

31 January 1972

## THE DOCTRINE OF COSMOSES

### A REVALUATION

#### INTRODUCTORY

Recent and most encouraging messages from the Shankaracharya give us a good start for our meetings in this otherwise sombre year of 1972. Here are three sentences from a literal translation of his words:

Love and True Knowledge are just two names for one and the same thing. This Unity is a natural property of the Self, and it comes to the surface when the soul concentrates on the Param-Atman. Then the mirage of a changing world vanishes and Param-Atman – the Self of the whole universe – appears in its place.

Our meetings must now follow a different policy. Hitherto any good idea from the True Knowledge (conceived with a bigger concentration of Sattva), has become dissipated by, often futile, discussions dominated by Rajas and Tamas. From now, a good idea should be received in silence and allowed to penetrate into the soul of each person at a meeting. Only questions aimed at a right understanding of the idea should be allowed.

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By asking the question: ‘What is the chief point round which our ignorance revolves at the present time?’ we find there is some agreement on this: we do not realise that the ‘physical, subtle and causal’ levels are three *different* worlds or bodies in which we live simultaneously without seeing how great the difference is. To describe this the Shankaracharya uses the simile that we live in a house with three rooms:

One is the room in which we work (with Rajas in command), another is the room we sleep in (governed by Tamas), but there is a third room (governed by Sattva). Most people do not know of the existence of this third room; the reason being that the doors and windows of the different rooms are heavily curtained so that we don’t see that we are going from one room to the other all the time without knowing it.

When the curtains of ignorance are removed, then the light of knowledge shines through the house; we see the difference between rooms; and we see the Conscious Being to whom the house belongs.

#### PART 1. THEORY

A new understanding of the teaching on ‘*Cosmoses*’ (which our Western system probably derived originally from the Greek ‘atomists’ in Asia Minor, only a little after the time of the original Shri Shankara) could be what we need. Regrettably this teaching has always been described in terms of the *external* universe.

The principle was that this big universe consists of a definite scale of ‘worlds within worlds’; each of those worlds is an ‘atom’ of the next bigger world; itself formed of the small world which is its ‘atom’. A man is built of cells; mankind, the genus *Homo*, is one of a myriad species or atoms of the Biosphere; life-bearing planets are atoms of solar systems, which are themselves atoms of a galaxy like our Milky Way. There are probably as many cells in a man as there are stars in a galaxy. This is not a *fixed* scale, as was once thought, but a sliding scale which keeps opening up with new frontiers of knowledge.

The dividing line between one cosmos and its neighbours is what Mr. Ouspensky described in *A New Model* (p.457) as ‘incommensurability’ – ‘one cannot use the same clocks and measuring rods, the same rules and regulations, when passing from one cosmos to another.’ Einstein based his ‘special theory of Relativity’ on four dimensions, but he certainly kept the same clocks throughout his argument! Similarly, though Western scientists find it indispensable *in practice* to use different ‘clocks’ and ‘measuring rods’, in their *thinking* they do not take the immense implications of this principle into account. Those sciences which have studied man as a physical machine, had to begin with gross anatomy, then pass to biochemistry and recently to electronics. But these are all still physical, and cannot describe the ‘subtle’ world of psychological experience, let alone the causal, though they can record some of their physical repercussions.

Modern science pronounces firmly that the universe cannot be described in terms of 3-dimensional bodies. But why is it left to Mr. Ouspensky and the Shankaracharya to pronounce, equally firmly, that it cannot be defined either in terms of one dimension of time only, the ‘earth-time’ of our clocks and calendars? Is it because scientists are speaking without the experience of *different times* within themselves – which they dismiss as merely subjective? Yet when you pass from experience of the physical world (where duration in time must always be greater than 1 second) into the subtle world of frequency (the inverse of time), you pass into a world of repetition of cycles of very different frequencies all experienced as *instantaneous*. In other words, just as you pass into a new dimension of space (for who would consider a thought or a feeling or an idea as a body of three dimensions?), so you pass into a new dimension of time as well. Psychology tries to observe neurology, with an additional dimension of space and time, but continues to describe it in the same terms and from an unchanged point of view!

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## PART 2. PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THREE COSMOSES

Mr. Ouspensky showed us that a given cosmos experiences only the repetition of the lives of the smaller cosmos within it. (Do we experience the fact that all our tissue cells live only a few days and die a thousand deaths during one lifetime of our own?) Similarly the Biosphere is eternal for us – we see it only in terms of cycles which we call ‘ages and epochs’.

The Shankaracharya seems to have all these three worlds in view when speaking; and certainly in this story which you should hear again. He was answering questions on the repetition of human lives.

**Approach to ‘Recurrence’.** Part of reply to question from Cedric Grigg (Boston)

S. From all this it is possible to come to the realisation that the world encompassed by the physical body is a limited world. This limited world has no validity of its own, no means or ways of establishing its relationship directly with the subtle world except through inferences derived from Knowledge. The most reasonable idea about birth and death is:

‘The happy and contented lead a good life in this world, and extend this goodness into other lives through other worlds.’ As an example, he told this story of Janaka who was both a king and a realized man.

Once, when on his travels, he broke his journey and fell asleep. In his sleep

he had a dream, in which he was entering a village, and at the moment when he was going through a door of a house in this village, a dog came from behind and bit him. Blood poured from the dog-bite; he was in great pain; many people gathered and a doctor was called. The doctor put some lotion into the wound, but because it was astringent, it increased the pain in the leg, so that the king cried out and this woke him up.

When he woke up, he found neither the village, nor the people, nor the dog, nor the painful leg! How does all this happen? Where did the dog come from? Who got the doctor? Who assembled all those people and created the village?

The only conclusion is that the subtle body creates a world of its own and enacts all these things. The cause of such a dream drama arises out of the cherished desires or fears which are stored in our Causal body. These unfulfilled desires and fears somehow create a dream world which seems to find expression for them. So the whole experience of the dream world is a proof of the existence of a subtle and of a Causal world.

The same applies in this bodily life in relation to birth and death. When the physical body is just about to die, the Causal body immediately collects all the experiences gained by the subtle body and jumps to a new form. It keeps on jumping from one body to another. All these experiences are felt in the subtle body which derives them from the Causal. The Atman, of course, is neither born nor dies.

If this question of birth and death is taken in the light of the three levels of existence, one would see that there is no difficulty in understanding it. Just as in our common life, there is 'dreamless' sleep, sleep with dreams, waking state and enlightened state (Samadhi).

(Record, 28 January 1970)

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