

The Eternal Message of the Gita

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Contradiction & Certitude – 5. The State of Turiya

The Reality which is not contradicted by anything, can only be *non-dual*. In fact, our intellectual intuition shows us that all contradiction implies duality, that is to say, a mental activity. What does this activity consist of? Of an endless series of images which our tendencies, innate or acquired, induce us to project. We find that these images continuously oppose one another, provoking conflict in us, and that the mind is the source of all such contradiction.

Thus the conviction forces itself that the Reality, in order to be *non-contradictory*, should be non-dual. The evidence of this will appear to us so much clearer as our spirit becomes purer. By purification we understand its liberation from the bonds of affection, for the truth is hidden by the shadows projected by ourselves: preferences, prejudices that were formed in the course of our lives, and over which we have but very little control. What immense effort is needed to cut

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2 This is the 11th (and final) of a series of independent commentaries by the Swami on various themes of the Gita-teachings published in French from Gretz in their *Bulletin des Activités Culturelles* No.18, February 1957. English translation and edit by André van den Brink of the Netherlands.

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off from ourselves our personal inclinations, our habits, our reactions—all those tendencies that express a profound need for satisfaction? How to imagine ourselves deprived of satisfactions? We pursue them with so much fervour that, if the élan which carries us towards them, is frustrated, broken, we think that our lives will be doomed to emptiness and monotony.

In fact, our anguish would disappear, if we would understand the nature of the very moment in which we feel it, of the fleeting yet ever present instant, a pin-point on which we could secure our equilibrium. But, instead of standing firm in this intuitive understanding of the present moment, we fool ourselves with the hope that tomorrow will bring us what we are lacking today. The expectation of a future satisfaction is the most tenacious of our present cravings and unable to distance ourselves, we allow ourselves to be trapped. The biological and psychological atavisms have strengthened the need 'to have experiences' to such an extent in us, to know all sorts of experiences in various degrees, that we cannot stop ourselves from thinking of tomorrow.

Let us apply our intelligence here, pushing it to its very limits, so that we shall finally realise what we are. It is the natural function of this intelligence to show us how to utilise the experiences of the past in order to correct the present mistakes, thus arriving, little by little, at a certain maturity. It will discover that the equilibrium coveted so much is impersonal, that the least trace of desire and attachment of which the 'I' is essentially made, no longer remains. Once the springs of desire are unwound, the 'I' disappears and, along with it, the non-'I'.

The effort at understanding thus leads to an impersonal

intuition. We have already looked into the importance of the intellectual intuition in the enquiry and how it may prepare us for the metaphysical knowledge. All intellectual enquiry finally leads to a denial of oneself, leading us to an impasse. We shall see the futility of having interpreted life in terms of concepts, of having formulated assertions (or negations which, again, were assertions) about the nature of the Reality, of having pictured It *as an objective and tangible reality*.

In fact, the intellectual intuition operates with respect to an object which it claims to grasp, to define, to explain. The metaphysical intuition, on the other hand, is an understanding which 'comes' to us. Because it doesn't originate anywhere, it can neither be situated in nor associated with any prior condition, in a series of causes and effects. It appears like those 'visitations' of which the religious texts speak. If it would be there in the mind already, we should be able to discover and analyse the process of its 'coming', but it escapes the relations of duality within which our enquiry is carried out. We cannot even say that this intuition 'comes' to us, for the word 'coming', the word 'visitation', indicates the movement of a *mental* energy, which is not the case as far as the metaphysical intuition is concerned. Here, then, we are caught in the trap of speech. No doubt an opening *does* take place in our mind, but we are not able to establish *what* it is that is acting on the mind, nor can we say that *nothing* was there.

At the same time we are taught that, from the point of view of the enquiry, Truth comes to 'visit' him who has been able to purify his spirit. Here we recognise the notion of the eternal Feminine, where the spirit should become like a woman whose nature it is to remain calm in a state of receptive

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attention. Spiritual discipline then becomes all-important, because it alone can lead us to this state of passivity—a *vigilant* passivity which no longer seeks to grasp, but which simply seeks to reflect the Reality that comes to shine within us. 'Woman!', Meister Eckhart says, 'is the most noble word with which the soul may be addressed... The spirit then becomes woman in a recognition which begets again, and in which it is, again, giving birth to Jesus in God's father-heart.'

One sees how the metaphysical intuition transcends the framework of the waking state in which our intellectual faculties operate. And, just as it does not have its origin in the 'I', so also it is not to the 'I' that this intuition comes. The *Yoga-Vasishta*, a post-Upanishadic treatise on Vedanta, says that it is recognised in the intangible interval which separates the waking from the dream state. But such a statement will still provoke a contradiction, for are the states of waking and dreaming not made of the same primordial matter—Existence? And, from the point of view of the Reality, how can there be question of a threshold between the two states?

In common language we say that the dream has ended and that the waking state has begun. An integral whole A (the time-space constituting the dream) vanishes in order to make place for an integral whole B (the space-time of the waking state). Nothing more arbitrary than to consider an *intermediate* phase between the two states, to even establish a *relation* between them. The dream has ended, we say. But in order to fix the moment of this ending, what time do we refer to? To the dream-time of course. And, if we claim that the waking state has a beginning, then where does it begin? At a certain point of time proper to the waking state. Our intellectual intuition clearly shows us that circle A and circle B

never overlap each other.

Nevertheless we are certain that nothing abnormal took place, and this intuition of the 'normal' is an indication that the Reality never moves away from us. Besides, can there be any question of a moving away or of a relation between us and the Reality? In our absence the Reality does not cease to be. When the 'I' of the reality A of the dream has died, the 'I' of reality B has come alive to be active in its universe of the waking state. It *thinks* that it has come to replace the 'I' of the dream state, when the latter has disappeared, but in doing so it is merely giving its *personal* interpretation. In reality there is neither coming nor going.

The intuition of the normal, the intuition of non-duality, is not contradicted by anything. While commenting upon verse 2.16, we have seen that, if Existence could be contradicted, it could only happen through non-Existence. The understanding to which we awaken is not the result of an intellectual approach. The latter does not cross the limits of the waking state, whereas the intuition of the non-contradictory Reality is Existence itself—Consciousness.

The attention becomes *without object*, for if in the waking and the dream state, we oppose an 'I' to a 'non-I', consciousness is only with contents. The attention-without-object is the intuition which shines, once we have thrown off all distinction and, therefore, all attachment. Let us remember that this liberation from the attachment to form, even when preceded by long discipline, comes *all of a sudden*, through a direct and immediate comprehension. Just as, when looking at the various objects of clay, there comes a moment when we cease to be distracted and captivated by the many different forms, and we realise that all is but clay.

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Then Consciousness alone remains, no longer fragmented by any subject-object relation. But let us now consider the dreamless sleep, the study of which may open us even more to the comprehension of non-duality.

All people have the experience of dreamless sleep, an expression, by the way, which will be found to be incorrect. On this subject, however, most people do not pose themselves any metaphysical questions, and its importance passes unnoticed. Everybody sees the universe in which he is living as a universe of multiplicity, each takes himself as a reference point. His body and his mind form a concrete reality (in relation with other concrete realities) which he claims to analyse and study. And finally, everybody classes the representations of the universe in the categories of past, present and future. Non-duality which doesn't enter into any category, then becomes synonymous with ignorance: 'I slept', one says, 'I wasn't conscious of anything.'

On waking up we have the impression that the dreamless sleep was a state of quieting down, because, for the moment, suffering and fear had left us. No subject, no object appears in this state, which is our common experience of the non-dual, although to us this non-dual is but a parenthesis inserted between two waking states. Its contents which we express by saying, 'I didn't know anything', remains an enigma. Most of the time, however, we do not see the use of dwelling at length on this subject, and it is enough for us to note that deep sleep plunges us into ignorance. This statement is most significant: By identifying the experience of non-duality with ignorance, the ego of the waking state proves its incapacity to understand what actually has taken place.

'Something took place': We speak about it in the past, and

we compare this unknown past with that which, at present, constitutes our lives. But, since the experience was *non-dual*, how to insert it *in a series, in a time proper to a state of manifestation*? Thus, unable to picture to ourselves the nature of deep sleep, we are constrained to accept the indications given by the Scriptures. In the 5th mantra of the *Mandukya Upanishad* deep sleep is described:

'This now is the state of deep sleep in which the sleeper no longer desires any object, in which he no longer sees any dream. The third *pada* (quarter) is *Prajña*, whose field is deep sleep: In him all experience becomes one and is lost in him. He is the fullness of bliss, and he tastes this bliss. He is the way leading to the knowledge (*of the two other states*).'

From the microcosmic point of view deep sleep is regarded by the Scriptures as the state in which all things exist in a potential, causal form, while from the macro-cosmic point of view it is called *Ishvara* or God, the Cause of the universe. None, however, is capable of knowing the cause. When we think to grasp it, only the effect—which alone is knowable—appears before us. *The cause remains beyond our reach. We cannot know God, we cannot know deep sleep and, as for all that is thus beyond our faculties of understanding, we shall have to resolve to accept the authority of Revelation.*

Nothing more improper than to declare, 'I was in deep sleep, in a peaceful state of ignorance', thus speaking about this state *as if it were known to us!* There is no *objective* reality there, which we could examine or study, for deep sleep is not an experience in the sense in which we understand this word in our lives. By saying, 'I didn't know any-

thing', we are implying a relation between the contents of deep sleep and our present 'I'. Now a relation indicates the capacity to *know*. Is it not paradoxical to see that, in deep sleep, all knowledge—in other words, all relation—is negated and that, at the same time, we associate this experience of the non-dual with the 'I'?

Most people hardly give any thought to this discrepancy and are content to look at deep sleep in a pragmatic way. From their viewpoint deep sleep appears as a reality essential to the preservation of life, for man finds that his equilibrium in the waking state depends on his sleep. If he has slept well, he will feel satisfied, good-humoured, nerves and spirit rested. But if he has been lacking sleep, then he is not at ease, not in good spirits, being aware of the fact that, in case this deprivation were to be prolonged, it would threaten his life, that is to say, the life of his 'I' in the waking state.

On the other hand, the man who undertakes a serious enquiry into the very nature of this life, will recognise that deep sleep *already* signifies the death of his 'I'. On reflection he will realise that the state in which he finds himself *now*, is *equally* non-dual. It is the particular feature of the *jivan-mukta*, the liberated man, to live in the full understanding of this non-duality. To give an approximative idea of his vision we propose to make a comparison:

It is the changing play of our attention which makes the situation confusing. Let us compare this attention to the beam of light of a lighthouse. The beam is turning round, and the alternation of the lighted zones and those that are in the dark may be representative of the 'succession' of the manifested states of waking and dreaming, and of the non-manifested state of deep sleep. Light illumines a world of waking

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and dreaming, while night is covering deep sleep. The Reality, however, although seemingly cut up into successive slices by the alternation of light and night, this Reality has not *really* undergone any such division: The division only *appears* with the light of the lighthouse turning round. We would even say more: From the point of view of the Reality the lighthouse never was a separate element. It is *part* of Nature and its position of 'observer' only an illusion. Thus Reality is never split up into different states, and the distinctions which seem to appear are due to the interpretation given by the lighthouse, as it thinks to be standing *apart* from Nature, *observing* it. Our intuition is showing us that the Real never ceases to be, that it doesn't suffer any fragmentation.

Of what use is it, then, to seek any further, once the intuition has led us to this high degree of understanding? It appears that we are not able to hold our own there and that, soon, we are again carried away by doubts. Without a *sadhana* (spiritual discipline), without an interior work, it is impossible to obtain liberation. Let us recall the words of Ramakrishna: 'An almanac may predict the quantity of rain that will fall in the course of the year. But, however much we may squeeze the pages of the almanac, not a single drop of water will come out.' We should wait for the rain to come and direct our attention towards heaven.

In the Vedantic texts the perfect comprehension of non-duality (*advaita*), the attention-without-object, is called *turiya*, the 'fourth' state, which we find mentioned in the 7th mantra of the *Mandukya Upanishad*. Once we realise that non-duality is *inherent* in the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, we shall have the realisation of *turiya*. About this realisation nothing can be said. We have seen that it was

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already impossible to prove or disprove the existence of deep sleep. The intuition of non-duality lies within consciousness:
It is Consciousness itself.



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