

15 October 1979

READING 3

(revised)

PART 1

You now surely want to know how it all started – namely the answer to a question about the relation of *meditation to mental activity* at the end of the first conversation by our party with the Shankaracharya on the 27th August last – which is the subject of Readings 1 and 2 of this term.

S. As an introductory observation on this subject there are two factors to be remembered: First, whenever any fresh activity has to be started, it can only be initiated from a point of *rest*. If one is not at rest psychologically (that is on the ‘subtle level’) then since there is already mental activity going on, there won’t be any question of being able to *initiate* any other different activity.

The second factor is that the progress and success of any constructive mental activity will depend on the forces available at the point of rest. So the *available energy* forms the capital (in the individual’s bank account) and governs the quality and the amount of any mental work he will be able to carry on.

This is the pre-condition of successful meditation, and also of all (first-class) mental as well as physical activity. So when one is trying to discover how the human mind works – whether it is free or handicapped by any diseases or deformities – one has to see and take into consideration both these factors.

Please make persistent efforts during this week to observe these facts in oneself whenever one can.

PART 2

The next part of his answer defines more exactly the second of those two aspects namely: ‘the forces available at the point of rest’. That is determined by a universal law (basically the same both in his Tradition and in our Western System): There are two opposing forces everywhere apparent – ‘action and reaction’ – defined much as they were in Newton’s time, ‘to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction’. Since these would eventually bring everything to a standstill, both systems maintain that: for anything new to arise, for the genesis of any fresh event of important change of direction, a *third kind of force* is needed; and the human mind is blind to the necessity and nature of this 3rd Force. Many examples of this law are seen on the physical level in the course of careful scientific research: for instance the formation of water from the combination of Hydrogen (‘active’) and Oxygen (‘reactive’) in the presence of a catalyst (like heated platinum) which is the ‘3rd Force’ in this case. What is not realised in the West is that this law lies behind all the phenomena of the manifest world on both the psychological (‘subtle’) and the physical levels.

These three kinds of force are in the Shankaracharya’s System called ‘Gunas’ (qualities or aspects of energy) and known individually as Rajas (action or impetus), Tamas (reaction or inertia) and a Third Force Sattva, which harmonises the two when present in sufficient concentration. While we are blind to its nature there is no use in trying to define it; but psychologically it often feels like ‘light’ or ‘awakening’.

So in answer he goes on to apply this Law of 3 Forces to the idea of 'rest' in these words:

S. There are *three types of rest* available for the individual known, according to the Guna preponderating at the time, as Sattvic, Rajasic or Tamasic rest. When Tamas or Rajas preponderate, not much increase of energy is provided as far as the mind is concerned. So, unless Sattvic rest is made available for those people who are deficient in mental energy, it would be difficult to change the content and direction of their mind. So we shall have to look into the relation between rest and mental energy under these three conditions, and then, later on, we will consider any further questions you may want to put.

Those of you who have already heard about or studied this 'Law of 3 Forces' could now revise what you remember and try to apply the idea in its simplest form to your own experiences of those natural moments of mental rest during the day. But for now we strongly recommend that in your discussions you keep separate the two terminologies: the 3 'Forces' of the West and the 3 'Gunas' of the East. Both are wonderfully useful but with different handling and for different purposes. I am sure you will find gradually in time that the 3 Forces is best for scientific problems in the material world; while H.H's psychological guidance on the 3 Gunas is much better in individual Self-realization – that is for getting through the gaps in the curtain during every day.

So this week concentrate on the quotations from the Shankaracharya.

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