

23 June 1969

## READING 7

For forty years we have been wrestling with the difficulty of reconciling the scientific picture of the Autonomic Nervous System derived chiefly from animal experiment, with the picture that emerges so clearly from self-observation if one gets the taste of the Three Gunas. This difficulty showed itself at some of your meetings last week, notably in the West Thames Division; but it would perhaps be valuable at this stage to suppose that there is an impartial and more enlightened observer in the Fourth Room and see how he might look at the other three rooms. A good way to do this is to select certain short stories from our inexhaustible store which could stimulate you to find similar illustrations from your own experience.

We will begin with the *middle room* – the emotional one. Here are three Zen stories which depict the middle room when one or other Guna predominates – the first when Rajas, the second Tamas, and the third when Sattva is predominating:

### 1. The Gates of Paradise

A soldier came to Haku-In and asked, 'Is there really a paradise and a hell?'

'Who are you?' inquired Haku-In.

'I am a Samurai.'

'You, a soldier!' exclaimed Haku-In. 'What kind of ruler would have you as his guard? You look very low-class.'

The man became so angry that he began to draw his sword as Haku-In continued, 'Oh, so you have a sword! But it's probably much too blunt to cut off my head.'

As the sword came out of its sheath Haku-in remarked, 'Here open the gates of hell!'

At these words the Samurai, perceiving the Master's discipline, sheathed his sword and bowed.

'Here open the Gates of Paradise,' said Haku-In.

[Comment: Here we see how Rajas was deliberately provoked by the instructor and conquered – one way towards the control of expression of the more violent emotions.]

### 2. No-loving kindness

There was an old woman in China who had supported a monk for over twenty years; she had built a little hut for him and fed him while he was meditating. To find out just what progress he had made in all that time, she sought the help of a girl rich in desire. 'Go and embrace him,' she told her, 'And then ask him suddenly, "What now?"'

The girl called on the monk and without hesitation went up and caressed him, asking him what he was going to do about it. 'An old tree grows on a cold rock in winter,' replied the monk somewhat poetically. 'Nowhere is there any warmth.'

When the girl returned and related what he had said, the old woman exclaimed angrily, 'To think I fed that creature for twenty years! He showed no consideration for your need, no sympathy with your condition. He need not have responded with passion, but at least he should have shown some compassion.'

With that she went at once to the monk's hut and burned it down.

[Comment: This story illustrates how what the monks call 'meditation' had only suppressed instead of awakening sympathy. Where Tamas predominates to that extent the method of provocation fails and, as His Holiness says, a more violent shock is needed.]

### 3. Open your own Treasure-House

Dai-Ju visited the Master Ba-So who asked him: 'What are you searching for?'

'Enlightenment,' replied Dai-Ju.

'You have your own treasure house,' said the Master: 'Why do you search outside?'

Dai-Ju enquired, 'Where is my treasure-house?'

The Master answered, 'What you are asking is your treasure-house.'

At that Dai-Ju experienced Satori. Ever after, he urged his friends to 'Open your treasure-house and use those treasures.'

[Comment: Where Sattva is reaching saturation-point after persistent search, the *coup de grâce* can be given by just a few skilful words.

There are equally good stories to show the effect of the different Gunas in the other two rooms, which we can go on to use if you want to.]

## CONCLUSION

Life can be regulated in the 'place of consciousness', which is located in the top part of our brain which we can get to know at firsthand. For each of us to operate his own switches (as in those three Zen tales), it is necessary to know very little theory. It is like my bedtime clock; I look at the dial and tell the time. By turning it round and looking at the back I am able to perform a few simple manoeuvres:

1. I can synchronise the hands with standard time.
2. I can regulate it so that it doesn't run fast or slow (the Gunas)
3. I can set the alarm and switch it off.

But for five hundred *different* makes of watch or clock which are often going wrong, a professional watch repairer is required, and he must know much more about the works. The forebrain of even the rat has several thousand million nerve cells, each of which can connect up to several hundred other cells. That is why a few of us have to relate current research to our own self-knowledge; the rest needn't bother.

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