

20 June 1977

READING 7

IDENTIFICATION AND CONSIDERING

In trying to understand and put into practice the aim so simply expressed in ‘The Alchemy of Happiness’, we have already discussed the characteristic of the undisciplined mind which makes it unstable like mercury (quicksilver). It’s easy to understand (in theory at least) the necessity of stilling the mind so that it becomes silver and only a little practice of meditation shows one how valuable that is.

But what is much more difficult (in fact is never fully understood) is the meaning of the ‘melting of the silver’ and what must lead up to it. This is connected with one of the fundamental characteristics of man’s attitude to himself and to all his surroundings; namely his constant ‘identification with what pleases or displeases him’.

The word ‘identification’ doesn’t make the process any easier to understand! What is meant is that you lose your own identity and become hypnotised by other things instead. The equivalent Sanskrit word is more revealing – it is *Kashaya*, the word for the sticky resin or gum from a tree; insects are attracted by its aromatic odour and get stuck in it. Psychologically it means that the mind ‘gets stuck’ in anything that attracts it; and the universal thing that everybody’s mind gets stuck in is one’s *ego*. It’s a waste of time making a list of things one can be identified with; what is important is to get to hate the feeling – the nasty sticky feeling of *being identified* and losing one’s freedom of choice.

When our system was first given to Mr. Ouspensky this was well described but it was forgotten again. Here is the relevant passage:

Identifying is the chief obstacle to self-remembering. A man who gets identified with anything is unable to remember himself; but in order to learn not to get identified a man must first of all *not* be identified with himself. So long as a man identifies or can be identified, he is the slave of everything that can happen to him. Freedom is first of all freedom from identification.

After the general idea of identification, attention must be given to a particular form of identifying, namely identifying with people, which is called ‘*inner considering*’. This also has many forms, the most common being perhaps that a man is identified with what others think about him, what attitude they have towards him. He usually thinks that people do not value him enough, this torments him and may develop into a distrustful and hostile attitude towards people.

[*In Search of the Miraculous*, Chapter 8]

At a new group last week, one of our psychiatrists asked a question which shows the absurdity of the word ordinarily used in India as the equivalent of what we have been describing – namely ‘attachment’. The question was, I think, worded as follows: ‘On the fifth step of the Ladder of Self-realization, is a person required to give up being attached to his parents?’ What is really meant of course by ‘non-attachment’ is ‘non-identification’ and certainly to reach the fifth stage a man must become free from identification and ‘inner considering’. If one is in the habit of thinking that one’s parents do not value one enough, if one has a distrustful or even

hostile attitude towards them or towards anyone that one would naturally love, it is the inner considering that must be given up. On the fifth step one is no longer a slave, one is free to love unselfishly and without demanding anything in return. There is a saying, which is attributed I think to Gautama the Buddha, that if one carried one's parents on one's back for the rest of their lives one would not have repaid them for all the loving protection they gave during one's earliest years till one could grow up to be independent.

To revert to the original description:

The opposite of inner considering, and what is in part a means of fighting against it, is *external considering* which is based upon an entirely different relationship with people. It is adaptation of one's own selfish desires to an understanding of other people, to their needs and requirements. By understanding the tastes, habits and prejudices of others one understands oneself; and external considering requires a great power over oneself, a great control over the weaker sides of one's own nature...

Right 'external considering' is very important in this work because only through this will one understand and value what the organisation and the people in it are trying to do. The peak of achievement in this respect is to be seen in the example of the fully Realized man, who, as His Holiness says:

...must never resort to other than Sattvic means; so whether he is dealing with his dependents or followers, he will always seek the reasonable and peaceful ways of correcting them, and would never use violent means for the creation or correction of disciples.

(Record, 21 January 1970)

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