

14 October 1980

READING 2

(for 2 weeks)

The current diagram has been a help to more people than we had hoped for, in our escape from the prison of a dualistic outlook and its conflicts; by getting us to 'lift up our hearts and minds towards the Grace of our all-knowing Self (the Atman)' whenever we are reminded of 'Who we are' by a good impulse. Moments of freedom and happiness, times of doubt or stress can equally help us to form the habit of turning our common viewpoint the other way up like jars in a thirsty land during a welcome shower of rain.

Quite frequently over the years the Shankaracharya has told us a story at the beginning of a visit to him, the lessons from which few of us have practised enough. There have been different versions but the essence of this story is that someone came to an expert to be taught the Meditation technique. 'Before we get on to that,' said the instructor, 'can you mention anything you noticed on the way here?' The man tells him different things – one time it was a dead donkey lying in the road; at others (as in 1968), a monkey in a tree making offensive gestures. 'Very well,' he was told, 'just go into the next room and come back and tell me when you have got that monkey out of your mind.' After some time the man returns, perspiring freely, and says, 'I'm afraid that monkey is only getting bigger;' and then he is told certain lessons that the experiment is meant to demonstrate.

On this occasion in 1968 R. led off by saying, 'I used to tell this story as a joke, but now I no longer feel safe with that monkey, and I come this time to ask you to be good enough to shoot him, or at least to send him back to the jungle where he belongs.' His reply, as usual, took some of the heat out of the question:

S. The story of the monkey has a very general 'feel' about it. Everyone who aspires to rise high on the way to Liberation wants Self-realization first, and only after Self-realization would he do the work. This way of thinking is wrong, for there is no such thing as 'Self-realization now and work later.'

When the aspirant expressed his inability to get the monkey out of his mind, the instructor pointed out that this is the nature of our being, that whatever is taken in by the registering mind (Manas) stays there, and the mind fights back if direct attempts are made to restrict or discipline it. Manas *becomes* whatever it admits, so one would say that the mind becomes the monkey and keeps on gesticulating old habits. This is how our ordinary thoughts and desires lower the level of our being.

One becomes whatever one takes in.† (see Note overleaf)

The way to get rid of all this is through Self-Knowledge by which one gets to know things as they really are; and by meditation one reduces the effects of all habits so as to allow the discriminating Mind (Buddhi) to do its work under the influence of the True Self.

There are many such monkeys within each individual's nature, which have taken up their abode during the journey through previous lives; and they rise on occasion

to disturb the peaceful existence. They will play around as long as one allows them free play. To check all this one needs the systematic support of good company and inspired words.

(Pause for silence and short discussion)

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†**Note.** This idea is at the heart of our Western Tradition both in the early Christian *Philokalia* and also in Russia 65 years ago when Mr. Ouspensky was being taught it like this:

A man does not remember... and this (forgetfulness) is associated with one of the fundamental characteristics of man's attitude toward himself and his surroundings; namely his constant 'identification' with what at a given moment has caught his attention, his thoughts or desires and his imagination... The difficulty of escape is further increased today by the fact that when people observe it in themselves (or in others) they often consider it a good trait and call it 'enthusiasm', 'zeal', 'spontaneity', 'dedication', and even 'genius' and names of that kind.

If people could see what identifying really means, they would alter their opinion. By identifying with any *thing* a man loses his human nature and *becomes* a 'thing'; if people identify with wordy arguments, they *become* words; and greediness or desires likewise. Of themselves nothing remains. Identifying is the opposite of Self-remembering.

Conclusion. One has to go by the feel or taste of it. Our difficulty has been increased because Indian literature (and our interpreters, who do not know our System) confuse the idea with 'attachment' and miss the psychological meaning of the word 'Kashaya', which means literally a sticky gum in which the mind gets caught like a fly on fly-paper.

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