

24 May 1971

READING 4

Some of you evidently got the point of last week's diagram, which is to feel in silent contemplation the central axis of Pure Consciousness around which our world revolves. If we can convince the logical mind that there *is* a different way of looking at everything, perhaps we can persuade it to keep out of the way and attend to its own job. Then we shall at moments escape from duality and see the Unity which underlies all this changing show. But the Antahkarana or inner organ which could look at things that way, is subject to the three Gunas; and the diagram or the abstract truth it expresses are meaningless unless one has a fair concentration of Sattva. For this I find the 139th Psalm a very constant help:

Lord, you have searched me and known me; you know my lying down and my getting up; you understand my thoughts before they come.

You are about my path and about my bed, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but you, Lord, know it through and through... Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me, I cannot reach up to it.

Where shall I go, then, from your Spirit or whither shall I escape from your presence? If I go up to heaven you are there; if I go down to hell you are there also. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall your hand lead me, and your right hand will hold me.

If I say, 'Maybe the darkness will cover me', then shall my night be turned into day. Indeed with you there *is* no darkness, but the night is as clear as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike.

Constant attention to this train of thought will bring the first stage in Self-realization; but we long for the further stage when the individual Self will be free to rise above the veils of illusion, to know that it is the same as the Universal or Param-Atman, and shed its Light on all our problems.

Surprisingly the Psalmist himself turns next to the field of embryology, to which the diagram also inevitably leads us today:

I will give thanks to you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was knit together in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth; your eyes could see my unformed substance, and in your book were all my members written when as yet there was none of them.

Isn't it rather curious that John Kendrew (one of the Cambridge team of Nobel prize-winners) should use this same metaphor of the *book*, in his *Thread of Life* (p.102):

We have called DNA the Thread of Life, but now let us think of it as the Book of Life. Think of an amino-acid or its equivalent triplet of bases, as a *word*. Then a protein molecule containing a few hundred amino-acids would be roughly equivalent to a paragraph in the book. Then a group of genes specifying a particular group of enzymes – perhaps a thousand words in all – is about a page. On this basis the nucleic acid in a virus would amount to a thin book of 60 or 70 pages... If we now turn to a man, every cell in the human organism has something like 2000 million pairs of bases in it, contained in 46 chromosomes. In terms of our analogy this would be equivalent to a

very large encyclopaedia indeed, an encyclopaedia of 46 volumes, and they would be positively gigantic volumes, averaging perhaps 20,000 pages each.

Every cell in the human body is provided with the whole encyclopaedia, the whole set of chromosomes, and we have to imagine that most of the time most of the pages of the encyclopaedia are shut – the great majority of the genes are not operating. Just every now and again one page is opened; and the genes on that page come into operation and produce a set of enzymes for a particular metabolic pathway which the cell requires.

Well, some may regard one language more conducive to Sattva than the other; but what comes out quite clearly (don't you think?), is that it's quite impossible to think of the Causal level logically with our common attitude to space and time. You can't possibly cram 46 huge volumes into the tiny nucleus of a cell – let alone into all of the million million cells of the body duplicating themselves every few days – and also maintain that 'one of the pages only opens now and again', if you are thinking of units like inches and days. So please don't let us any more try to think that way about the Causal level or recurrence or anything else there. We need to have new concepts – a cipher, a code, a Mantra in which 'very much is contained in very little'. That is the meaning of that 5th step of Yoga (Pratyahara or 'abbreviation') as explained in a recent letter from interpreter Jaiswal:

Mind must learn to reduce a large thing into small, small into smaller until it comes to a single point; just as our practice of meditation is to start a Mantra and allow the sound and rhythm to become subtler and subtler until it comes to the single point where Mantra, meditator and object of meditation become One. That is the true end of meditation and is said to be the causal level of our being; causal in the sense that, here alone, something materialises to bring about change in the individual.

But that is the advanced stage of the Yoga System; the earlier stage is Pratyahara when this is applied only to the senses and the (computer) mind. The idea is to derive the fullest satisfaction from the least action (if two senses are enough, a third need not be used; if two pieces of bread are enough, don't eat a third; if £20 is enough, why earn or spend £21?).

This does not at all mean to become an ascetic or recluse; it simply means to learn the measure of things and one's own measure, in order to advance from coarser to subtler. All master artists and craftsmen adopt this practice in their respective fields; no good composer loads his music, and no good artist puts an unnecessary stroke of his brush on the canvas. Later you can apply this to thinking, speaking, and the meaning of words in communication.

(Pause for discussion)

One more point. People say, 'if the sensory world is unreal, what is the point of doing *anything?*' But Shakespeare, who in Sonnet 15 shows that quite early on he himself made the discovery with which we began this paper, did not take it that way. On the contrary it was a liberation, often renewed which gave him inspiration and scope in his work:

When I consider everything that grows
 Holds in perfection but a little moment,
 That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
 Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;

...

Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
 Sets *you* most rich in youth before my sight,
 Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay,
 To change your day of youth to sullied night.

(Shakespeare, *Sonnet 15*)

Here is this central consciousness which is felt by the poet as his Muse; and to show that 'wasteful time' is not very important. The mind can flash back from 16th century England to the Greece of the 5th century BC across 2000 years of tumultuous European history and hear the poet Pindar saying the same thing:

Man's life is a day.
 What is he, what is he not?
 A shadow in a dream is man.
 Yet when God sends the splendour
 Shining light is on the earth,
 And life is full of honey.

(*Pythian Odes*, 8, line 95–8; Tr. Bowra)

There *is* always Truth, and always there are great men to remind us of what we have always known.

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