

4 November 1974

READING 3

It is felt that we could profitably turn now to a theme which started during our last visit to the Shankaracharya and which has been the basis of much correspondence ever since.

It deals with the different departments of what can be broadly called Mind, namely psychology, where His Holiness shows us the true meaning of an allegory used in our Western System. When Mr. Ouspensky was first taught this System, these words were used:

Eastern teachings contain various allegorical pictures to portray the nature of man's being from the point of view of his multiplicity. Thus, in one teaching, man is compared to a 'house' in which there is a multitude of servants; ... the servants have forgotten their duties; no one wants to do what he ought; everyone tries to be master, if only for a moment; and, in this kind of disorder, the house is threatened with grave danger. The only chance of salvation is for a group of the more sensible servants to meet together and elect a 'deputy steward' who can then put the other servants in their places, and make each do his own work: the cook in the kitchen, the coachman in the stables, the gardener in the garden, and so on. In this way the 'house' can be got ready for the arrival of the real Steward who will, in his turn, prepare it for the Master (to take command)...

As we know, the subject appears under various forms in many of the parables in the Gospels.

(In Search of the Miraculous p.60)

But we have to go back to Isaiah for a picture of Unity – the Fully Realized man – which is the goal to which this allegory should lead:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him... He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto Truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His Law.

(Isaiah 42: 1-4)

The great advantage of this way of looking at the human endowment over ordinary psychological descriptions in terms of 'nervous mechanisms', 'complex functions' etc. is that it keeps us from forgetting that each major department of Mind (thinking, feeling and action) has the same life, intelligence and consciousness as we have; and each considers that it has its own 'free will'.

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1974 Record

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.

(Record, 24 February 1974)

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.

[Can anyone express from their own experience what the Shankaracharya means by 'the personal servant'?)

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After some discussion, read this from the Correspondence, 1974 Record:

Letter 19th May: re '*personal servant*' – in reply to R.'s request for further information:

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 civilized person would not put deteriorated 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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