

Chapter Four

Practical Concerns in Work

Order and Rhythm

There can be no physical life without an order and rhythm. When this order is changed it must be in obedience to an inner growth and not for the sake of external novelty. It is only a certain part of the surface lower vital nature which seeks always external change and novelty for its own sake.

It is by a constant inner growth that one can find a constant newness and unfailing interest in life. There is no other satisfying way.

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In the most physical things you have to fix a programme in order to deal with them, otherwise all becomes a sea of confusion and haphazard. Fixed rules have also to be made for the management of material things so long as people are not sufficiently developed to deal with them in the right way without rules. But in matters of the inner development and the sadhana it is impossible to map out a plan fixed in every detail and say, "Every time you shall stop here, there, in this way, on that line and no other." Things would become so tied up and rigid that nothing could be done; there could be no true and effective movement.

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Order, harmony and organisation in physical things is a necessary part of efficiency and perfection and make the instrument more fit for whatever work is given to it.

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The impatience of things going wrong is the defect of a quality — an insistence on accuracy and order. The thing is to keep the quality and get rid of the defect.

Rules, Discipline, Regularity, Thoroughness

Rules are indispensable for the orderly management of work; for without order and arrangement nothing can be properly done, all becomes clash, confusion and disorder.

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A rule that can be varied by everyone at his pleasure is no rule. In all countries in which organised work is successfully done, (India is not one of them), rules exist and nobody thinks of breaking them, for it is realised that work (or life either) without discipline would soon become a confusion and an anarchic failure. In the great days of India everything was put under rule, even art and poetry, even Yoga. Here in fact rules are much less rigid than in any European organisation. Personal discretion can even in a frame of rules have plenty of play — but discretion must be discreetly used, otherwise it becomes something arbitrary or chaotic.

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In work there must be a rule and discipline and as much punctuality as possible in regard to time.

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To be able to be regular is a great force, one becomes master of one's time and one's movements.

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That is quite necessary for work; efficiency and discipline are indispensable. They can however only partly be maintained by outward means — it really depends, in ordinary life, on the personality of the superior, his influence on the subordinates, his firmness, tact, kindness in dealing with them. But the *sadhak* depends on a deeper force, that of his inner consciousness and the Force working through him.

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[*Discipline:*] To act according to a standard of Truth or a rule or law of action (dharma) or in obedience to a superior authority or to the highest principles discovered by the reason and intelligent will and not according to one's own fancy, vital impulses and desires. In Yoga obedience to the Guru or to the Divine and the law of the Truth as declared by the Guru is the foundation of discipline.

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What most want is that things should be done according to their desire without check or reference. The talk of perfection is humbug. Perfection does not consist in everybody being a law to himself. Perfection comes by renunciation of desires and surrender to a higher Will.

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Thoroughness means to do whatever you do completely, thoroughly, so that it may be entire and perfect, not carelessly or partially done. It refers to internal things as well as to external.

Harmony

When all is in agreement with one Truth or an expression of it, that is harmony.

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Wherever there is excessive sensitiveness or quickness of temper, occasions of clash and quarrel will arise, no matter with whom one works — and especially where there is the pressure of the sadhana, which requires that all such weaknesses should be overcome, occasions are likely to arise which will bring them to the surface. The only way is not to indulge them or act under their influence, but to face them and overcome.

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The difficulty rises from a certain excess of sensitiveness in the vital nature which feels strongly any want of harmony or

opposition in the work or any untoward happening and, when that comes, one is apt to feel it as if a personal opposition and on the other side also a similar feeling arises and so the difficulty becomes prolonged and leads to conflict. As a matter of fact the difficulty often arises from circumstances, e.g. the B. S. [*Building Service*] with its much reduced staff and a rush of work using up all its men may find it more difficult to accommodate you than before. Or it may arise from people acting according to their view of a matter which does not accord with yours. Or again it may come from the person following his own ideas, view of what is convenient and effective and thus coming up against yours. There need be no personal feeling in all that and it is best not to look for any and not to see it from that point of view. What is needed is always to take a calm view of the thing and a clear vision — not only from one's own standpoint which may be eventually right and yet need modification in detail, but with a vision that sees also the standpoint of others. This broad seeing, quiet and impersonal, is needed in the full Yogic consciousness. Having it one can insist on what has to be insisted on with firmness but at the same time with a consideration and understanding of the other that removes the chance of any clash of personal feeling. Naturally if the other is unreasonable, he may still resent, but then it will be his own fault entirely and it will fall back on him only. It is here that we see the necessity of some change. Loyalty, fidelity, capacity, strength of will and other qualities in the work you have in plenty — a full calm and equality not only in the inner being where it can exist already, but in the outer nervous parts is a thing you have to get completely.

Avoiding Harshness, Severity, Anger

There are always defects on both sides which lead to this disharmony. On your side you have a tendency to too harsh a judgment of others, a readiness to see and stress the faults, defects, weak side of others and not to see enough their good side. This prevents the kindness of outlook which should be there and gives an impression of harshness and critical severity and creates a

tendency to contrariety and revolt which even when it is not there in the minds of the others, acts through their subconscious and creates all these discordant movements. To take advantage of what is good in others, keeping one's eye always on that, and to deal tactfully with their mistakes, faults and defects is the best way; it does not exclude firmness and maintenance of discipline, even severity when severity is due; but the latter should be rare and the others should not feel it as if it were a permanent attitude.

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The one thing you must try to do in your relations with your fellow-workers is to master your nerves and irritability and take care not to speak roughly, angrily or peevishly to them. It is that that is creating most of the difficulty now. If you have to be firm, you can be firm, but at the same time quiet and even gentle. If you take care on this point, things are likely to improve soon.

If you put yourself in the Mother's hand and reject these vital movements in her strength, there is no reason why you should not pass through all ordeals and progress in the Yoga.

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In all such dealings with others,¹ you should see not only your own side of the question but the other side also. There should be no anger, vehement reproach or menace, for these things only raise anger and retort on the other side. I write this because you are trying to rise above yourself and dominate your vital and when one wants to do that, one cannot be too strict with oneself in these things. It is best even to be severe to one's own mistakes and charitable to the mistakes of others.

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The experience of the difference between your inner feelings and your surface reactions shows that you are becoming aware of different parts of your nature which each have their own

¹ *In this case the correspondent became angry when his request for help in his work was not promptly met. — Ed.*

character. In fact each human being is composed of different personalities that feel and behave in a different way and his action is determined by the one that happens to be prominent at the time. The one that has no feelings against anyone is either the psychic being or the emotional being in the heart, the one that feels anger and is severe is a part of the external vital nature on the surface. This anger and severity is a wrong form of something that in itself has a value, a certain strength of will and force of action and control in the vital being, without which work cannot be done. What is necessary is to get rid of the anger and to keep the force and firm will along with a developed judgment as to what is the right thing to do in any circumstances. For instance, people can be allowed to do things in their own way when that does not spoil the work, when it is only their way of doing what is necessary to be done; when their way is opposed to the discipline of the work, then they have to be controlled, but it should be done quietly and kindly, not with anger. Very often, if one has developed a silent power of putting the Mother's force on the work with one's own will as instrument, that by itself may be sufficient without having to say anything as the person changes his way of himself as if by his own initiative.

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To discourage anybody is wrong, but to give false encouragement or encouragement of anything wrong is not right. Severity has sometimes to be used (though not overused), when without it an obstinate persistence in what is wrong cannot be set right. Very often, if an inner communication has been established, a silent pressure is more effective than anything else. No absolute rule can be laid down; one has to judge and act for the best in each case.

Working with Subordinates and Superiors

It [*disciplining subordinates*] has to be done in the right spirit and the subordinates generally must be able to feel that it is so, that they are being dealt with in all uprightness and justice and

by a man who has sympathy and insight and not only severity and energy. It is a question of vital tact and a strong and large vital finding always the right way to deal with the others.

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To be able to see the viewpoint of others and make allowance for their nature — neither being too harsh, authoritative or exacting, nor too weak and accommodating or indulgent, but still, even when firm, combining firmness with tact and sympathy, — is very necessary for one who has to deal with others as his inferiors in position and subject to his authority. It is also necessary when the position is reversed so that there may not be unnecessary clash or friction with official superiors.

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The root of the difficulty has been in the readiness of the superior officers to accept without examination the things that are said against you. A double action is needed, to destroy the ill-will of the inferiors and to change the mind of the superiors — an invisible action, for in the visible they seem to be too much under the control of the Forces of the Ignorance.

Overcoming the Instinct of Domination

We have been very glad to get your letters with the details which prove how great and rapid a progress you have made in sadhana. All that you write shows a clear consciousness and a new orientation in the lower vital. To have seen clearly the instinct of domination and the pride of the instrument there means that that part of the being is on the right way to change — these defects must now be replaced by their true counterparts — the power to act selflessly on others for the Truth and the Right and the power to be a strong and confident but egoless instrument of the Divine. It is clear also that the physical is effectively opening, but the instinctive physical and vital-physical motions in it, fear in the body, weakness, disposition to ill-health must go also. As to diet, a light quantity of food sufficient for strength and

sustenance is the best for you — meat is not advisable.

Let the wide opening that has come in you develop and your whole being down to the material fill with the true consciousness and the true power.

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That is true.² As things are, the vital falsehood seems to take a temporary advantage over the superior sattwic nature.

Avoiding Disturbance

Whenever anything untoward happens, it is essential not to allow any vibrations of disturbance or unrest in either the physical mind or the nerves. One must remain calm and open to the Light and Force, then one will be able to act in the right way.

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From the point of view of sadhana — you must not allow yourself to be in the least disturbed by these things [*lack of sympathy and support in one's work*]. What you have to do, what is right to be done, should be done in perfect calmness with the support of the Divine Force. All that is necessary for a successful result, can be done — including the securing of the support of those who are able to help you. But if this outer support is not forthcoming, you have not to be disturbed but to proceed calmly on your way. If there is any difficulty or unsuccess anywhere not due to your own fault, you have not to be troubled. Strength, unmoved calm, quiet, straight and right dealing with all things you have to deal with must be the rule of your action.

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Keep unmoved, unoffended, do your work without being discouraged, call on the Force to act for you. It is a field of trial for you — the inward result is more important than the outward.

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² *The correspondent remarked that people full of vital ego often override, deceive and even injure people with less egoistic push but greater capacity. — Ed.*

As for the work, I have already told you that it is not by your going away that there will be harmony and peace. Wherever there are human beings working together, differences and disagreements and incompatibilities of temper will always be there. It is only if the human nature changes that it will be otherwise, but that cannot be done at once. One has to go on quietly and patiently doing the work for the Mother's sake until the change can be made in yourself and others.

Avoiding Restlessness, Worry and Anxiety

As for quietude and work, quietude is the proper basis for work — not restlessness. You speak as if quietude and being alive and working were not compatible! The Mother and myself do plenty of work, I suppose, and we are quite alive, but it is out of quietude that we do it. To worry and be restless and think always "I am not doing well my work" is not the way; you have to be quiet, conscious more and more of a greater Force than your own working in you: that Force will hereafter take up your work and do it for you.

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The difficulty you find results very much from your always worrying with your mind about things, thinking "This is wrong, that is wrong in me or my work" and, as a result, "I am incompetent, I am bad, nothing can be done with me." Your embroidery work, your lampshades etc. have always been very good, and yet you are always thinking "This is bad work, that is wrong" and by doing so, confuse yourself and get into a muddle. Naturally, you make a mistake now and then, but more when you worry like that than when you do things simply and confidently.

It is better whether with work or with sadhana to go on quietly, allowing the Force to act and doing your best to let it work rightly, but without this self-tormenting and constant restless questioning at every point. Whatever defects there are would go much sooner, if you did not harp on them too much; for by dwelling on them so much you lose confidence in yourself

and in your power of openness to the Force — which is there all the same — and put unnecessary difficulties in the way of its working.

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There is nothing really wrong with your work; it is very well done. It is only your imagination that makes you always think it is defective here and defective there. There may be slight mistakes sometimes, but that is the case with everybody. You have only to work quietly, getting the best inspiration you can and, if there is any difficulty, to be quiet and the right thing will come. To be true to the inner feeling, remaining turned towards us for help is absolutely the right way; to trouble and doubt and fret is quite the wrong way.

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Do not worry about mistakes in work. Often you imagine that things are badly done by you when really you have done them very well; but even if there are mistakes, it is nothing to be sad about. Let the consciousness grow — only in the divine consciousness is there an entire perfection. The more you surrender to the Divine, the more will there be the possibility of perfection in you.

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Do not attach too much importance to such mistakes or get upset about them. It is the nature of the mind to make such mistakes. It is only a higher consciousness that can set them right — the mind can be sure only after a very long training in each particular action and even then it has only to be off-guard for something untoward to occur. Do as well as you can, and for the rest let the higher consciousness grow till it can enlighten all the movements of the physical mind.

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Skill in works will come when there is the opening in the physical mind and the body. There is no need to be anxious about that now. Do your best and do not be anxious about it.

Compliments and Criticism

That is a great error of the human vital — to want compliments for their own sake and to be depressed by their absence and imagine that it means there is no capacity. In this world one starts with ignorance and imperfection in whatever one does — one has to find out one's mistakes and to learn, one has to commit errors and find out by correcting them the right way to do things. Nobody in the world has ever escaped from this law. So what one has to expect from others is not compliments all the time, but praise of what is right or well done and criticism of errors and mistakes. The more one can bear criticism and see one's mistakes, the more likely one is to arrive at the fullness of one's capacity. Especially when one is very young — before the age of maturity — one cannot easily do perfect work. What is called the juvenile work of poets and painters — work done in their early years — is always imperfect, it is a promise and has qualities — but the real perfection and full use of their powers comes afterwards. They themselves know that very well, but they go on writing or painting because they know also that by doing so they will develop their powers.

As for comparison with others, one ought not to do that. Each one has his own lesson to learn, his own work to do and he must concern himself with that, not with the superior or inferior progress of others in comparison with himself. If he is behind today, he can be in full capacity hereafter and it is for that future perfection of his powers that he must labour. You are young and have everything yet to learn — your capacities are yet only in bud, you must wait and work for them to be in full bloom — and you must not mind if it takes months and years even to arrive at something satisfying and perfect. It will come in its proper time, and the work you do now is always a step towards it.

But learn to welcome criticism and the pointing out of imperfections — the more you do so, the more rapidly you will advance.

Someone who is learning to paint or play music or write and does not like to have his mistakes pointed out by those who already know — how is he to learn at all or reach any perfection of technique?

Thinking about Work

Think of your work only when it is being done, not before and not after.

Do not let your mind go back on a work that is finished. It belongs to the past and all rehandling of it is a waste of power.

Do not let your mind labour in anticipation on a work that has to be done. The Power that acts in you will see to it at its own time.

These two habits of the mind belong to a past functioning that the transforming Force is pressing to remove and the physical mind's persistence in them is the cause of your strain and fatigue. If you can remember to let your mind work only when its action is needed, the strain will lessen and disappear. This is indeed the transitional movement before the supramental working takes possession of the physical mind and brings into it the spontaneous action of the Light.

Dealing with Physical Things

Material things are not to be despised — without them there can be no manifestation in the material world.

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Physical things have a life and value of their own which does not depend upon their price. To respect physical things and make a careful and scrupulous use of them is a part of the Yoga, for without that the mastery over matter cannot come.

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What you feel about physical things is true — there is a consciousness in them, a life which is not the life and consciousness

of man and animal which we know, but still secret and real. That is why we must have a respect for physical things and use them rightly, not misuse and waste, ill-treat or handle with a careless roughness. This feeling of all being conscious or alive comes when our own physical consciousness — and not the mind only — awakes out of its obscurity and becomes aware of the One in all things, the Divine everywhere.

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It is very true that physical things have a consciousness within them which feels and responds to care and is sensitive to careless touch and rough handling. To know or feel that and learn to be careful of them is a great progress in consciousness.

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There is a consciousness in each physical thing with which one can communicate. Everything has an individuality of a certain kind, houses, cars, furniture etc. The ancient peoples knew that and so they saw a spirit or “genius” in every physical thing.

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The rough handling and careless breaking or waste and misuse of physical things is a denial of the Yogic Consciousness and a great hindrance to the bringing down of the Divine Truth to the material plane.

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Wanton waste, careless spoiling of physical things in an incredibly short time, loose disorder, misuse of service and materials due either to vital grasping or to tamasic inertia are baneful to prosperity and tend to drive away or discourage the Wealth-Power. These things have long been rampant in the society and, if that continues, an increase in our means might well mean a proportionate increase in the wastage and disorder and neutralise the material advantage. This must be remedied if there is to be any sound progress.

Asceticism for its own sake is not the ideal of this Yoga, but

self-control in the vital and right order in the material are a very important part of it — and even an ascetic discipline is better for our purpose than a loose absence of true control. Mastery of the material does not mean having plenty and profusely throwing it out or spoiling it as fast as it comes or faster. Mastery implies in it the right and careful utilisation of things and also a self-control in their use.