakened Mind when Buddhi is performing its right action under the influence of Sattva, which always gives a feeling of 'waking up'.

It would be very valuable if you would look out these stories and consider them from this angle, trying to find similar examples in your own experience.

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### **Extract from a letter from Jaiswal**

Benares, 7 August

When I go to see His Holiness again, I will present your beautiful observation. For your new findings about Buddhi are much more illuminating, yet the word 'intellect' doesn't fall short in any way.

Intellect is derived from the Latin *inter* and *legere*, which means 'that which can be read between the lines'. The idea of this compound word is to see or read or gather what lies hidden between the relation of two things, events or motives.

Since it has always been told us that it is only the Will of the Absolute which is the Law that can be observed by reading or seeing or gathering what lies behind these related things, so it all comes to waking-up, does it not? By reason, we are told to wake up to the ratio of the things, events or motives, all measured in the Will of the Absolute or the Law.