

27 November 1972

READING 8

A most illuminating letter has just come from Allahabad (posted 12 December 1972). Fortunately, on impulse, we sent Reading 3 to be translated and possibly relayed to His Holiness. You should have Reading 3 with you when you listen to the eight points from the Swami's remarks, which need amendment. You must remember, however, that our 'man on the spot' has no shorthand, and must remember and then translate what is said in his own words; so we allow for minor inaccuracies. However, here is the letter verbatim:

When I presented a translation of your Reading 3 to H.H., he asked me to sit down and read it out to him. As I did so, he found it necessary to throw some further light on the Swami Ji's answers so that they may be better understood by your audiences and chances of any misunderstanding removed as far as possible.

1. H.H. very much liked the remarks by St. John White and Dr. Fenwick's question that, 'When things go wrong inside the School here, and sometimes, outside, it is frequently a question of *who* is doing it.' He observed that our past accumulated nature and the six inner enemies, i.e., Kama (obsessive desires), Krodha (anger), Lobh (greed), Madh (vanity), etc., make things go wrong. Blame should not be thrown on God, thinking that He motivated everything that happened. As explained in *Gita*, Kama creates a lot of Rajoguna, which, in turn, does so much mischief.
2. 'Worship of God should not be in a closed room only..' It should be clearly understood that this does not in any way condemn worship in a closed room. On the other hand, it is *necessary*. Only, it should be supplemented in all actions as indicated by the Swami Ji, and not forgotten after coming out of the room.
3. The simile of the puppet should not be taken too literally, because if we were really so then Self-realization would have become an impossibility. We have got an Atman, the very substance of Param-Atman, which the puppet has not got.
4. 'You can offer your actions and thoughts, whether they are good, bad or indifferent'. H.H. is emphatic that only good actions should be offered to God, and as regards bad actions, we must always regret them and pray to Him to be forgiven for them. Param-Atman is not the fount of any bad actions. His actions are good and orderly, and this is why an order prevails in the universe. If He could ever initiate a wrong action, the cosmos would immediately lapse into chaos.

Wrong actions originate as explained under (1) above. We must, however, bear in mind that the very same action can be good in one situation and bad in another.

5. 'The fire does not refuse to burn dirty linen'. True, but the question hardly arises as soiled clothes are just sent to the laundry. We do not take the trouble of consigning them to fire!
6. 'The sweeper can fill his basket and offer it to God... as a basket of flowers'. In actual practice, it is most difficult not to discriminate between a basket of rubbish and flowers as an offering to God. Everything about God is clean and beautiful. Therefore, offering Him anything unclean and ugly would appear contrary to the spirit of worship. That is why it is traditional to offer flowers.

7. 'The soldier's role is to kill...' But a hunter cannot treat killing as his role. We have to be most cautious in seeking exceptions to the general rule that non-violence is the greatest virtue. It is true that Krishna advised Arjuna to fight. But it was done when an enemy was standing in front ready to launch an attack, rejecting all attempts for a peaceful settlement.
8. 'Trying to change the film shown on the cosmic screen.' We need not do this at all, as the cosmic screen is constantly showing a multitude of various films, and we can always select a film which we can like. Just as a large number of cinema houses in the town screen various films and we only go to that one which shows the film of our own choice – instead of trying to change the film on show at a particular house.

H.H. liked your concluding remarks.

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COMMENT

You will see that these were just the points that caused us worry and debate.

Point 3 needs a little elaboration, perhaps. Just as Mr. Ouspensky said (in his first *Psychological Lecture* given in the 1930's) 'Man is a marionette pulled by invisible strings', and 'man is a machine, but a very peculiar machine', so the Shankaracharya's words to us were very broad and general and not meant to be pushed too far.

One of the best descriptions of human activity in general is, he said, at our first audience in October, 'the shadow play of puppets. There is someone holding the strings and moving them, but they appear to be moving themselves and to be the real doers.'

He had previously laid stress on the main difference between the two kinds of people: 'those who know, and those who don't know'. If puppet man knows this secret and avoids 'attachment', he becomes an instrument of the Param-Atman and ceases to be a puppet.

The other way we can profit from this general idea, is that it is highly presumptuous to judge and get angry with all the people who *don't* know, for puppets are not responsible for their actions.

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