

# THE PASSAGE OF TIME FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF ETERNITY

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by

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The New Year is approaching. Time passes. The passage which is known as temporal is also the process of the evolution of the universe. There is a progressive march of the constituent elements of things in the passage of the time process. When a particular specialised occasion arises in this progression of the time process, we call that particular event or occasion by a designation as a 'New Year's Day', a 'birthday', a 'holy day', an 'occasion of celebration' and some such nomenclature.

There are pressures exerted by the time process at different times of each march onwards, and one such pressure is what we call the commencement of a New Year. This novelty of the year that is to come is not connected merely with the numbers on the calendar that we have with us. It is something more than a mathematical event. It is not that we just count several days and when a certain number of days are over we say that the year is complete. Though that may be so, there is something more about it at the beginning of what we call a New Year. Otherwise, if it does not have some supernormal significance, why do we make so much

fuss about it, feel happy about it, and are exuberant when it comes?

Anything that makes us feel happy, hopeful, and charges us with a noble expectation for the future is something more than the normal, something above the terrestrial—super-physical, not merely Earthly. Actually, nothing on the Earth can make us happy. If at some time, during some moments of our day, we seem to be happy occasionally, we should conclude that something not of the Earth is operating in us, because nothing merely Earth-earthly can satisfy us. This body, which is a part of this Earth, participates in the sorrows of the world and has all the characteristics of the Earth. The body, which is physical, cannot expect anything from this Earth more than what the Earth can give; and the Earth can give us only what this body has. If this body cannot make us happy, the Earth also cannot make us happy, because both these are made of the same substance—physical, material stuff. This body, this Earth which is matter, is not the reason behind our being sometimes happy in this world. There is a super-Earthly operation taking place in us, whether we know it or not. The transformations that are taking place within ourselves, within our own selves, are not always objects of our perception. We may know what is happening outside; we cannot know what is happening above us.

If for some reason or the other the world is celebrating the New Year, it is inspired by some feature operating in this world which is above the world. To say the least, we may say this has an astronomical significance. The revolution of the planets around the Sun is of course taking place perpetually, day in and day out, and these revolutions, rotations of the planets in respect of the Sun which is their centre, have their hallmarks, their specific indications. Some aspects of this process of the revolution of the planets and the movement of the planets on their orbits are known as the houses of the zodiac. There are no built-up houses in the sky. They are only names that we give to certain occasions, significations arising at certain moments of time during the movement of these

planets on their orbits; and we people, humans living on the Earth, have the direct impact of whatever the Earth does when it moves along its orbit. Without going too far into the astronomical significances of the influence exerted by the cumulative effect of the planetary system upon us on account of the fact of Earth itself being one of the planets, we may safely say that the New Year is one specific signpost in the process of the march of time, with special reference to the revolution of the Earth around the Sun and its influence on all creatures on it.

I mentioned that the time process is also the evolutionary process. Everything moves; everything hurries forward; nothing is static in this world. Our own life as human beings is an example of this process. We were little children; we were babies. We have now grown into adults and old persons. Time has taken a toll upon us and constructed this body out of its own substance. This very body of ours is a time process—concentrated, as it were, in a visible form. We have not felt the movement of time when we have grown into adult beings from childhood. We can see the movement of a motorcar, of a boat on the river or something moving in front of us, but we are not able to see the movement of our own substance, which is this body, when it has moved from childhood to adulthood and so on. Evolution has taken place in our own self in the form of this growth of the personality. We have grown psychophysically. We thought in one way when we were little children and now we feel that we are more mature, that we are grown up individuals. The body also has grown. The psychic apparatus together with the physical constitution have become different. Every atom in this universe moves in this manner. Restless is every atom, every particle of matter, every planet in the heavens, everything in the skies—what we call the heavenly bodies, the galaxies, the stars. What are the significances of these movements? Why should we grow? Why should anything move? What is the meaning of the passage of time?

Anything can be known by some kind of observation or calculation. We can measure the distance of space. We can

see space with our eyes in some manner; but we cannot see time. Time is not the movement of the watch or the timepiece or the clock; it is an inscrutable illusion cast upon us. If we know what an illusion is, it ceases to be illusion. We should be caught by the magic of the magician—only then it is entertaining. The magician cannot enjoy his performance; it is others who cannot understand what it is who enjoy it and are entertained by it. We seem to be somehow or other getting on in this world, with the satisfaction of being worthwhile or doing something worthwhile, because we do not know what time is doing to us. *Kalo jagat bhakshah*, is an old adage: Time is the consumer of all things. The greatest consumer is time. The work of time is eating, swallowing, digesting, destroying, transforming; this is the work of time. Birth and death are processes of time. As everything, every one of us, is involved in this process, we cannot know what is actually happening. We cannot know when we are born; we cannot know that we are growing after we have been born; we cannot know that death is near. Nothing is clear when it is a question of involvement in the time process. Yet, there is something above time which is working within us in the form of a joy that a New Year of betterment is before us.

Who told us that the New Year is something better than the previous year? We have not seen the New Year; the year has not yet come, yet every year we say, "The New Year is a happy one. It has to be something better." We never feel that the next year will be worse than the previous one. We always know it cannot be worse; it has to be better. Who told us that it should be better? We are the witnesses of it. The transtemporal, That which is above time working in us, operating in everyone, tells us that the future has to be something better than the past. Why should the future be better than the past? Observational science cannot answer this question. There is no method of experimentation by which we can know that the future is better. Even the study of history is not enough for this purpose. It is only our heart that says that the future is better. "Tomorrow it shall be better. Everything will be all right. All shall be well. Peace

shall reign in the world. The millennium shall come. God shall rule the world.” Does not a voice from within us speak in this manner? From where does this voice come? It is That within us which is not involved in time, which is not limited in space, though we are involved in time and confined to space. Spatially we are confined to one particular location; temporally we are limited to our age, our span of life. Yet we always feel that there is a grand thing before us, ahead of us.

“Wish you a Happy New Year!” we cry loudly. Who is actually making this wish? Is it my wish or your wish? It is the wish of the Timeless Eternal in us. The non-temporal Eternity tells us that all shall be well with us, and not to be despondent. Everyone, even the most miserable man in this world, feels that a good day will come to him: “Somehow I shall be free from this misery, this sorrow, this suffering.” The language of Eternity is the literature of joy, happiness, blessedness, irrespective of the fact that we seem to be shrouded in the limitations of space and time. We live a dual life: a life of death, mortality, and the life of deathlessness immortality.

We know that we shall not live in this world for a long time, and yet we feel that we should do good things. If tomorrow is the last day for us, what benefit is there in doing good things today? That which tells us that in spite of the fact that tomorrow may be the last day, today we should be good—that which tell us this, is the Eternity that is speaking to us: “You shall not perish.” Though the temporal encasement in us shall perish tomorrow, the Eternity in us shall not perish. The deeds that we perform have an eternal characteristic also in them, apart from their perishable nature. Every work that we do perishes when the work is over—it has an end, it comes to a close—but it produces an effect which shall not come to an end.

In the same way as we have a temporal vesture, which is this body, simultaneously with an Eternity that is a spark of Divinity within us, there is this temporality in the actions

that we perform. All work is perishable in its nature; that is true. Yet, in this perishable framework of our actions, there is an eternal future embedded, a seed sown. It shall be an asset for us in our future. What do we mean by the future? If we leave this body tomorrow, where is the future for us? If all that we have done in this world, all our meritorious works are to cease together with the cessation of this body, what good is this life? This question may arise many a time when we are in a mood of despondency, but we forget that we are not merely mortal bodies and our actions are not entirely perishable or temporal in their nature. Perishable is this body, perishable are our deeds, yet immortal is our soul and deathless is the effect produced by our actions. This is the reason why we feel that tomorrow shall be a better day. Otherwise, what is the rational ground for our feeling that tomorrow shall be better and the New Year is blessed? God speaks within us in the language of the Eternal that is operating within us and tells us, "All shall be well with you." *Suhrdam sarva-bhutanam jnatva mam santim rcchati*. The Lord says in the Bhagavadgita, "Know me as your friend. Knowing this, you shall have peace." Our friend is our Eternal in us; it is our real asset. Whatever we do in this world, if it has even a modicum of the Eternity in it, it shall be a credit for us to be carried forward to our future life.

Thus there are several series of New Years to come. Many New Years have already gone and many more are yet to come. All the New Years that are yet to come in the future are steps on the onward march of the eternal element in us towards its flowering efflorescence in the form of utter perfection. To the extent we are Eternal, we are happy; we smile and we feel that things are fine in this world. We feel that things are okay, fine, to the extent the Eternity is operating in us; but when the other temporal element takes care of us and catches our throat, we feel all is misery and nothing is of any worth in this world.

The God element is stronger than the Earthly element. We have seen this little movie where the power that was material, which is represented by Kamsa, was overshadowed by the Eternal which was Sri Krishna, which was light, radiance—this Eternal Light before which, all the radiation of matter is darkness.

So this New Year that is before us, ahead of us, gazing at us, speaks to us in a language of blessing and gracious abundance. May we therefore collect our thoughts, bring our minds into a focus of attention and realise our true destiny—what we are really and what we are going to be in the future. May we not be caught up by the illusions of the time process.

We have come alone to this world. Is it true that we have come alone to this world, with no friends to accompany us? We came with open hands, with nothing on our palms. *Eka prajayate jantur eka eva praliyate, eko'nubhunkte sukrtam eka eva tu duskrtam; namutrahi sahayartham pita mata ca tisthatah, na putradarah na jnati dharmas tisthati kevalah.* This is a ringing message of the Manu Smriti. Alone does the Soul come into this world. It does not bring luggage, treasures, or friends and relations. Alone shall it depart from this world. It will not carry any luggage and bedding. It cannot carry with it one broken needle. Alone shall we reap the fruits of our deeds. Nobody will share our sorrows; our cry will be in the wilderness. And if we have done any good deed, we alone shall reap the fruits of those good deeds.

*Eko'nubhunkte sukrtam eka eva tu duskrtam; namutrahi sahayartham pita mata ca tisthatah.* Our parents will not come with us. Our relations will desert us. What will come with us? We will come with ourself. When I go, what shall I take with me? I shall take only myself. This is good news. It is happy news indeed to hear that when I go, I carry only myself; when I go, I take only myself. What is this 'myself'? This body? It has been left here. The seed that has been sown in the form of a perpetuation of values by the deeds performed and thoughts entertained and also feelings of the mind—these will come with us. When I say, "I come with

myself," my thoughts, my feelings, my deeds in their potentiality will come. These are the historical notes struck by the drama of time; and onward does it march, carrying every one of us like passengers in a railway train, in a single direction. Each one comes alone, each one goes alone—of course it is true—but everyone shall meet at one point, as pilgrims meet in a choultry or an inn when they are on their way to their destination. So we are not fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters or friends and relations here; we are pilgrims on the path. We chat together, talk together, entertain ourselves by telling stories on the way, but we do not belong to one another.

Neither you belong to me nor I belong to you, but everyone belongs to something else. Nobody owns any property here, because all property belongs to one thing, to which we also belong. Towards that we are heading. This is the time process; this is the movement of the whole universe. The entire body of the cosmos is lifted up high above itself to its own destiny, which is what may be called Universal Self-realisation. The world is moving toward a Self-realisation of itself. This Universal Self-realisation, where the universe becomes conscious of itself as 'I am I', is the destiny towards which time is moving—reaching which, time extinguishes itself as a flame is extinguished when that which feeds it is no more there. The karmas cease, and time also ceases; Eternity reigns supreme. It is towards this glorious consummation of the values of all life, towards this blessedness, that we are moving in the passage of time for the experience of Eternity.

So, blessed is the New Year, and may we take this occasion especially to invoke the invisible presence of Worshipful Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj that the purpose for which we have come here to this Ashram, which is our Self-realisation, be fulfilled in our loving participation with the work of the whole cosmos in its Universal Self-realisation.

May this be our blessedness! May this be the blessedness of all humanity! May the world be in absolute peace! May be this our humble prayer at this moment of the coming of the New Year 1993! God bless you all!