MEN IN ancient India had a very poetic idea about the earth and the world—an idea intended to express order.

The land inhabited by men was called Jambu Dvipa and it was surrounded by a sea of salt. Then came a ring of land and then a sea of milk. Another ring of land, and a sea of butter. More land, and a sea of curds. Land again, and a sea of wine. More land, and after that a sea of sugar. Still more land, and at last, the seventh and final ring of pure water: the sweet, the sweetest of all seas!

If you look at a map of the world like the ones we now use in schools, you will not find the sea of sugar, or the sea of milk, or the others. Nor did the Indians think that these seas really existed, but for them it was an original way of expressing a profound idea.

The ancient legend meant among other things that everything in the world is made to be arranged in an orderly way; that the earth will truly become a place of rest, a reasonable place, and a dwelling fit to live in, only when each thing has found its right place. Indeed, how could one enjoy even the best things, salt, milk, butter, wine, sugar, water, if instead of being kept apart in an orderly way they were to form the frightful mixture you can imagine?

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All the religious books of mankind, by means of the most varied images, teach this law of order.

The Hebrew Book of Genesis, in its own way, also tells a story of order.
In the beginning there was chaos, that is, disorder and darkness. And the first act of God was to throw light upon this disorder, just as a man shines the light of his lamp into the gloom of the dark and dirty cellar he wants to enter.

After that the Bible tells how, day by day, things emerged from the chaos in an orderly way until at last the human race appeared.

It is the glory of man to create order and to discover it everywhere.

The astronomer looks up towards the stars and makes a map of the heavens; he studies the regular paths of the heavenly bodies and names them, he calculates the motions of the planets around the sun and forecasts the moment when the moon, passing between the earth and the sun, will cause what we call an eclipse. The whole science of astronomy depends on a knowledge of order.

Arithmetic is also a science of order. Even a very small child takes delight in repeating numbers in the right order. He soon discovers that there is no meaning in saying: one, five, three, ten, two, as he counts his fingers or his marbles. He counts: one, two, three, four; and all mathematics comes from that.

And without order, what would become of that lovely thing, music? There are seven notes in the scale: do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si. If you play these notes one after another, it is all right, but if you strike them all together, and mix their sounds, it will make a frightful noise. They can produce a harmonious sound together only when they are played in a certain order. Do, mi, sol, do, for example, sounded together, form what is known as a “chord”. The whole science of music is based on that order.

And it could be shown that order is also the basis of every other science and of all the arts that man can invent.

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But is it not equally indispensable in everything?
Words of Long Ago

If you went into a house and found the furniture and ornaments all topsyturvy and scattered about, and covered with a thick layer of dust, you would exclaim, “What dirt and disorder!” For dirt itself is nothing but disorder. There is a place for dust in the world, but not on the furniture.

Similarly, the place for ink is in the ink-pot and not on your fingers or on the carpet.

Everything is clean when each thing is in its place. And your books at school, your clothes and toys at home should each have a place which is really its own and which no other thing can claim. Otherwise, battles will follow and your books will get torn, your clothes stained and your toys lost. Then it will cost you much trouble and patience to find your way in this muddle and put everything right. Whereas it is so convenient when things are kept in order.

The life and work of men, and even the wealth and prosperity of nations, all depend on this same principle of order.

And that is why one of the main occupations of the government of a country is to maintain good order. From the emperor, king or president, down to the ordinary policeman, each one must contribute to this task as best he can. And all the citizens, whatever their occupations may be, should also take part in this work of maintaining order; for in this way each one can contribute to the organisation of a strong and prosperous nation.

Think of the serious consequences that the slightest disorder can sometimes have.

What regularity and precision there must be among the multitude of railwaymen, gate-keepers, engine-drivers and pointsmen so that the numerous trains which run in all countries can leave and arrive on time, at the exact minute calculated to avoid all congestion. And if by accident or negligence this order is disrupted even for a moment, what unfortunate incidents can happen! How many things can be upset by a simple delay: friends miss each other, employees and businessmen arrive late at their offices or for their appointments, passengers miss their
Order

boats. And you cannot imagine all the other troubles that will follow.

Think of the sad state things would be in if order and regularity suddenly ceased to exist in the world.

See how the whole routine of the house is disturbed simply when a clock stops giving its charming example of regularity and begins to go slow or else to go madly fast. If it cannot be put right, then the best thing to do is to get rid of it.

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In the parlour of an old farmhouse there was an antique grandfather clock which for more than a hundred and fifty years had never ceased ticking faithfully. Every morning at daybreak when the farmer came down, the first thing he would do was to visit the clock to be sure that it was right. Now it happened one morning that as he went into the parlour as usual, the clock began to speak:

“For more than a century and a half,” it said, “I have been working without a stop and keeping perfect time. Now I am tired; don’t I deserve to take a rest and stop ticking?”

“Young complaint is unjustified, my good clock,” the shrewd farmer replied, “for you are forgetting that between each tick you have a second’s rest.”

After a moment’s thought, the clock began to work again as usual.

Children, what does this story show? That in orderly work fatigue and rest balance each other, and that regularity avoids much pain and effort.

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How greatly orderliness increases the power in each thing! Are not the most powerful machines the ones in which each part, each cog, each lever fulfils its function with order and precision?
Words of Long Ago

And in a machine like that, even the smallest screw, when it keeps to its proper place, can claim to be as useful as the majestic flywheel.

Similarly a little child who carefully carries out his task makes a useful contribution to the order of his school, of his home, of his own small world within the greater world.

At first it may take some pains to acquire order. Nothing can be learnt without an effort; nor is it easy to learn to swim, to row, to do gymnastics; but success comes little by little. In the same way, after a certain time, we can learn to do things in an orderly way without the least difficulty. And more and more, we find disorder painful and disagreeable.

When you first learnt to walk, you often stumbled, you fell, you bumped yourself, you cried. Now you walk without giving it a thought and you run skilfully. Well, the movements of walking and running are a splendid example of the orderly functioning of your nerves, your muscles and all your organs.

Thus order always in the end becomes a habit.

And above all, don’t imagine that being orderly, regular, punctual, must prevent you from being happy and smiling. It is not necessary to pull a long face when carrying out a task exactly. And to prove it to you, we shall end this lesson on order with a little laughter.

Listen to this example of punctuality, which should not be copied.

An Arab lady had a servant. She sent him to a neighbour’s house to fetch some embers to light her fire.

The servant met a caravan going towards Egypt. He began talking with the men and decided to go with them. And he stayed away a whole year.

On his return, he went into the neighbour’s house to fetch the embers. But as he was carrying them, he tripped and fell. The burning coals dropped and went out. Then he cried:

“What a nuisance to be in a hurry!”