

20 November 1967

READING 5

NEW LIGHT ON THE GUNAS

PART 1

Knowledge of the Gunas comes from experience not from definitions. From experience you learn what each tastes like. Shut your eyes and observe what is going on in your mind. Suppose it is darting around, won't stay still – then it is Rajas which predominates. Suppose on the other hand, it is sleepy, dull, inert or depressed, then Tamas is in excess. Those are easy to see any time you stop and take a look at what's going on. In fact you are confronted with it willy-nilly every time you shut your eyes for meditation; or whenever you set out to do something a little difficult or unusual.

But gradually the observer begins to distinguish something different (which he calls 'Sattva'), neither active nor sleepy, but pleasing, enlivening and refreshing. It's difficult at first to remember what it feels like if it isn't there. So it is very useful to learn more about its varying characteristics. Hence these notes from our recent talks with His Holiness, who uses the taste of the three Gunas for all purposes and in all situations:

30.10.67 (10)

S. Sattva is a Guna (quality). It is enlightening and conducive to bliss. Abundance of Sattva will ease our efforts in performing our activities. In Sattva we can manage four hours or work in one hour. The movements are made easy and one is full of enthusiasm for work. The attention anticipates Sattva and Sattva helps to be attentive.

30.10.67 (11)

R. Does this concentration of the Sattva which often follows attention also lead to sudden moments of Truth which feel like 'waking up', as when you wake up and see that yourself and also the world are asleep and all our troubles come from being and doing in sleep?

S. *The effect of Sattva is new awakening.* It comes with a new opening and one is opened up to what actually exists, and not to what pictures we have in the mind. People wake up and see whatever there is. Just as with an oil lamp which is about to go out due to lack of oil, and when supplied with oil it brightens up.

Whenever there is a wave of Sattva in the being it arouses a new awakening. How this new awakening is used entirely depends upon the essence (Sanskara) and the being. If only a casual drop of Sattva has crept in, the awakening is followed by sleep and the effect of Sattva is lost. If the presence of Sattva is constant and the essence is good, the True Knowledge and meditation available, then it can lead to higher consciousness, and use of awakening can be made to help oneself and others too. Naturally one can't have Sattva all the time. Most of our day is governed by Rajas and Tamas. At most one could be under the influence of Sattva for two or three hours.

30.10.67 (12)

R. Like some others, often I have the feeling that I have lived before and I have lived many lives, and then I know what is going to happen because the situation is familiar.

S. This effect is due to increase of Sattva. Those who are fortunate enough to have abundance of Sattva, they can retain the Knowledge and also revive the Knowledge of the past or see the future events. Those with too much Rajas and Tamas, they cannot even retain what they hear. They keep on hearing and also keep on forgetting. Due to the lack of Sattva nothing is retained. It is the Sattva that holds the knowledge.

The quantity of Sattva is also subject to increase and loss. It depends upon how does one live his life. If he is under the influence of True Knowledge and practises meditation, the possibilities are more; when the life is directed only to sensual enjoyment and material gains, the Sattva will be reduced.

30.10.67 (13)

R. How does this relate to consciousness, the states of consciousness? We are told that there are higher states of consciousness than the ordinary states we live in, ending with Turiya.

S. There are some occasions when the wave of Sattva lifts up the consciousness to a great height. This could happen by chance or by some necessity. The result is usually extraordinary. It enlightens the person far beyond the reach of common levels. This type is rare. Here is a story which illustrates the subject. This was given sometime ago, but it seems necessary to restate it:

Two persons went to a king and wished to display their art. One of them was a painter who said that he would paint a mural. The other claimed that although he will not touch the brush and paint, yet he will show the true copy of what the other man paints. They were given a room with a partition in the middle. One was painting and the other cleaned the wall thoroughly, plastered and kept on polishing. After completion of the painting the partition was dismantled and one could see the same mural being reflected on the other wall. Here are two types: one is like the man with information, skill and art, and the other is like the man of Sattva whose wall is clear and reflective and reflects whatever there is. The abundance of Sattva is more like the polished wall which does the job without any art, skill or information.

30.10.67 (14)

W. We are told that to realize the Atman and the absolute nature of Atman it is necessary to rise above the Gunas. Does the attention in Sattva help in this way?

S. The nature of the Atman or the Absolute is Truth, Bliss and Consciousness. The manifestation starts with Prakriti and with Sattva as the finest of the Gunas. To reach the state of bliss and consciousness we start where we are. A man of Tamas must rise above to Rajas, and the man of Rajas must also rise above to Sattva. With abundance of Sattva one rises to the state which is without any activity. The light of the Sun is not the sun, but sun is only qualified with the light. The Atman is like a Sun and Sattva is the manifestation like light. Attention to the activity is a different name for consciousness. When the consciousness is applied to some thing, then we call it attention, and this attention is possible only if enough of Sattva is available to direct us towards the Atman. So-called 'attention' with Tamas is going in the opposite direction towards inertia or death.

30.10.67 (15)

W. May one just ask whether the Sattva therefore relates to the wakeful state of consciousness? Going beyond the Guna will be deep sleep state?

S. In deep sleep we are not in Sattva at all. We go into Tamas and due to rest in Tamas we come out fresh and full of energy. This energy lasts only a few hours and we again seek to go into Tamas to be fresh next morning. Tamas recharges only the physical body.

Rest in Sattva is of a different nature. It recharges us with consciousness and happiness. This is far more permanent compared to Tamas. This we can see from those people who have abundance of Sattva; they have very acute consciousness and a lasting happy disposition.

Samadhi or Turiya is mostly associated with abundance of Sattva. The Sattva will lead on to the point where the Atman or the Absolute is, which is without motion, form or word as known to us in the physical sense.

30.10.67 (16)

W. Is this to be equated with any of the three levels of consciousness in H.H's system of Teaching?

S. It was just about to be explained and the question has been already raised. The three levels of consciousness are like three states of creation. The deep sleep state is that where everything seems to be concentrated to a non-active point. The dream state is a state of random movements governed by Rajas. The wakeful state is governed by Sattva. In each state the lower state looks very small and insignificant.

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PART 2

Now let us find a striking example:

1.11.67 (1)

R. In the West we have mostly been brought up on the Christian Tradition so that Christ's stories in the Gospels are very familiar, and we recognise some of them as happening within ourselves. These stories surely are contained in His Holiness's Tradition also; it would help us to understand H.H's terminology of Buddhi, Manas, Chitta and Atman in this particular story I would like to tell:

A man had two sons. The younger asked for his portion of the inheritance and went to a far country where he 'wasted his substance in riotous living'. Now there came a great famine on the land, and being reduced to condition of a swineherd he would even desire to eat the pigs' food; but when 'he came to himSelf' he said, 'How many hired servants of my Father have food enough and to spare, and yet I perish with hunger; I will arise and go to my Father.' And when he was yet a great way off, his Father met him and kissed him, and made the servants put the best robe on him and prepare a feast. But the elder son was working in the fields, and when he was told what was happening, he complained that though he was always faithful, his father never made a feast for him. But the Father said, 'Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours, but this, your brother, was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

If the father were the Atman, who are the sons, and who receives the 'good impulse'?

S. The father is the Atman or the Absolute. Sons are men, one with understanding and one with ignorance. The son without understanding associates himself with the body and its claims. So he asks the father to give him his portion. In doing so he only

establishes a boundary within the creation which he could call his own. He then goes out into the search of pleasure far removed from the centre of happiness into the realm of the material world. This 'far country' is the country where the physical laws prevail, and when the physical body has spent up the substance there comes a famine due to lack of rest and real bliss. Utter confusion is the misery, and then not being able to see further, he looks back or looks within. He remembers to look within because of the great misery. He remembers the wealth and abundance of his Father's house where everyone is happy, and discriminates his situation from others. He is then met by his Father in the midway and is given the robe. The giving of the robe is the dawn of discrimination of the True Knowledge, and then all become happy and make a feast. He starts a new life because a transformation has taken place due to discrimination and True Knowledge. When the other son asks as to why was he never given a feast, he is told that the feasts are given to those who are separated. Those who are united with the Father, they are always celebrating. There is not a moment when there is no happiness in the company of the Father. The outer celebration is only for the separated ones, and since the younger was separated from wisdom he was being given a special treatment to start afresh. One who is with the Father is without blemish, and one who is without blemish is indeed the Absolute. In Absolute (Brahman) there is fulness and completeness, and in fulness there is no blemish.

There was a rich man in Calcutta who used to go out of his mind after certain intervals. Eight servants were deputed to look after him in groups of two, and were instructed to hit him on his head with his shoes whenever he was insane. They did as they were told and the moment they could see him coming to senses, the servants would stand with folded hands in respect, to obey his commands. This was the only cure.

1.11.67 (2)

R. Would you say, then, that these two sons seem to represent two states of the Buddhi ('Soul', Charioteer), one being misled by worldly things and the other always faithful?

S. Yes, both states of Buddhi, but one was with discrimination and True Knowledge, and the other without it.

...When a person is subjected to misery, then at the climax of great misery Buddhi looks back. The world is such that it simply goes on towards sensual pursuit without feeling misery as misery. But when they reach the end of it then they look back and the discrimination starts.

1.11.67 (4)

R. We see also in the story, clearly, the influences of the three Gunas on the young son. Going away he spends all his money in Rajas, and then reduced to Tamas, and when Sattva collects he turns towards his Father.

S. This is right.

R. You have yourself said that it would be valuable to find connections between the Christian Gospels and your Teachings – the Vedas – whence they originally arose. If you agree, we might go on and try to do this.

S. assents.

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SUMMARY

We each know the experience – often in the day – of ‘coming to oneSelf in the far country’, with the ‘good impulse’ to ‘arise and go to our Father’. We know also the negative reaction of a part of the mind whose nature is still and who is constantly faithful. We can now also understand what His Holiness means by ‘Buddhi’ under the influence of the three Gunas when one preponderates.

[**NOTE:** In your discussions please don’t waste time trying to define or rename the Gunas but, having discovered their meaning in your own experience, give us small examples and illustrations in your own words.]

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