

24 February 1975

## READING 5

We must recognise for what they are more kinds of good impulses we are getting, and we must respond to them. One important purpose they have is to tell to us that only Pure Consciousness, the Atman, is real – all the rest is illusion, not what it seems to us to be. If whenever we get a prompting like that, we repeat the words ‘Only the Self is real’, they gradually acquire meaning and connection which gives them power to change events. After a time the impulses and the feeling become firmly connected. This is the way to get on.

The following passage from last Monday’s meeting greatly helps if one will only carry the gist of it in mind:

S. Restfulness is the very Nature of the Atman. It is real, Eternal. All unrest is unreal – transitory. An apparent state of unrest is created by our treating a disturbing element in the external world as if it belonged to us.

When we see a drama, we are not unduly moved by the disturbing incidents because we know that we are not involved in them. Similarly, the Reality is that all that is happening around us is like a drama, and the Atman is merely like its spectator. A Knowledge of the Reality always dispels false unrest, just as a rubber snake would not frighten anyone who knows that it *is* rubber.

Also, since restfulness is inherent in the Nature of the Atman, the apparent state of unrest is a passing phase and would die down if it had not been for our endless association with this or that. Hence it is this association which has to be given up.

(Record, 21 April 1969)

(Dr. R. to A.) Is there anything else you would like to read us?

A. There is this question: ‘Is rest an established food for man?’ The Shankaracharya said:

Yes, rest and joy are the natural foods for the Atman. Also, they are always there, but under the stimuli of a false external world a delusion of unrest is created. It is the giving up of this delusion in our thoughts and beliefs that goes by the name of ‘rest’ and ‘joy’.

(*ibid*)

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At your recent small meetings there has been some (rather futile) talk as to which of the ‘impulses’ one is getting are good, and which are not. The above quotations show that the first criterion is whether the impulses lead towards ‘inner restfulness’ and away from those ‘endless associations with this or that’, which give rise to the usual state of agitation which is unreal and transitory.

A little firm thinking and memory-recall tells us that always, in the past, this ‘restfulness’ has been the gateway to our most worthwhile experiences which (in his Introduction to the 1964 paperback edition of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*) the late W. H. Auden called ‘mystical’. Here is the clear description he gave (p.xxix) as quoted in *A Lasting Freedom* (p.63):

...All experiences which may be called mystical have certain characteristics in common.

1. The experience is ‘given’. That is to say, it cannot be induced or prolonged by an effort of will, though the openness of any individual to receive it is partly determined by his age, his psychophysical make-up, and his cultural milieu.

2. Whatever the contents of the experience, the subject is absolutely convinced that it is a revelation of reality. When it is over, he does not say, as one says when one awakes from a dream: 'Now I am awake and conscious again of the real world'. He says, rather: 'For a while the veil was lifted and a reality revealed which in my "normal" state is hidden from me'.
3. With whatever the vision is concerned, things, human beings, or God, they are experienced as numinous, clothed in glory, charged with an intense 'being-thereness'.
4. Confronted by the vision, the attention of the subject, in awe, joy, dread, is absolutely absorbed in contemplation and, while the vision lasts, his self, its desires and needs, are completely forgotten.

When this aim becomes as desperate as the air-hunger experienced by somebody whose head is being held under water, then we can be no longer in doubt. As Mr. Ouspensky put it: 'If we realise often how much we are missing because we do not remember ourSelves, then we develop a constant longing for Self-remembering'; and His Holiness: 'In Meditation we begin to Be what we are, but first we must come out of what we are not'.

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Once one has acquired a longing for coffee, the taste of coffee (even though impure or dilute) is detectable; the same with the taste of 'being-thereness'. If one likes it, one remembers it and keeps going after the best one can get. Then one really knows what is meant by the words: 'The Peace of God that passes all understanding'.

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