

30 April 1973

## A PRACTICAL SYSTEM OF KNOWLEDGE

### INTRODUCTION

Many people connected with us, here and in other countries, are clamouring for a practical System of Knowledge which will go with, and enhance, any methods we use – and particularly Meditation. I, myself, am only interested in a System which will improve our being as well as our knowledge, thus bringing us more and more of those flashes of understanding and unaccountable happiness which enable us to rescue anyone who comes to us with their troubles and problems, or thirst for knowledge.

The chief limitation of our being is the inherent *duality of our point of view*. Our Western System explained to us that this duality arises in two parts of the machinery – the intellectual and the instinctive. The ‘card index’ of the mind is made to say ‘yes’ and ‘no’ – it was called the ‘formatory centre’. Whenever there is affirmation there is always negation; we see this every day. Similarly, the instinctive area of the mind which governs the body is based on the dualism of pleasure and pain, which leads to the frenzied pursuit of pleasure and the panic flight from pain and poverty. For Self-realization we have to liberate ourselves from this duality of attitude occasioned by sensations and thought processes.

Our New York friends at the end of March were studying a quotation from ‘The Absolute and Manifestation’ by Swami Vivekananda, which quotation begins like this:

The one question that is most difficult to grasp in understanding the ADVAITA (non-dual philosophy), which will be asked again and again and which will always remain unanswered (unless experienced) is: How can the infinite, the Absolute, become finite?... This Absolute has become the universe by coming through time, space and causation. This is the central idea of Advaita. Time, space and causation are the glass through which the Absolute is seen.

There is no need for us to borrow this formulation from the Ramakrishna Tradition, since the Shankaracharya Tradition (to which we belong) has always been the chief champion of Advaita, and even Western historians regard the original Shri Shankara as the ‘founder of the Advaita system of non-dualism’. Our Shankaracharya frequently points out that, since ‘time, space and causation’ are artifacts produced by the human mind, they can, and must, be got rid of in the course of Self-realization. Thus on 3rd February 1973 he began a talk to his people in this way:

It is usual to regard two kinds of forces as living in all of us – good and evil. This dualism leads to conflict, and conflict to unhappiness... Liberation implies freeing our reflected consciousness (Chitta) from this illusion of good and evil.

The universe also unfolds itself in two ways: one is the ignorant way in which we imagine ourselves to be the ‘doers’ of actions and are, therefore, subject to the Law of Karma, i.e., ‘as you sow, so you reap’. The other way is to see it all as the performance of a drama, in which an actor taking the part of thief or saint is not, in fact, either a thief or a saint himself. This way, therefore, the Law of Karma does not hold.

For example: in cases where Param-Atman has taken the part of a man (Krishna, Jesus), he was not really a man, and so He was not bound by the Law of Karma – cause and effect.

But that cannot be the case with anyone who *identifies himself with his actions*. If such a man thinks he has won a victory today, the Law of Karma lays down that he would suffer a defeat tomorrow.

In our branch of the Work, the chief scourge is the approval and disapproval we extend to everything, and particularly to ourselves. This is most evident in those of us who have had the longest experience of our Tradition. As we get older, we torture ourselves more and more with our apparent failure and the fear that we shall die unrealized. So it is urgent that we work steadily day by day to get rid of this form of dualism by substituting the single idea that *everything* is part of one single Param-Atman. Therefore, whatever system we invent (and anybody who likes can make the attempt!) I, myself, will only support a System which frees us from dualism.

Another fact brought out by His Holiness in a talk which we quoted at our last Monday meeting, (19th March) makes it even more difficult to invent a comprehensive System that works:

All doctrines and Scriptures say that Param-Atman can be reached by going through some established system of discipline, but we see people who have tried them all and yet achieved nothing. The reason is that, for union with the Pure Consciousness of Param-Atman, we cannot lay down any laws as Newton did for the physical universe, and then feel sure that everything will go accordingly. The union with Param-Atman is achieved solely by His grace, when His heart melts on seeing the rock-like determination of the devotee.

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Knowledge of the laws governing the structure of the nervous system really confirm this, for it has been established that the lower the level of evolution, the more mechanical and, therefore, the more predictable will be its functions. Conversely, the higher and more conscious the level, the less predictable. It is only the physical or material level that can be studied by controlled experiment; on the subtle level of psychology there are many more 'degrees of freedom'; and on the causal level there is unlimited possibility, most of it, as yet, unrealised.

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So we are open to offers by any creators among us of systems of knowledge, and I would like to try my hand once more at a smaller meeting next Monday so that you can pull it to pieces!

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