

17 May 1965

READING 2

PART 1. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACTIONS

The classical examples given last week were merely intended to illustrate the fact that actions differ qualitatively as well as quantitatively in terms of the kind of energy they need, so please don't just go on talking about 'physical labour, intelligence and invention, and artistic creation'. Bring your own examples. This part of the Teaching is designed to be a guide to us in our conduct of affairs from day to day; and that is confirmed by the Shankaracharya (7.10.62). You remember?

Q. Will you please speak of how to increase the concentration of Sattva from day to day? Is the company and example of a Realized Man important or essential?

A. There are two ways of increasing Sattva Guna. One is, as you say, the company of a Saint; and this is as important as the other, which lies in *right conduct* during the day in respect of actions, feelings and thoughts.

If these are good one day, one may achieve the balance of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, and Sattva will prevail over the others. If they or one of them is bad, then the Gunas are unbalanced with either Rajas or Tamas prevailing. But the effect of good actions, feelings and thoughts would be to create more Sattva and help to restore the balance. If either actions, feelings or thoughts are allowed to remain bad, the balance will be further upset and will lead to bad effects on oneself and other people.

The criterion of the expression 'good' as used here, is, he says, whether the effect is increase of happiness merging into eternal happiness. The actions, feelings and thoughts are bad if their effect is unhappy or leading to only temporary happiness – what turns into unhappiness later.

Q. (after 15 minutes' meditation): Can you say more about the criterion of goodness in thoughts and actions and feelings, especially actions? Many actions are necessary; part of one's duty; yet not seeming to lead to Spiritual things. But these necessary actions could lead the way to your 'good actions', couldn't they?

A. All the actions in the world can be related to the good actions and should be. They could all be made by the Realized Man to lead in the end towards Consciousness. The actions of an ordinary man have no Spiritual significance, but the actions of a Conscious man, even if they seem outwardly to be evil, will inevitably lead toward goodness; so action is not wrong if it is done by a Conscious man. If he (H.H.) punishes someone it is for his benefit, to correct his wrong.

Q. So it depends on who does the action? For instance, Christ could curse the barren fig-tree.

A. Curse can only be given by a 'powerful' man. He pronounces it to correct the wrong and to bring greater Consciousness to people all round. If a Conscious man curses he also confers a boon.

Q. All that you are saying agrees with what our System says: 'There can be no conscious evil'.

A. Consciousness can relate all types of action to goodness.

- Q. In our Teaching, actions are said to be different in their genesis and result according to the nature and proportion of the three Forces contained in the action? Do you agree?
- A. On a lower level actions can be classified according to Gunas. But in the higher stages of Consciousness all action emanates from Consciousness for goodness.

CONCLUSION

What would you conclude from all this?

[My own conclusion is that the quality and results of actions will depend on the success or otherwise of efforts on the line of Consciousness and Self-realization. If the special triad (N-O-C) is present during any of the other activities their nature and results will be different.]

PART 2. TIME AND RECURRENCE

Quotations from Mr. Ouspensky (Meetings London & New York 1935–1945)

- Q. Will you explain how it is possible for a man to live coexistent lives simultaneously in two time-places at once?
- A. There are many things that look impossible, but that is because our thinking apparatus is not good enough to think about such things. It simplifies too much. These problems need mathematical thinking. For instance, we cannot think about Time as a curve but only as a straight line. If we could think of Time as a curve, and understand all that this implied, this question of yours would not arise.
- In this case we are in exactly the same position as plane-beings trying to think of a three-dimensional world. Really there is no problem of this kind. The problem is the structure of our own mind. The aim of all our work is to reach the third and fourth states of Consciousness, which means to think through Higher Centres. If we could do this, then problems of the future life, absurdities like this time question, and so on, would not arise.
- Q. Is it possible to learn something of Essence through memories of childhood?
- A. You can, if you have a good memory and can *find things in yourself that have changed and things that do not change*.
- Q. Is there any sign by which you can tell that we have not been in this house before? (in New York)
- A. No one can tell. I only know that I have not been in this house before.
- Q. Then we have not either?
- A. I do not know. But you will be much nearer to the Truth if you begin with *this* as the first time. If we did something before, then it was only so much as made this possible.
- Q. Does this idea of parallel time mean that all moments continually exist?
- A. Yes, it is very difficult to think about it. Certainly it means eternity of the moment, but our mind cannot think in that way. Our mind is a very limited machine. We must think in the easiest way and make allowance for it. It is easier to think of repetition than of the eternal existence of the moment. You must understand that our mind cannot rightly formulate things as they are. We can only make approximate

formulations which are nearer to Truth than our ordinary thinking. Our mind and our language are very rough instruments and we have to deal with very fine matters and fine problems.

COMMENT: (May 1965)

With reference to our *language*, we shall never change our Understanding if we don't change our language at least in one particular respect. From now on, please stop talking about 'Time' in the singular. There are as many different Times as there are many different clocks or Time-keepers. So if anyone mentions the word 'Time', would someone in the Group please ask them, 'Whose time?' or 'Which time?'

Each of us has the following Time-keepers:

1) Those based on heart-beats and breaths (meaning seconds and moments). 2) Quicker than those are clocks based on nerve impulses, sensations and neurological events (in milliseconds). 3) Within those again are electronic events measured in microseconds. Then 4) we are dependent on external clock-time for events measured in seconds, minutes and hours up to a day; and after that, 5) we use calendars for days, weeks and months up to a year. For longer 'times' we base our measurements on contemporary records, 6) up to a generation or two; before resorting to 7) historical time-records, and 8) pre-history and geological times which we measure by what we bring up from certain depths in the earth's crust; and 9 & 10) we are checking by means of planetary times and by astronomical times (Sun and 'fixed' stars, star-clusters and galaxies). Each smaller time-cycle repeats and repeats within larger time-cycles, quickly becoming unnoticeable with increasing scale. New external clocks (electronic and radioactive) keep coming into use, but what about new inner clocks?

To talk about one Time is as paralysing as to talk about our 'five senses' (for we have a thousand senses and our experience cannot be confined to five!)

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The poets have known very well about all these things; and some unknown Elizabethan writer put it this way:

When love on time and measure makes his ground,
Time that must end, though love can never die,
'Tis love betwixt a shadow and a sound,
A love not in the heart but in the eye;
A love that ebbs and flows, now up, now down,
A morning's favour, and an evening's frown.

Sweet looks show love, yet they are but as beams;
Fair words seem true, yet they are but as wind;
Eyes shed their tears, yet are but outward streams;
Sighs paint a shadow in the falsest mind.
Looks, words, tears, sighs, show love, when love they leave;
False hearts can weep, sigh, swear, and yet deceive.

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