

The following lecture by G.V. Desani was delivered to an “especially invited” audience of business executives at Kishinchand Chellaram College in Bombay (now Mumbai and the school now better known as K.C. College) in the mid-‘60s. The lecture would be familiar to students at The University of Texas at Austin who took one of Desani’s Theravada Buddhism courses. A.S. Raman, the first Indian editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India, introduced Desani and, apparently, had the transcript published in India.

ETHICS, NIRVANA & SUNDRY ITEMS

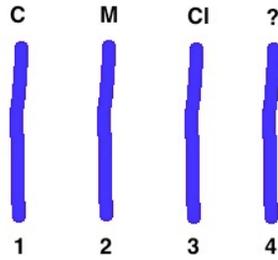
by

G.V. Desani

Some politicians are under the impression that all problems are political (or power) problems. Some businessmen are under the impression that all problems are essentially economic (derived from power mechanisms). I know of the arguments advanced in favor of these views.

The substance of this talk however would be that all problems – in the last analysis – are ethical problems. (The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines *Ethics* as a science or a theory which deals with the principles of morality.) That conclusion is valid in business dealings, too. You gentlemen are businessmen. Your motive for attending this meeting, I assume, is to profit from it – to gain something, if possible. My motive for coming to speak to you is *dharma dāna*. (The dictionary defines *Dharma dānam* as making a charitable gift to someone – untainted by self-interest.) Anyway, I am glad that we could meet because we are going to discuss things worth discussing.

It is necessary, before we discuss human action, to define a human being. I am told that you had a Swamiji to speak to you not long ago. I expect he defined a human being as *Ātman* or Self. (There is no need to interpret the word.) European thinkers – particularly the psychologists – have told us a great deal about what constitutes a human being or the human complex. I shall avoid these views of man. They are not relevant to my subject.



I have drawn four vertical lines on the board....

Line 1 has the letter *C* written above it (*C* for *Consciousness*). A part of myself is *Consciousness*. The function of *Consciousness* – for the purpose of this discussion – is to know, to be *aware*. This table – I infer – does not *know* what I am saying. It might not know itself as a table. Therefore – I infer – that *Consciousness* is absent in it (or is minimal, is unmanifested, undifferentiated, dormant.) In any case, if present, it is not functioning as well as it does in you and me. A part of myself, a human being, then, is *Consciousness*. (Represented on the board by *C*.)

Line 2 has the letter *M* written on it. (*M* for *Matter*.) Whatever I might be in essence, so much of myself – the flesh and bone is Substance. The presence of Substance can be witnessed by your senses. I am here present. Your eyes would bear witness to that fact, and your ears would, too, if I spoke, and were you to step forward on the platform, the Substance part of myself would resist you. You could touch me. Therefore, a part of myself, a human being, is *Matter* (represented on the board by *M*).

Line 3 on the board has the letters *Cl* written above it. (*Cl* for *Coloring: Coloring of Consciousness*.)

Now *C* – the *Consciousness* in us – in its purity, may be assumed to be like a sphere of rock crystal. In its purity, *Consciousness* is ‘God’. And it is ‘Power’ (*Shakti*). It is free of *Coloring* (limitations, qualities, *upadhis*). The most extraordinary things could happen – big and small ‘miracles’ – if *Consciousness* were in its purity, its true nature, its *svarūpa*. This is very rare.



Please observe the *Red* lines and the *Green* lines, above.

These colors, if present in Consciousness, tint it, as it were (thereby, finiting it, limiting it, making it 'non-God', 'non-Power', and making one the creature one is). For the purpose of this discussion, *Red* is a *bad* color; and *Green* is a *good* color. (Presently, I shall be defining *Good* and *Bad*.)

Now – listening to me as attentively as you are – the *C* part of yourselves is tinted *Green*. You are feeling friendly: at least, so it seems. When you were bent upon profiting from our meeting, doing 'business' with me – I had inferred this – your *C* was colored *Red*. It is no longer *Red*. If you were angry with me over anything at all – including over this business of defining man, if he is essentially *Ātman* or a Freudian or other construction or what is assumed on the board – your coloring would be *Red*. (Both *avarice* for 'profit', and *anger* over anything at all, manifest as *Red*.)

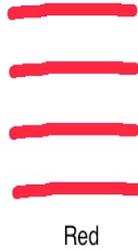
Beings – creatures – human, supra-human, infra-human – might be defined by these three lines (*C*, *M*, and *Cl*). They are *Consciousness*, they are *Matter*, and they are *Coloring of Consciousness*, at any instant under observation. As soon as Desire – *kāma*, *rāga* – arises in one, including the desire to profit from our meeting, *Consciousness* is *colored*. A god or a devil with desire – including the desire to make, sustain, destroy – would be subject to this definition: *C*, *M* – although his substance, his Matter might be different, strange to us – and *Cl*.

?



4

Finally, line four, with the sign over it. This is not a subject for words or discussion. You may call it *Absolute*, *Brahman*, or – this is becoming a favorite word – *Life*, or *All*, or better, *Nirvana*.



The Buddha's terms for these Red lines are *Lobha*, *Dosa*, and *Moha*. *Lobha* is greed, covetousness, avarice and all that. *Dosa* is anger, hatred, and all that (including anger and hate directed against oneself; sometimes a man commits suicide from anger and hate directed against himself). *Moha* is ignorance, darkness, unwisdom, delusion. It is an 'evil'. An ignorant man – in this particular sense – is far more 'evil' than a covetous or an angry man. Ignorance (*Moha*) in this particular sense – means *not to know the true nature of a thing*, at any instant.

Now it so happens that you cannot have the coloring of *Lobha* – covetousness, avarice – and you cannot be tinted with *Dosa* – anger, hatred – without necessarily being Ignorant (being tinted with *Moha*). *Moha* is inseparable from the two (*Lobha* and *Dosa*). *Moha* hides the truth. One does *not know the true nature of a thing* if it is tinted with *Moha*.

If I may elaborate. A desire arises in one – any sort of desire at all. And the *Consciousness* is tinted. You desire, covet, and you are tinted with *Lobha*. The following moment, you might be angry, tinted with *Dosa*: because a certain circumstance, the law, taxation, the weather, a son or a daughter, an opponent, anyone at all, obstructed you: denied you satisfaction. In both these situations – *Red* – you are necessarily tinted with *Moha* – *Red*. *Moha* is Ignorance, imperfect, perceiving, not seeing truly. Untruth adheres to your *C*. (This situation cannot be conceived – we might infer – in the 'state' of 'being', implied by the line 4, which is fulfillment, Enlightenment, is *All*, is *All-Wisdom*, *Nirvana*.)

The Buddha, whose insight into the problem of ethics is unmatched, in the *Abhidhamma*, has given us the most elaborate classification of the states of *Consciousness*. But basically – in the last analysis – all *evil* arises from avarice (*Lobha*), anger (*Dosa*), and the crowning sin of false perceiving (*avidyā*, *Moha*).



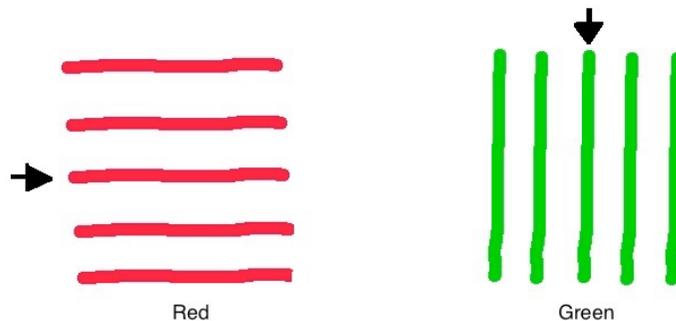
Green

A Consciousness which is colored *Green*, basically – in the last analysis – is colored with *Alobha* (no-*Lobha*) a manifestation of which is charity. *Lobha* takes. Charity gives. A *Consciousness* tinted *Green* has *Adosa* (no-*Dosa*): a manifestation of which is compassion, love. A *Consciousness* tinted *Green* has *Amoha*: a manifestation of which is Wisdom, Insight, Enlightenment (rather than ignorance, delusion, darkness).

To have *Lobha* – avarice – for a thing, or to be angry and to hate something or someone (*Dosa*), or to have a false view (*Moha*) – and thoughts, words, and deeds arising from these – are *Bad*. Charity, compassion, wisdom, are *Good*, and the resulting thoughts, words and deeds are *Good*. And *Bad* or *Evil* is that which causes suffering – eventually. *Good* is that which leads to *sukha* (the sensation of happiness) – eventually.

Basically, all conscious action – and human action – originates in these three roots (the *Red* lines), and those three roots (the *Green* lines). You might care to subject any action to scrutiny and test this hypothesis.

(The term *Lobha* is often used [in parts of India] in a colloquial sense. A *Lobhi* person is a self-centered person; over-indulgent, possibly guilty of obvious or a not obvious anti-social conduct. We are not using the term in that sense. On the board, it is a color of Consciousness, a manifestation of which might be all these things, and overeating, too. The ancient commentary defines *Lobha* as “delight in one’s possessions”; starting from *mam*: ‘I’, ‘Me’ and ending with ‘Mine’.)



Please look at these five *Red* lines and five vertical *Green* lines. (I have drawn five lines of each color – the *Bad* color and the *Good* color – purely for convenience. These five lines represent many lines. Certainly more than five.) The third *Red* line is pointed out – singled out – by an arrow. That is *Lobha*. Now, if *Lobha* should adhere to a *Consciousness*, and make it *Red*, there are present *a number of other things besides*: the lines above and below *Lobha* – pointed out by the arrow – represent those many other things. (This is true of the *Green* lines, too. The third *Green* line, to which an arrow points, is *Alobha*. I shall discuss the *Green* lines presently.)

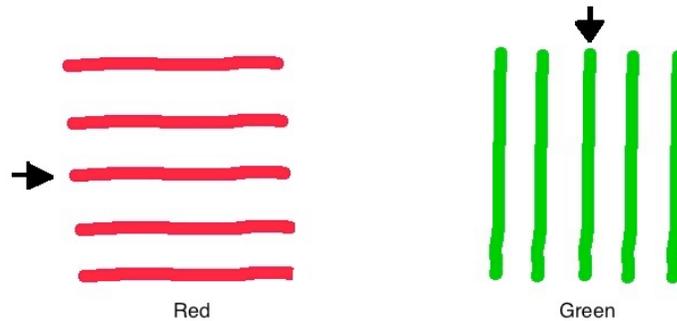
Quoting the ancients, being colored with *Lobha* is analogous to harvesting. To reap a harvest, you need many things. You need the seed, of course; and *a number of other things besides*. A farmer is needed. Soil is needed. Water, manure, rain – several such things – would be needed. Likewise – to develop, and to sustain *Lobha*, the seed – several, *many* things would be needed. For instance, a person colored with *Lobha*, for the duration, has no moral shame and dread: which is to say, he is *forward, resolute*. (A person, colored with *Lobha*, for the duration – whatever the consequence later on – has *pleasure* from it. He would not pursue the object of his desire if he had no *pleasure* in it.) Sometimes, one cannot do certain things if there are people present and watching one. Sometimes, one cannot do certain things if one believes – rightly or wrongly – that there is a law of retribution, an archangel or God witnessing one's deeds. But the person colored with *Lobha* is *forward, resolute*. And a person colored with *Lobha* would be *restless*. He would be, moreover, colored with *Moha* for the duration. (The lines above and below the line to which the arrow points, represent these and many other things.)

Over 16 such things – the *many* such factors – might be present when *Lobha* colors a *Consciousness* for the duration of a tenth of a second, or less, or for days. Among the 16, as witnessed by the Buddha, would be *ekāgratā*, one-pointed attention. Too many people complain that they cannot achieve one-pointed attention. They say they cannot concentrate. This is not a genuine complaint. It might arise from *Moha* – from not perceiving truly. Everyone of us has this faculty. When one's *Consciousness* is colored with *Lobha* – when one is hunted and there is extreme attachment to one's substance, one's *M*. Or in the sexual embrace, if the act yields pleasure and there is extreme attachment to the sense of touch – there is present *ekāgratā*, one-pointed attention or concentration. I shall agree that it is difficult to point one's attention to the object of one's choice – an uninteresting, no-pleasure-yielding preoccupation such as gazing at the tip of one's nose. To do that, one must have discipline (*sādhana*).

One lies from *Lobha*. (One lies from *Dosa*, anger, hate, too.) A man who lies is necessarily colored with *Moha*. From *Lobha* – love of gain is a manifestation of it – and *Dosa* – anger, rage, against something or other – one following the other – and *Moha* – present all along – one can commit a murder, a so-called *successful* murder, and never get caught. Yet....

II

It is not possible to commit a successful murder although nobody saw you and you weren't caught. *The victim knows the murderer even though attacked in darkness and unseen* (and others do, too, although they do not bear witness against you).



It is not possible to lie to anyone at all. The victim – the person deceived, one's competitor, one's wife, an income-tax official, anyone at all – knows of the deception (and others do, too, although they do not bear witness against you).

This might interest you. A hospital nurse had lost her wrist watch. She was troubled about the loss. Under deep hypnosis – she was a good hypnosis subject – she described the person who had stolen her watch and accurately described the circumstances – as if she were a witness, watching the action, watching and seeing a person acting. When awakened, she had no recollection of what she had said and described. The watch was recovered from the person named. The circumstances described were confirmed as true. I find this frightening. One might presume that one has murdered successfully or deceived successfully. Yet, a part of the Consciousness knows otherwise. I have years of practice (*sādhana*) behind me. For years I have occupied myself with these things. I have come to the conclusion that it is fools, damned fools – the unfortunate people colored with *Moha* – who go about planning and executing lies, deceptions, misrepresenting accounts, all sorts of such things at all. It is very necessary to help such people.

A theft, a murder, is committed through one's limbs. One lies, assisted by the tongue. It is a deed on the level of words. Theft, murder, or lies, all arise from *Lobha*, *Dosa*, and *Moha*. People slander other people. This is done from *Lobha* – a bias for oneself – and *Dosa* – hate or anger directed against another – and *Moha* always accompanies the two. Slandering, as a behavior, is different from legitimately measuring people. The Buddha was pleased to address some people [as] 'fools'. It was an assessment of them. They were fools. He did not call them fools from anger. The Buddha was now and then offered meat by his lay devotees. Several statements by him on the subject might be studied. His acceptance of *dāna* – the food given to him – and the attitude of the person who desires meat, enjoys it, and would not

hesitate to murder – slaughter, to satisfy himself – from the roots of such action, these *Red* lines – must be carefully compared and considered.

If I may make a passing reference to the enormous importance of motive.... This arises from the reference I made just now to the Buddha's motive and the motive of a victim of *Lobha*. You might invite a guest to eat with you from several motives. (Mr. Raman and I are invited to lunch with you, thank you very much, after the conclusion of this meeting.) You might invite a guest to eat with you because you enjoy his company, in spite of the inconvenience to him. That would be a *Light Red Lobha* motive. You might invite him to eat with you, professing affection, because you wish to deal with him for profit. (A real *Red Lobha* motive.) You might invite him to eat with you because you wish to humiliate him. You wish to show off your possessions and so reduce him in his own estimation. His office or home, to your certain knowledge, is not as good as yours. That would be a *Red Dosa*-colored Consciousness. You might invite him to eat with you because you know that he is a destitute, cannot afford a meal – one never seems to invite such people to lunch – or, at any rate, not the quality you [usually] provide. In that case only the motive would be from charity (*dāna* – giving).

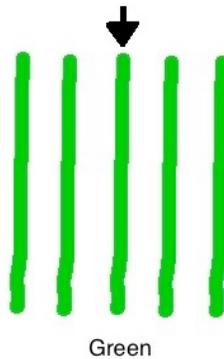
Most disputes arise from *Dosa*. Most thefts are committed from *Lobha*, although one steals from anger, and hate (*Dosa*), too – anger and hate against an employer, one's parents, one's superiors, the government. An unlawful sexual act is a theft arising from the root *Lobha*. An unlawful sexual relationship with unwilling partners, with minors, with people under medical and other care, are most often rooted in *Dosa*, often in *Lobha*, and *Moha* accompanies the two. An illicit relationship with a married person – a relationship one cannot admit openly and for which one might be willing to sacrifice the interests and feelings of others, something one would not like to have happening to oneself – is a theft, rooted in *Lobha*. I myself have been guilty of such a theft – a secret love affair of which I was grossly ashamed, when not overwhelmed by my feelings, and which caused me an appalling, but just, suffering over the years.

Reducing people – belittling them – pretensions, hypocrisy, wearing masks, false faces, you say you are glad to see someone when you are not, you write letters that are true in tone but false in substance – crookedness, craftiness, rather than straightforwardness and simplicity: pride, conceit – these two arise from *Moha*, because the victim cannot assess himself or herself truly – any kind of an infatuation at all, and all sorts of fanaticism: all these can be traced to *Lobha*, *Dosa*, *Moha*, in one's Consciousness. (The *Red* lines.) A man who claims to own a business cannot shut shop or do without his office for a day. A man who claims to own a *lakh* of rupees, cannot, dare not, spend a hundred on a whim, a folly, unless it is many hundreds and thousands [of] rupees to equate himself with a social convention: for instance, concerning a son-in-law and the son-in-law's kith and kin (not from love or companions for a son-in-law and his kith and kin). Quite obviously – you gentlemen might care to consider this supposition – he owns nothing of the sort. Shops, offices, businesses own him. Money owns him. Attachment to money owns him, and that is

Lobha, and fanaticism – I used the word a while ago – is a manifestation of it. There is no freedom in this: freedom accompanies ‘owning’. If I own a toy, I am free – if I will – to break it. A servant and slave of an object of *Lobha* – represented to his Consciousness as a business, a bank balance, a property – cannot do that. A slave has no dignity.

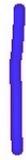
Dignity is a desirable quality. Awareness of this often leads a man or a woman to ‘good’ deeds. If a person were attached to an object of desire, including money – in excess, and at the expense of his dignity and the dignity of others – or if he indulged in anger, hatred, irritation – and irritation would be unavoidable, for such a man would always be up against opposition – or if, instead of recognizing his foes, *Lobha*, *Dosa*, *Moha* – he were to sit quietly in a corner, indulge in remorse, blame himself, blame the government, the markets, the customers, the competitors, his family, his planets, or simply, “the circumstances” – all such behavior arises mostly from *Moha*, ignorance – and if he were lazy, did nothing about it – such a person – it is not necessary to invoke an ancient moral terminology – may be said to compromise his dignity as a human being.

We have, so far, discussed the negatives. A positive attitude would be – quite simply – to refrain from such undignified action: and not indulge in *Lobha*, and the *Lobha* deeds; not indulge in *Dosa*, and the *Dosa* deeds; and not indulge in *Moha*, and the *Moha* deeds; with thought, with words, and with one’s limbs: and, of course, to move over to the other side, to these pretty Green lines. This is being Good. And that is *śilā*. (The real thing and not the travesty of the word, and its sense, used [in some parts of India] as a political catchword, the ‘*Pañcasīla*’.)



Please look at the *Green* lines now, and at *Alobha* – pointed out by the arrow – and consider a manifestation of it called *dānam* (charity, giving, gifting). This is a subject worth discussing. Some of you gentlemen, I happen to know, direct and manage charitable trusts.

Giving respect to men, who are worthy of respect – and to worship one’s God, a Buddha – is an act of charity, and it arises from *Alobha*. (The opposite coloring, arising from *Lobha* and *Moha* would be ‘worship’, a ritual, or a ‘*bhakti*’ for profits, gains, boons, and for notice taken of one’s pleas, petitions, prayers.) To minister to a man, who is worthy, is also an act of charity. And so is *sharing one’s merits with others*: it is an act of charity. Here is an example: About four or five years ago, I lived in a *vihara* – a monastery – in Burma. Along with the *bhikkhus* – the monks – I was invited to accept the *dāna* of a meal one day. The procedure is that the guests eat first and after the meal – the hosts eat long after the guests – the guests give a short discourse, an instruction, to the hosts. The senior *bhikkhu* of our party, whose duty it was to speak for us, happened to be burdened with a problem. A rash young man had stolen a sum of money from the monastery that morning. The senior *bhikkhu* was troubled for the youth – about the inevitable retribution due from his deed. At least, so he believed. Therefore, instead of the expected discourse, he proposed that we – the guests and hosts, the receivers and the givers of *dāna* – should share – rather renounce, will away, the merit we had earned by our act of love or *maître* to the erring young man, to save him from the consequence of his deed. Such an intention, and action, rooted in *Alobha*, would be *sharing one’s merits with others*.



C

Such acts – and their opposites, or perversions – have a connection with a function of *Consciousness* (*C* on the board) called the Will. The Will is necessarily concentrated in a man who is set upon and who must overcome an opponent in a struggle. The Will, however, is feeble – and not concentrated, or poised for action – when one is tired and in bed, and about to fall asleep. One might wish to get up. One postpones it, delays it. After a few minutes, one is drowsy. Now one is incapable – more or less – of acting. One cannot move, even though one wills it, and so one falls asleep. Now, one might move about in a dream, but the body does not move. It is not synchronized with the Will. Consider these two manifestations of the Will – in a man engaged in a combat and a man dreaming and asleep. I am still on the subject of *dāna*. It would be obvious that one should give – do *dāna*, with keenness, with a pointed Will, rather than with a feeble Will. Recalling the analogy of harvesting, you remember, the several, the *many* things needed for successful harvesting – in addition to the keen Will, it is necessary to consider the *value* of the things given. Monetary value is but a part of such evaluation. A person might need a certain thing at a certain time and not need it at another. There have been times – during my years in India – when I have badly needed medicine. On two occasions, I have

needed clothes badly, and for a few days, in Sarnath, I have not had the means to pay for food. (I do not have such needs today.) And how was the gift obtained by the giver? By what means? Legal means, honest means, dishonest means? And the status – the qualification – of the person receiving your gift? It is wonderful to be able to give *dāna* to a Buddha, an *ārya*, a worthy. So much for the complex action called *dānam* that arises from *Alobha*. (When the *dāna* is offered to a superior, it is rightly named *pūjā* (worship). You bestow upon – do *anugraha* to – an equal or an inferior.)

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4

These things by themselves do not lead us to the ideal. They help us approach the ideal. A person who keeps his conduct *Good* – as defined so far – is the one who *qualifies*. It is quite in order to ask what it is for which one should qualify.

To know *this*, to experience *this* – symbolized by the fourth line, with the question mark over it – is to attain excellence, freedom, *mukti*, *Nirvana*. But to attain it, one needs *bala* or *balāni*; power, or powers.

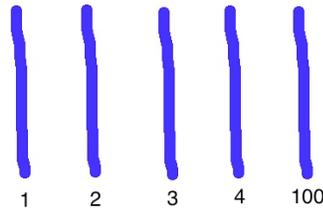
III

You need to have in your favor, *prārabdha*; a fate, a destiny, a beginning in the past. To be possessed of a good ‘past’ is a *bala* (a power). By ‘past’ is meant the infinite or a ‘history’ of a *Consciousness*. An individual born with an enormous bank balance, any prince or princess of a ruling house, with a few or no obligations or responsibilities, has to his or her credit a ‘past’. An individual born with an infirmity, an incurable disease, robbing him of the freedom of action, has a ‘past’. Both he, and an individual born with gifts, experience the advantages, and the disadvantages, of their situations, and regardless of their *Will*. *Faith* is a *bala*. A person without faith is the one who has his palm formed into a fist. You cannot give him anything. He cannot receive it. If a person *exerts*, practices, he has *bala*, or power. If a person has *samādhi* – he has concentration of mind, has calmness, as opposed to the *restlessness* of *Lobha* [that] I mentioned, he has real *bala*, power.

A Frenchman, who paid me a visit some time ago, asked me how can one attain any good – any spiritual good – by staring down at the tip of one’s nose. (This

practice is recommended in the *Gita*. His was not a question. It was an opinion dressed up as a question.) The answer to that one might be that for the duration of the practice – staring at the tip of one’s nose, directing attention to that point only – one does not indulge in *Lobha, Dosa, Moha*. For the duration of the practice, then, it would be a *clean* state (the state of *citta visudhi*). If high concentration – *samādhi* – can be attained by this, or any other means, it would be a real *bala*.

Methods vary. Some look at and contemplate an image – a *pratimā*. Some visualize – ‘see’ mentally, direct attention to – a thought, a notion, a concept, a *quality*. (To contemplate one’s God as *supreme*, as *good*, as *true*, as *merciful*, as *just*, as *love*, as *wisdom*, is to contemplate the *qualities* of supremacy or power, goodness, truth, mercy, justice, love and wisdom. To venerate in a contemplation Gautama, the Buddha, or any other Buddha, as omniscient, as enlightened, as virtuous, free from *Lobha, Dosa, Moha* – regardless of its value as a prayer or a communication – would be a contemplation of his *qualities*.) It does not matter what means are employed so long as those lead to success in controlling that operation of *Consciousness* called ‘attention’. The Buddha recommends that we contemplate *maître* – lovingkindness for all beings whatsoever, human, infra-human, supra-human; and *karunā* – compassion for all beings, the good, the evil, all; *muditā* – altruistic joy in the happiness of all; *upeksha* – equanimity, the quality that enables us to accept, with calmness, and dignity, both joy and sorrow. The contemplation of these – with method and technique – can lead us to high *samādhi*, to the *bala*, power, of a concentrated mind. And to develop these *qualities*, as character traits, is as high an ethical aim as one can conceive.



The most powerful weapon against *Moha*, the basic ignorance, is *Sati* (Sanskrit, *Smriti*). (We are grateful to Gautama, the Buddha, for this precept.)

On the table, as you can see, is a piece of chalk. I am picking it up – so. If asked to describe the action, you would – I assume – reply. “You picked up a stick of chalk.” Now, if one were to develop this *bala* – the power of *Sati* – the statement you were pleased to make might not seem quite correct.

As mentioned, once upon a time, I used to spend 10 hours a day walking and watching my feet as I walked, to and fro, to develop concentration of mind and *Sati* (*mindfulness, awareness*). After the first three weeks or so of the practice, if I were asked to describe my preoccupation, I would have replied, “I am *walking*.” (One summary observation, represented on the board [above] by the vertical line, under

which is written the Figure 1.) Yet, after further practice, for two weeks or so – when this anti-*Moha* factor or *bala, Sati*, was developed a bit – I discovered that I was not ‘walking’, not strictly. I noticed two actions, namely, *lifting* (of a foot) and *placing* (of a foot): rather than ‘walking’! (Two observations for the former one observation represented on the board by the vertical line marked 2.) After some time, devoting not less than 10 hours a day to the practice – it was necessary to reduce sleep to save time – I found that a foot was subject to a *pushing forward* – a thrust, as it were – towards the floor, while in transit, from *lifting* off the floor to *placing* upon the floor. (No analysis or thought was involved in making these observations or discoveries. Rather, these facts occurred to me as *realizations*.) Shortly after, I realized a *cooling sensation* upon the soles of my feet, as soon as a foot was off the floor. The act ‘walking’ – became a complex action: *lifting, cooling, pushing, placing*. (Four observations or realizations for the initial ‘walking’: represented on the board by the fourth vertical line, under which is the figure 4.) Then there was the sensation of *heat* as the feet touched ground. And I ‘sensed’ fully the surface of my sandals. Even the *movement* of a foot – from lifting of it onwards – was not a single act, a transition or a journey: rather the circuit, I realized, was itself made up of parts, as a Venetian blind is made up of parts, the shutters – and that the movement, as a single entire act, was an *illusion*. I could not truthfully – because of the swiftness of the phenomena – single out or discern a part or parts of it or grasp “the arc” (so the movement seemed to me once [when starting the practice]). After about three months – I occupied myself with the practice for more than five months, sleeping four hours in 24 – I was able to make a hundred or so observations, during the journey of the foot from the moment of *lifting* to the very last realization (after *placing*). (These are represented on the board by the last line, under which is the figure 100.)

One cannot gain these things – make the symbolic 100 observations or realizations – without extreme concentration. So absorbed was I once with the miracle of this heightening awareness – the *Sati bala* – that I could not see a young woman who had come to offer me a cold drink. (I was told, later in the day, that she had been waiting – and facing me, as I paced to and fro – for more than an hour.) One day – and this is a conclusion – I made the discovery that the foot cannot move without the impulse to move it – without a *movement* in the *Consciousness*: of which, till that moment, I had not been aware. The observation now began with this impulse: ‘*intending*’, followed by the 100 or so things realized by me in sequence, *lifting, cooling, pushing...* Further discoveries are represented on the board by the *blankness* (beside the line with the figure 100 under it).

This is a matter of experience. It cannot be given to you in a lecture (I expect, by now, this talk sounds like a lecture. My phrases have become long.) If one experienced this, by any device – and mine happened to be the device of watching that most inescapable phenomenon of all existence, namely *movement*, movement of my feet – one might assume that *M (Material)* cannot move without volition (a function of *C, Consciousness*.) A review of this assumption, or discovery, without further consideration or debate, might lead one to the conclusion that all *Good*, and

all *Evil*, must arise from the *Consciousness* part of ourselves, from the function called volition – for all practical purposes, shall we say. And all *evil* might then be traced to *Lobha*, *Dosa*, and *Moha*. But those, too, are not single factors. They too are made up of parts. Everything is. Yet, it is from these roots of evil, that mental, verbal and physical action grows. (*Recapitulating*, one would kill, destroy, steal, indulge in unlawful sexual relations – and so act with the limbs – and lie, slander, use harsh words, indulge in wasteful talk, gossip – verbal action – indulge in greed, avarice, anger, hatred, be ignorant, unaware, have false views of things, the phenomena – mental acts – from these roots of evil. An easily remembered enumerations is *kāma*, *krudhā*, *lobha*, *moha*, *ahamkāra*, *īrṣyā*, *mātsarya*. To *abstain* from these actions, to make an effort for it, is positive and good, being a move towards *Alobha*, *Adosa*, and *Amoha*.)

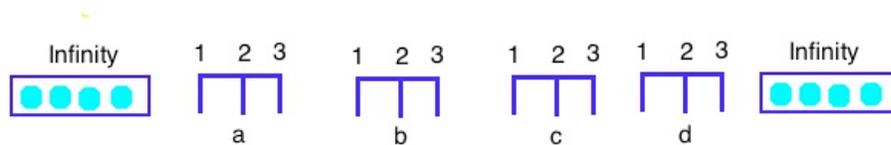
Concentration (*Samādhi*) and mindfulness (*Sati*) are the means to free the mind, and to clear one's *dṛṣṭi*, one's vision, and to know things as they are (to cultivate *Amoha*). Let's get back to the stick of chalk. I am picking it up. After a millionth part of a second – and arbitrary reckoning – I felt about 15 sensations. As my hand moves towards the chalk, I was aware of several points in my body, where things were touching other things. I felt the touch of my breath. I heard someone breathing. During the split-split part of a millisecond of a millisecond, there was *ekāgratā*, concentration, and as the fingers touched the stick of chalk, I felt its hardness, its surface temperature – rather, recalling this, a sensation of warmth at my finger tips. Then the entire action of picking it up was similarly known, realized. All these observations, and others, are the parts of the total action of “picking up a stick of chalk,” the phrase being a construction, limited by the resources of the language, to describe a very complex action. To know it, for what it is – and to know any thought, word or deed – it is necessary to discipline oneself and to develop high concentration and awareness. Concentration and awareness confer competence upon the mind and grace it with wisdom, insight, *prajñā*, *jnāna*.



Please see this line on the board [above]. At the start of it, I have written ‘12 noon’, and at the end of it, the words ‘+ 1000th of a second’. I have started speaking to you at 12 noon. (Actually, it was two minutes past. Mr. Raman briefly introduced me to you.) The end of the line indicates that a 1000th of a second has passed. We are assuming that I stopped speaking to you at 1000th of a second past 12 noon.

All of us, myself included, are under the impression that time passes and that it passes, more or less, as a straight horizontal line, left to right. (Some might visualize it as passing right to left. The reference is not to time as a phenomenon but rather to our awareness of it, the awareness of its ‘passing’, and to our conceptual

construction of it.) One of the privileges of living today is that we can accept from people trained in the discipline of physics that this table does not exist or that it does exist relative to ourselves and relative to similarly situated observers. The physicists tell us, too, that this table is made up of atoms, with space between any two atoms and that the components – the atoms – of what we name a table do not exist as we imagine them but rather that they are energy, radiation, to be conceived and imagined as you will. If one can accept these assumptions about *Matter* – in spite of the testimony of our senses, unaided by the instruments of science – one might as well accept that *Consciousness*, too, is subject to a similar law. Our awareness of the ‘passing’ of time, might not be a continuous process – as represented on the board [above] by the ‘12 noon’ ... line – but rather a matter of parts, a mental moment following a mental moment, an awareness following an awareness, with ‘space’ or ‘time’ – ‘*kalā*’ or ‘*ākāśa*’ – intervening between each. The Indian tradition has it that during one flash of lightning, *crores* of such moments, or awarenesses – or *vrittis* – *arise* (are born), *exist* (live), and *pass* (die, vanish): that the awareness of a flash of lightening, as a total experience, is a concept, a notion, not necessarily true.



Now a mental moment is also made up of parts. Applying to it a most convenient number – the number 3 – we might break [each] up in three parts (represented on the board [above] by the [moments] *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*). A mental moment named ‘*a*’ *arises*, *exists*, *passes* (three phases, or events). It then gives rise to, and is the parent of, the mental moment called ‘*b*’, which *then arises*, *exists*, *passes*. These very swiftly occurring events give use the impression of continuity (*santati*): which is not there. (Even the Great Undefined, represented by the vertical line with the question mark above it, *Nirvana* (number 4 line, you remember), is known through these passing moments of *Consciousness*.) They form a cause-effect chain, *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, and so on, from infinity to infinity.

One is crossing a busy street. One is contemplating a profitable deal. One’s *Consciousness* is colored with *Lobha* (and all the other things that go with it, including *Moha*). One’s attention for the duration would be concentrated. It is then that one is struck by a car and instantly killed. (Which is to say, the material part of one cannot now sustain the *Consciousness* and the *Coloring* parts of one.) The very last point, or mental moment, or awareness – or *vritti*, may now be treated as an *a*, the parent of the *b*, to follow instantaneously, to which the *a* bears a causal relationship. The *b* (following the *a*) would be similarly colored, colored with *Lobha* and *Moha* (and the many other things, *Red*, you remember). The material through

which it would manifest – this is a law, it would seem – might be treated as its (the *b*'s) rebirth (or the *b*'s birth, following the decease of the parent moment *a*). (It is not necessary to die in order to know this. There are techniques, for those who would pursue such inquiries, although it might claim a few years of a man's life, assuming that all the factors – the *balāni*, the powers – are there to aid him.)

There are innumerable laws of nature. The law of *Karma* – implied in the lines *a*, *b*, *c* and *d* preceded and followed by *Infinity* – is *one* of the laws. If an iron nail is exposed to the sea breeze, it would rust. That result has nothing to do with the law of *Karma*. It has something to do with the law concerning the effect or action of the sea and its salt upon iron. If you are untruthful – from *Lobha* and *Moha* – you keep false account books. You lie, you cheat and you gain; you save that much which, if you were telling the truth, would go towards the income tax, to the government. Quite obviously, this result is due to the law of successful lying. It has nothing to do with the law of *Karma-vipāka*, or “The Grace of God”. Results of good *Karma*, and “The Grace of God” reveal themselves *differently*. There would be no need for you to exert, to be a slave of what you imagine you *own*, and of telling lies and cheating. Likewise, there are biological laws. Innumerable bodies are created by sexual, asexual and other or similar processes. Those bodies appear as individuals; and give us the impression of *compactness*, *wholeness*, *personality*, as we have an impression of this table. Actually, bodies are made up of innumerable parts, cells. A point of *Consciousness* gravitates towards a body; just as a heavy object falls. How can an ex-human's *Colored C* gravitate towards, and appear in a deadly snake? Well, whether that happens, or not happens, is not the issue: ‘Rebirth’ is not indicated by me on the board. But a basis of assuming such a possibility is this: in a state of passion – *Dosa* – one *has* the Coloring, the mentality, of a deadly snake: the mentality being the billions of *arising*, *existing*, and *passing* points of *Consciousness*, all tinted a scarlet *Red*. And how can a lowly woman, a destitute, a beggar in the street, someone you see every day – a person, but now considered as an *a*, the departing point of *Consciousness* – become a Goddess? Well. *If* she were tinted this pretty *Green* – if she were dreaming of giving a morsel of food to someone from love or charity or offering a flower to a god from veneration – she would gravitate to a Material fit for a goddess? Whyever not?

IV

One occupies oneself with these things to attain purity (*visuddhi*): purity of the heart by overcoming *Lobha*, *Dosa*, *Moha* and so cultivating *Alobha*, *Adosa*, *Amoha*. And one does these things to attain *purity* of the intellect (*buddhi*). A refined intellect overcomes Ignorance, *Avidyā*, *Moha*, *Maya*. (The substance of this talk is that – in the last analysis – “All problems are ethical problems.”)

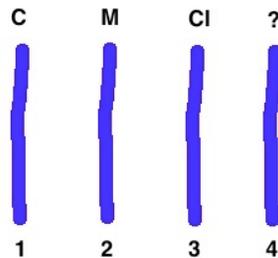
It is *Maya* – an inherent blemish upon us – that gives us the illusion of *continuity*. It is, conventionally speaking, true to speak of the manifestation known as the Ganga as an identity and to indicate it as a winding snake on a map. Yet, is there such a things – an abiding, continuing thing – called the Ganga? If you were to poke your

finger into the stream, the flow, you would never ‘touch’ or strike the same water. Parts, drops, each a different identity, make up the stream. A *Consciousness*, too is like the river Ganga. One has an illusion of an abiding continuity and of being.

Another *Maya*-born illusion is that of *compactness*, wholeness. This table is a compact unit. This individual is a wholeness of a unit. Our bodies, spoken of as units, wholenesses, are actually made up of millions of units, wholenesses, cells. The white blood corpuscles are alive. Each of these creatures, as units, has existence, a destiny, a function, with the intelligence to pursue that function. They are – I assume – subject to the same illusion as we are. Each must believe itself to be a compact unit, a wholeness, a personality. True enough, they are born, consume food, resist, fight, procreate, die: that is the destiny (and the ‘Coloring’) of human beings, too. I imagine, these creatures would be *astounded* if informed that a superior person – a presiding person – calls the community of themselves, the millions upon millions of themselves, an ‘I’, ‘me’, and that he dedicates his whole life, more or less, [to] supporting that presumption.

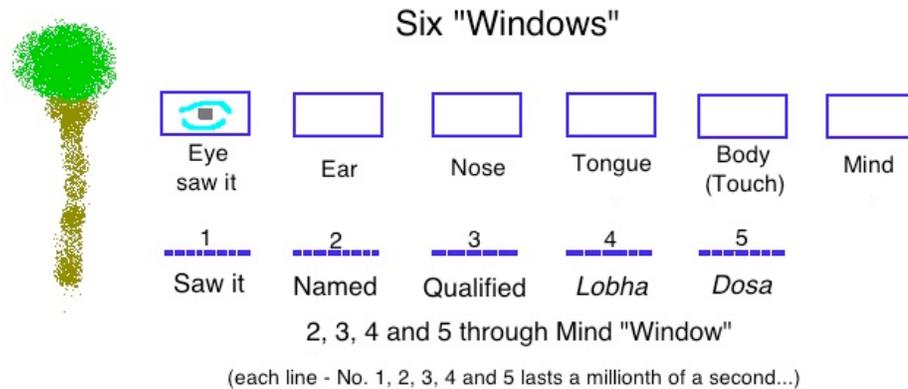
A *Maya*-born illusion concerns action, function, *kriyā*. “*I raise my arm*”: conventionally speaking, this is true enough. Yet this raising – this function, this movement – is made up of a 100 passing changes and the *Ākāśa* (the space) between those is appreciated by us in terms of the ‘passing’ of time – *Kālā* – and the ‘movement’ itself is made up of moves, stops, moves, stops: pulls, pushes, as divined by ‘myself’ (this speaker).

So, too, the illusion concerning objects: the ‘singleness’ or ‘oneness’ of objects. The things that we judge to be blue are not ‘blue’, really. Consider the judgment, “the sky is blue”. The blueness of the sky, as a judgment, is a construction. We do not know, cannot know, the true nature of an object – the world of objects which we perceive through the senses – without insight, wisdom, *vidyā*, *prajñā*. To develop these is to pursue virtue.



Whatever might be its essential, and ultimate nature, the floor upon which I stand, and your chairs are set – being *M*, *Matter*, the second line on the board – *exists*. It exists because – situated as we are – two of our senses bear witness to the fact. You *see* it. And you can *touch* it. Now, if we raised up the *floor*, we would call it a *ceiling*, wouldn't we? ... although no change of any sort has taken place as far as its impact upon the eyes and upon our sense of touch is concerned. Why is it no longer

the *floor* and is the *ceiling*? It is not necessary to pursue the question. (I know that an answer to the question might be that it is no longer a *floor*, and is a *ceiling*, because it serves as a *ceiling*, functions as a *ceiling*.) The question would be better understood if we accept both '*floor*' and '*ceiling*' as constructions, as conventions of speech, as labels, concepts, and little schemes of understanding (a *buddhi nirmāṇa*) – for '*something*' that can be *seen* (has a 'color') and is *hard*, and might be perceived at a certain moment as either under or above one's head.



Please see this drawing on the board [above]. It is a tree: and there are six 'windows'. (Underneath the 'windows', I have little lines, to indicate the points of *Consciousness, vrittis*. Each little line – Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 represent *a million points of Consciousness*, lasting a millionth or less of a second.)

Once upon a time, I was occupied with a long meditation ... to understand truly – although I had not realized this, certainly not in these words – the concepts of *continuity, compactness* or wholeness, action or *function*, and singleness of an *object*.

Why do we accept these concepts? Because our senses so witness. Here they are, our senses – represented on the board as six 'windows'. They are the five senses and the 'mind'. (In our scheme, the 'mind' is a sense. A gifted 'mind' can 'see', unaided by the eye.) All experience of the world is had through these six 'windows'.

In the course of my meditation – the practice lasting several months – I 'saw' a tree once. You are now invited to see this representation of that tree [above]. Through which 'window' did I 'see' the tree? Obviously, through the eye. (That is the 'window' with the eye in the center. Underneath it, I have written the words "Saw it". I saw the tree.) During this period of 'seeing', a million mental moments, or points of *Consciousness* came into being, existed, passed away: and that event is represented on the board by the first little line, "Saw it" with the figure 1, above it.

This is taxing to the utmost the resources of language. This is a matter of experience – of *anubhava* – of realizing, knowing. (An exquisite pain is a matter of experience. One cannot communicate it to another. One uses words and other

symbols as a compromise,) Now, then, I ‘saw’ the tree and that took a million points of *Consciousness*. Actually – as far as it is possible to communicate this – the barest, barest experience – a mere outline experience, which might be labeled as *no-experience of a tree* was had while a million point of *Consciousness* passed. Nothing more or less occurred. Now, in the course of the following million mental moments – the second little line, No. 2 – the tree was recognized, identified, culminating in the judgment, “This is as tree.” (That is what I said to myself.) But that experience, or the process of identification, *naming* the tree, did not take place through the first window (the eye, vision). The process of identification was *not* simultaneous with ‘seeing’. It was through the ‘mind’ – the sixth window, the Buddha’s *Mano dwara* – that this happened. A detailed explanation of this one million mental moment line would be too complicated. Memories of trees known and identified could be cited. In fact, the terminology of European psychology would better explain that process. Well, after this identification of the tree – I *named* it a tree – I assigned qualities to it. “It is a *green* tree,” this sorting out process – a qualifying process – took another million mental moments. (No. 3 little line.) That, too, happened through the sixth ‘window’ (the ‘mind’). (Actual ‘seeing’ of the tree – the bare *seeing*, the outline *no-experience of a tree*, without any reaction from the sixth window – took place long, long ago.) I might – according to my conditioning, habit, practice, tendency – have *Lobha* (*mamatā*, ‘mine’) tinting me *Red*. “This is *my* tree!” I might now – after (No. 4) arising, existing and passing of another million mental moments, have *Dosa-colored Consciousness* (No. 5). I might be angry because someone claimed *my* tree, *my* property! All these events represented on the board as lines 2, 3, 4 and 5 – which occur so swiftly as to be a *Maya*-born illusion of *continuity* – are *cognized*, or *adopted*, through the sixth ‘window’ (the ‘mind’). (I ‘saw’ the tree through No. 1 window, remember?)

Assuming that I am not entertaining you – not my function – or being stimulating – that, too, is not my purpose or function – it is possible, citing an experience, *just to ‘see’ a tree*. It is possible, by controlling the mind, by *freeing* it, freeing it of all concepts – through the techniques the Buddha has taught us, by developing *Sati* and *Samādhi* – to ‘barely’ ‘see’ a tree, for a millionth-millionth part of a second. And to declare that *it does not exist*: or to say – from lacking the means to communicate exactly an experience – that the tree ‘exists’ only in the ‘mind’, in your *C*, in your particular scheme of knowing and understanding. At any rate, such a judgment would be as ‘true’ or as ‘false’, or more ‘true’ and less ‘false’, than the summary assertion “*I saw a tree.*” The Buddha has asked us *to barely see*. He has asked us to *barely see* (and not involve *mana*, the mind, in reactions, responses). That is true ‘seeing’. *The ethical implications of such an appraisal of the world – both external and internal – are enormous.*

The substance of the *Gita* – whatever else it might say and suggest – agrees with this. It is, of course, easier to credit one’s little ego with *niṣkāmakarma* (acting without *kāma*, desire) than to do it. It is sober, and honest, to try and throw a ball in the air, without *kāma*, desire, intention, volition, *cetana*: unaided by the Will,

saṃkalpa, 'mind'. To lay claims to being a *karma yogin* – too many businessmen claim this – is a verbal act.

To be the balanced being, who is above all selfish motive, attachment, desire, and unbiased towards and above friends, relatives, progeny, the ideal recommended in the *Gita*, and so to experience the world barely, *must* demand *sādhana* (practice, *yoga*). (For a man who cannot leave his business alone for a day, or leave his woman alone for a day, to claim the *Karma yoga* attainment is purposeless talk, babble; arising from *Moha*: it might be a manifestation of *Lobha* or *Dosa*, in the form of *ahamkāra*, pride, conceit; from a false or perverted view of things.)

To throw a ball in the air, unaided by the Will ... to anyone at all – the fool excepted – the thing would be *impossible*. It would take *years* of practice, before one can truthfully claim *to throw a ball in the air without willing*. If you did not understand the nature of action (*karma, kriyā*), and its consequences, effects – and the extent to which a mental deed, a deed by thought, and a verbal deed, and a deed by one's limbs, affects the 'environment' mental and other – then it is easy to talk of *niṣkāmakarma*. I have heard men, up to their neck in money – and who cannot *possibly* have the basic intelligence or education or character or whatever is needed to understand this enormous proposition – speak of *niṣkāmakarma* and *summa, bhava*, and the Buddha's *bare seeing, bare hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, feeling* – and lay claims to the *Gita* attainment, and to being Buddhist, too. (The five precepts, the minimum requirement for a *savaka*, a hearer of the Buddha's *Dhamma*, include killing no living being, stealing from no being, and *lying to no being*. I recall, too, a man whose entire energy is dedicated to venality, profiteering – he has no time at all – sanctify himself a Vedantin, and identify himself [as] No. 4 vertical line, *Brahma*, too, the same identity as the great god and question mark.

If one *barely saw* – and thus attained the *Gita* ideal of selfless action, too – then the Buddha's conclusion about the phenomena would be understood. All things whatsoever are changing, and are *impermanent*. All things, by their very nature, are imperfect, hence *suffering* adheres to them. There is nothing that has any abiding *substance*. This conclusion is not something that can be taught, preached, parroted: but it is a matter of experiencing, through *sādhana* (practice), and is, in the fullest sense, an attainment (a *siddhi*).

A direct consequence of such an attainment (*siddhi*) is a *fundamentally changed* attitude towards the phenomena: to everything symbolized by *C, M, and Cl* on the board. If this is reality, I cannot think of a stronger recommendation in favor of selflessness, ethical conduct.

?

4

Recapitulating, such an attitude, and practice, is virtue: it refines us, and leads us to the ideal *Nirvana*. (The fourth line with the question mark above it.)

What is it like? This is not a subject for words. If it were, it would come under categories, limitations, and would be subject to *C*, *M*, and *Coloring* definitions, and those are subject to *impermanence*, *suffering* and *no-substance*, the marks or signatures of all existence.

The nearest conceivable *lakṣaṇa* – mark or feature – of *Nirvana* – according to Gautama, the Buddha, is *peace*. Bhagwan was careful to point out that the *peace* – the *śanti lakṣana* of Nirvana – is not the ‘peace’ experienced by creatures in the world of phenomena.

Those who know it, the Buddhas, the Arahata, the Aryas, follow and practice a spontaneous, a *natural* morality based on the truthful (*Amoha*) view of things; not because of a code, a book, or a recommendation: but an ethic built on the rock of experience and won by *sādhana*, practice. That is *yogacara : sādhuvrata : brahamacariya*.

In addition to minor editing and image rendering, spelling and punctuation have been Americanized.

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