

16 January 1978

READING 1

In an article called 'Travelling Light' in the second issue of *The Bridge* I wrote on p.13:

Is it not possible that we are being taught, when still very young, to see the world upside-down and through the wrong end of our binoculars? Looking outside ourselves with such restricted vision and means of communication, we find no confirmation of our instinctive sense of the divine, or of any continued existence...'

Has anyone considered this question enough to bring any fresh evidence to bear on it?

(Pause for observation)

We have been led to understand that all the work of this 'Society for the Study of Normal Psychology' should be directed towards increasing experience and expansion of those moments of *Consciousness* which all of us get from time to time and which come as such a pleasant surprise like a sort of 'no-claims bonus'. Since this mysterious concept '*Consciousness*' is neither definable nor susceptible to direct experiment (for you can know it only when you have it), we must come at it through the practice of *Attention* which, in one form or another, is the means employed in any valid system designed to realize man's inherent possibilities. Though '*Consciousness*' is the goal, the practice of attention is the means of attaining it.

Yet in no field of enquiry does it become more obvious in practice that we are still seeing the world upside down. Do the few people who use the word '*Consciousness*' today really suppose that man (this badly-behaved little creature on an insignificant planet) has invented the only consciousness in the Universe? Some scientists today think it 'probable' that there are other beings on other planets outside our Solar System who are just as conscious as we are – which isn't saying much! And yet in almost any discovery that man makes, he finds that Nature has already done better – navigation, flight, electromagnetism, organic chemistry, sonar, and much more, even just on the physical level. In fact the world shows so much evidence of *Consciousness* in the form of life, intelligence, patterns, orders of laws, that it would be better to keep the capital 'C' for the Universal *Consciousness* (in Sanskrit, Chit) and keep the small 'c' for our human consciousness which is its small reflection (chitta).

With regard to *human consciousness* we were told about four states of consciousness: First, sleep; second, daytime state; third, awakened state or Self consciousness; and fourth, Cosmic or 'Objective' *Consciousness*. We experience the first and second states in every twenty-four hour cycle of our lives; we get glimpses of the third state; but only after that is firmly established can we get glimpses of the fourth – the Sanskrit word 'Turiya' means 'the Fourth state' and is translated as 'enlightenment'.

Though most of mankind take it for granted that they are awake during the day, yet when experiencing the third state we feel we have suddenly awakened from a deep sleep in which we have been living ever since we last 'woke up'.

When our System 'came West' in 1915, these words were used:

A modern man lives in sleep, in sleep he is born and in sleep he dies... At present just think of one thing. What *knowledge* can a sleeping man have? And if you think about

it and at the same time remember that *sleep* is the chief feature of our *being*, it will at once become clear that if a man really wants Knowledge, he must first of all think about how to awake, that is, about how to change his being.

(*In Search of the Miraculous*, Chapter 4)

It seems to me that the trouble so many people go to nowadays in trying any promising method, is really motivated by this strong desire to awake; and that if we could make proper use of the scientific discoveries of the last two decades about the *mechanism of attention* together with the Shankaracharya's guidance, we could save ourselves a lot of effort.

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