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How do you know the character of a man by looking at his eyes?

Not only by looking at his eyes. I know the character of a man through self-identification. And then outwardly, if you want, the eyes are like doors or windows: there are some which are open, so one enters within, goes very deep inside, and one may see everything that happens there. There are others which are partly open, partly closed; others still have a veil, a kind of curtain; and then there are others which are fastened, locked up, doors closed so well that they cannot be opened. Indeed, this is already an indication, it gives an indication of the strength of the inner life, the sincerity and transparency of the being. And so, through these doors that are open I enter and identify myself with the person within. And I see what he sees, understand what he understands, think what he thinks, and I could do what he does (but usually I refrain from that!) and in this way I get to know what people are like. And it doesn’t need much time; it goes very fast. It can even be done through a photograph, but not so well. A photograph captures only a moment, a minute of somebody; if there were many photographs... But still, even with a photograph, by going a little deeper one can have a fairly clear idea. But all knowledge is knowledge by identification. That is, one must become that which one wants to know. One may surmise, imagine, deduce, one may reason, but one does not know.

So it is something difficult for human beings?

No, why?
One can learn how to identify oneself. One must learn. It is
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indispensable if one wants to get out of one’s ego. For so long as one is shut up in one’s ego, one can’t make any progress.

_How can it be done?_

There are many ways. I’ll tell you one.

When I was in Paris, I used to go to many places where there were gatherings of all kinds, people making all sorts of researches, spiritual (so-called spiritual), occult researches, etc. And once I was invited to meet a young lady (I believe she was Swedish) who had found a method of knowledge, exactly a method for learning. And so she explained it to us. We were three or four (her French was not very good but she was quite sure about what she was saying!); she said: “It’s like this, you take an object or make a sign on a blackboard or take a drawing — that is not important — take whatever is most convenient for you. Suppose, for instance, that I draw for you... (she had a blackboard) I draw a design.” She drew a kind of half-geometric design. “Now, you sit in front of the design and concentrate all your attention upon it — upon that design which is there. You concentrate, concentrate without letting anything else enter your consciousness — except that. Your eyes are fixed on the drawing and don’t move at all. You are as it were hypnotised by the drawing. You look (and so she sat there, looking), you look, look, look,... I don’t know, it takes more or less time, but still for one who is used to it, it goes pretty fast. You look, look, look, you _become_ that drawing you are looking at. Nothing else exists in the world any longer except the drawing, and then, suddenly, you pass to the other side; and when you pass to the other side you enter a new consciousness, and you know.”

We had a good laugh, for it was amusing. But it is quite true, it is an excellent method to practise. Naturally, instead of taking a drawing or any object, you may take, for instance, an idea, a few words. You have a problem preoccupying you, you don’t know the solution of the problem; well, you objectify
your problem in your mind, put it in the most precise, exact, succinct terms possible, and then concentrate, make an effort; you concentrate only on the words, and if possible on the idea they represent, that is, upon your problem — you concentrate, concentrate, concentrate until nothing else exists but that. And it is true that, all of a sudden, you have the feeling of something opening, and one is on the other side. The other side of what?... It means that you have opened a door of your consciousness, and instantaneously you have the solution of your problem.

It is an excellent method of learning “how” to identify oneself.

For instance, you are with someone. This person tells you something, you tell him the contrary (as it usually happens, simply through a spirit of contradiction) and you begin arguing. Naturally, you will never come to any point, except a quarrel if you are ill-natured. But instead of doing that, instead of remaining shut up in your own ideas or your own words, if you tell yourself: “Wait a little, I am going to try and see why he said that to me. Yes, why did he tell me that?” And you concentrate: “Why, why, why?” You stand there, just like that, trying. The other person continues speaking, doesn’t he? — and is very happy too, for you don’t contradict him any longer! He talks profusely and is sure he has convinced you. Then you concentrate more and more on what he is saying, and with the feeling that gradually, through his words, you are entering his mind. When you enter his head, suddenly you enter into his way of thinking, and next, just imagine, you understand why he is speaking to you thus! And then, if you have a fairly swift intelligence and put what you have just come to understand alongside what you had known before, you have the two ways together, and so can find the truth reconciling both. And here you have truly made progress. And this is the best way of widening one’s thought.

If you are beginning an argument, keep quiet immediately, instantaneously. You must be silent, say nothing at all, and then
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try to see the thing as the other person sees it — that won’t make you forget your own way of seeing it, not at all! but you will be able to put both of them together. And you will truly have made progress, a real progress.

It is the same for everything. In all that you do together with others, if you do not agree, take it as a divine Grace, a marvellous opportunity given you to make a progress. And it is simple: instead of being on this side, you are on the other; instead of looking at yourself, you enter the other person and look. You must have just a little bit of imagination, a little more control over your thoughts, over your movements. But that is not very difficult. When you have tried it out a little, after a while you find it very easy.

You must not just look and then make a mental effort, telling yourself: “Why is it like this and like that? Why does he do that? Why does he say that?” You will never arrive at anything. You won’t understand, you will imagine all kinds of explanations which will be worthless and teach you nothing at all except to tell yourself: “That person is stupid or else wicked” — things that lead nowhere. On the other hand, if you only make that little movement, and instead of looking at him as an object quite alien to you, you try to enter within, you enter within, into that little head that’s before you, and then, suddenly, you find yourself on the other side, you look at yourself and understand quite well what he is saying — everything is clear, the why, the how, the reason, the feeling which is behind the whole thing.... It is an experiment you have the opportunity of making a hundred times a day.

At first you won’t succeed very well, but if you persist, you will end up by succeeding admirably. This adds a lot of interest to life. And besides it is a work which really makes you progress, for it makes you come out of that little armour of yours in which you are nicely shut up, in which you knock against everything. You have seen moths knocking against the light, haven’t you?... Everyone’s consciousness is like that, it goes along knocking here, knocking there, for these are things...
foreign to it. But instead of knocking about, one enters within, then it becomes a part of oneself. One widens oneself, breathes freely, has enough space to move in, one doesn’t knock against anything, one enters, penetrates, understands. And one lives in many places at the same time. It is very interesting, one does it automatically.

For instance, when you are reading a book that interests you very much, a wonderful novel full of exciting adventures, when you are completely absorbed in the story, at times you forget your class-hour or even dinner-time or your bed-time. You are completely absorbed in what you are reading. Well, this is a phenomenon of self-identification. And if you do it with a certain perfection, you succeed in understanding ahead what is going to happen. There is a moment when, being fully absorbed in the story, you come to know (without trying to look for it) towards what end the author is leading you, how he is going to unfold his story and come to his conclusion. For you have identified yourself with the creative thought of the author. You do it more or less perfectly, without knowing that you are doing it, but these are phenomena of self-identification.

There are, in Paris, theatres of the third or fourth rank where sensational dramas are performed. These are suburban theatres. They are not for intellectuals but for the masses, and all the elements are always extremely dramatic, moving. Well, those who go there are mostly very simple people and forget completely that they are in a theatre. They identify themselves with the drama. And so, things like this happen: on the stage there is the traitor hiding behind the door, and the hero comes along, not aware naturally that the traitor is hiding there and he is going to be killed. Now, there are people sitting up there (in what is called the gallery), right up in the theatre, who shout: “Look out, he is there!” (Laughter) It has not happened just once, it happens hundreds of times, spontaneously. I had seen a play of this kind called Le Bossu, I believe; anyway it was quite a sensational drama and it was being played at the Théâtre de la
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*Porte Saint-Martin.* In this play there was a room. On the stage a large room could be seen and at its side a small room and... I don’t remember the story now, but in the small room there was a button which could be pressed, and by pressing the button the ceiling of the bigger room could be brought down on those who were there so as to crush them inexorably!... And a warning had been given, people had already spoken about it, passed on the word. And now there was a traitor who had hidden himself in the little room and he knew the trick of the button, and then there was the hero who came in with other people, and they started arguing; and everyone knew that the ceiling was going to come down.... I didn’t say anything, I remembered I was in the theatre, I was waiting to see how the author was going to get out of this situation to save his hero (for it was evident he couldn’t kill him off like that before everybody!). But the others were not at all in the same state. Well, there were spectators who shouted, really shouted: “Look out, mind the ceiling!” That’s how it was.

These are phenomena of self-identification. Only, they are involuntary. And this is also one of the methods used today to cure nervous diseases. When someone cannot sleep, cannot be restful because he is too excited and nervous and his nerves are ill and weakened by excessive agitation, he is told to sit in front of an aquarium, for instance — an aquarium, that’s very lovely, isn’t it? — before an aquarium with pretty little fish in it, goldfish; just to sit there, settle down in an easy-chair and try not to think of anything (particularly not of his troubles) and look at the fish. So he looks at the fish, moving around, coming and going, swimming, gliding, turning, meeting, crossing, chasing one another indefinitely, and also the water flowing slowly and the passing fish. After a while he lives the life of fishes: he comes and goes, swims, glides, plays. And at the end of the hour his nerves are in a perfect state and he is completely restful!

But the condition is that one must not think of one’s troubles, simply watch the fish.
Can the Divine be attained in this way?

You know, the only way of knowing the Divine is by identifying oneself with Him. There is no other, there is only one, one single way. Hence, once you are master of this method of identification, you can identify yourself. So you choose your object for identification, you want to identify yourself with the Divine. But so long as you do not know how to identify yourself, a hundred and one things will always come across your path, pulling you here, pulling you there, scattering you, and you will not be able to identify yourself with Him. But if you have learnt how to identify yourself, then you have only to direct the identification, place it where you want it, and then hold on there until you get a result. It will come very fast if you are master of your power of identification. Yes, it will come very quickly. Ramakrishna used to say that the time could vary between three days, three hours and three minutes. Three days for very slow people, three hours for those who were a little swifter, three minutes for those who are used to it.

Three days for very slow people?

For very slow people, yes. He was asked: “How long does it take one to get identified with the Divine?” that was his answer.

And that means three days without doing anything?

No, not without doing anything. It is not necessary to do nothing simply in order to be identified with the Divine. Evidently you cannot remain seated motionless for three days without doing anything; it would mean you had already attained an extraordinary degree of perfection if you could do that — forget all your needs and remain motionless for three days. No, it is not that he means; the thought must be concentrated solely on the Divine. And he did it before that person, to show him, prove to him that
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what he was saying was true. That did not take him more than
three minutes.

But it is just that, what hinders the experience is the absence
of the practice of concentration, and also the absence of one-
pointedness, singleness of purpose, of will. One “wants” it for a
minute, two minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, an hour,
and afterwards, one wants many other things.... One “thinks”
about it for a few seconds, and after that thinks of a thousand
other things. So naturally in this way you could take an eternity.
For indeed, in this you cannot add up; if it could be accumulated
like grains of sand, if with every thought you give to the Divine
you place a little grain of sand somewhere, after a time this
would make a mountain. But it is not like that, it does not
remain. It has no result. It does not accumulate, you cannot go
on adding, cannot progress quantitatively — you can progress
in intensity, progress qualitatively. Yes, you can learn within
yourself how to do it; but what you have done counts only in
this way. It does not get accumulated like grains of sand on a
dune. Else it would be enough to become quite clever and tell
yourself: “Well, I shall give at least a dozen thoughts to the
Divine every day.” And then, by little bits like that, after some
time one has a little hill....

Well, my children, it will soon be ten o’clock. But if someone
has a very interesting question... You? Ask.

I have a question.

Very interesting?

It is interesting for me. It is said that there are peo-
ple who are very intelligent, and others who are crazy.

Why?

Why? But, my child, there are all kinds of things in Nature!
No two things are identical. All the possibilities exist in Nature:
everything you can imagine and a hundred million times more. So you notice that there are intelligent people and again others who are not. And then there are others still who are unbalanced. And yet, your observations cover a very narrow field. But you can tell yourself that all this exists and hundreds of thousands of millions of other things also exist, and that no two things are alike in the world. And I don’t think there is anything one can imagine which doesn’t exist somewhere. This is exactly what amuses Nature most — she tries out everything, does everything, makes everything, undoes everything, and she makes all possible combinations and goes on changing them, re-handling them, remaking them, and it is a perpetual movement of all the possibilities following one another, clashing, intermingling, combining and falling apart. No two moments of terrestrial life are alike; and for how long has the earth existed?... Very well-informed people will perhaps tell you approximately. And for how long will it yet live? They will perhaps tell you that also: figures with many zeros, so many zeros that you won’t be able to read them. But it won’t ever be the same thing twice over nor will there be two similar moments. If you find things looking alike, that is only an appearance. There are no two things alike, and no two identical moments. And all this goes so far back that you cannot keep count. And it goes so far forward that you can’t keep count either. And it will never be twice the same thing. So, you can’t ask me why this exists and why that exists!... You wanted to ask me why? Nature has much more imagination than you, you know! She imagines new things all the time. It must be so for it is changing all the time and all combinations are always new. Not two seconds in the universe are identical. She has a great deal of imagination. Have you never thought about that?... Do you ever really have two similar moments? No. You know very well that you are not today what you were yesterday and you won’t be tomorrow what you are today... and that if you went back only... say, ten years, you wouldn’t recognise yourself at all any longer! You don’t know
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even what you used to think about, granting that you thought about anything!

So, there is no problem. All that you can do is to try and investigate the field of experience given to you which is extremely limited, to see all the possibilities. And you could begin noting them; you would see that it would make a huge volume immediately, simply in that tiny little field of experience which is yours!

And what are you?... One second in Eternity!

Voilà!