

2 June 1969

READING 4

PART 1

'Glimpses of the Truth' are of two main kinds and *which* you will get will depend on the external circumstances, the time and the place and upon your own nature and the direction your mind has been taking.

I will illustrate these two kinds from the many examples you sent in last year:

1. Seeing into one's own nature

e.g. As the noises, voices and pictures of day-time fade, frequently another Presence pervades my whole being. At first it came only in flashes but latterly for longer. It is a Presence strangely familiar – tranquil, undaunted and all-embracing; always leaving the same influence for a better way of living.

Some find that this insight increases as a result of the peace and silence of regular half-hours, or during the last *selam* of a Mukabeleh or after doing the Movements for some time. Learning to love it whenever it comes is better than being greedy about hanging on to it!

2. Expansion of Consciousness

e.g. I was in Southern Spain, and one afternoon having walked some way, I lay down on the grass enjoying the peace and beauty of the surroundings... Quite suddenly I had a wonderful feeling of the unity of all things, the Sun, even me and wild flowers growing near my face. I felt so happy, and knew that this was something I could never forget and which would help me when doubts assailed me.

These are two aspects of the same thing – the Unity of the Creator whether within or outside your own body and mind. The first has to be sought patiently day by day; the second comes as an unexpected bonus.

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PART 2

The more you experience these two aspects, the more you will recognise how universal they are even among people who don't use our methods and have never heard of a 'Ladder of Self-realization'. I've just had permission from Richard Church in Taormina to quote whatever we like from his writings for this book; and I'm considering using the following two quotations as illustrating the above two aspects:

a) (written after his return home at dusk from a week's congress in a noisy German city)

I stood for a few minutes before entering the house and I listened. I listened to nothing. It should be printed with a capital, for that Nothing came up round me and down over me, like the lustral waters deep and powerful... Entering the familiar house... the silences came round me, a multitude of them, and all old friends. Each of them carried its shadow of tiny sound (for sound is the shadow of silence, just as darkness is of light)...

What is so strange is that all this was more dramatic, more impressive of something about to happen of great moment, than all the commotion, argument, scientific relaying

and public ceremony under which I had been immersed for the past week. I found myself looking round, expectant of that Visitor whom we all recognise with joy, the Visitor who is invisible but ever-present when not crowded out by insistent mortality.

I did not anticipate being accosted directly. There was no need for that. The genius of silence was too expert an orator for such a crude approach...

(from *A Few Days of Silence*)

b) I felt again the responses that I had thought to be vanished with youth; all those 'fallings from us, vanishings' by which the larger-than-us is brought home to our conscious selves...

In an English lane on a winter night, in the afterglow and depression following Christmas, there I stood with my cat and my dog looking up at the night sky. Suddenly, with a wild break in formation, the swirling clouds opened, and there slid out from them the whole constellation of Orion, square and steady, with his belt glittering, his outriders like beacons, and following him on so briskly yet regally his dog, the sun Sirius. There they hung, so clean-cut in the purple void, shining so fiercely that they seemed to dip and rise, dip and rise, by fractions of an inch, yet to ride steady, rushing westward through the vast silence. Then the clouds closed again, and the adventure was over. I had lived through an experience that might have taken a century to enact.

(from *Small Moments*)

The more you experience, the more you will find among the things you read and hear and see. Don't, for heaven's sake, send them in to us, the filing cabinets at Colet are choked with them and my floor at home is knee-deep! But just note or file them for yourself and you will find them a never-failing fountain to help you in times of trouble.

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PART 3

From among the *general* characters of such experiences which your groups have lately assembled, I want to choose one or two which help most 'in arranging our minds as they have been in moments of consciousness so as to look at things in that way'. Though this is a very individual matter and each of us has to do it for ourselves, I might mention what seems to be most useful to me. In my own experiences the most characteristic thing is a 'liberation', a 'coming out of prison', bringing with it a feeling of happy unity and sense of new possibility. I'm becoming more and more convinced that this is due to 'detachment' – freedom from the state of identification in which I otherwise live during all my waking hours; and one gets more and more able to cultivate that 'detachment' by an effort of will at any moment one notices that one is identified. This quotation from a later chapter of the book on 'Expansion of Consciousness' may help you to get the taste or feeling of the prison and its opposite – the happy detachment:

At this point I would like to return to the quotation from the Shankaracharya: 'The mind can be the cause of bondage or liberation. It is very much like our interpreter. If the interpreter is 'attached' to one or the other side, he cannot do the job properly. He must fully understand both sides, but remain 'unattached' to either. All misery in the world is caused by this 'attachment'.

What is the idea behind this word 'attachment' or 'identification' which has been so terribly misunderstood in the East, and which is quite unknown to academic psychology

in the West? This idea, the state of mind described, is elusive and impossible of definition, so it is best understood through examples and stories. It is a very big and important idea worth spending time on; for it is the opposite of 'expansion of consciousness'. It is a narrowing-down ending in a kind of mental vacuum. It is, in fact, 'falling asleep' psychologically, the opposite of awakening...

The Sanskrit word which is translated 'attachment' is *Kashaya*, 'derived from a sticky gum or resin exuded from a tree – psychologically something sticky with a strong and rather attractive flavour' which causes the mind to pick up and stick to whatever happens to attract or repel it; so that the mind *becomes* whatever sticks to it, to the exclusion of everything else – rather what the smell of catmint does to a cat.

Two Zen stories illustrate clearly the meaning of psychological attachment and its opposite – liberation or detachment:

'The first describes two novices, Tan-Zan and Eki-do, travelling together along a muddy road in the pouring rain. Coming round a bend they came upon a lovely girl in silk kimono unable to get across what was now a muddy stream. 'Come on, girl,' said Tan-Zan at once as, lifting her in his arms, he carried her over. Eki-do did not speak again until that night when they reached the temple where they lodged. Then he could no longer restrain himself. 'We monks don't go near females,' he told Tan-Zan, 'especially young and lovely ones. It's dangerous. How *could* you?'

'I left the girl there,' said Tan-Zan. 'Are you still carrying her?'

One sees in this story the repetitive nature of the process. When our feelings are engaged, part of the mind begins to turn and turn over a single circuit, drawing more and more of the mind into the process so that we cease to see and hear, cease to know even that this is going on, and have no desire to get out of the prison. Neurologists tell us much these days about 'reverberating circuits' of which, in this context, probably the most important are the 'limbic circuits', which surround the deeper emotional parts of the forebrain and tie together many important centres designed for better things...

Complete freedom, of course, is still some way off as the following story may show:

The Zen master, Haku-In, was praised by his neighbours as one who lived a pure life. A beautiful girl lived near him whose parents owned the local food shop. Suddenly, without warning, the girl was found to be pregnant. Her parents were furious; at first she would not say who the man was, but under stress at last named Haku-In. 'Is that so?' was all he would say.

After the child was born it was brought to Haku-In. By this time he had lost his reputation, which didn't trouble him, but he took very good care of the baby, getting milk and all it needed, from his neighbours.

A year later the girl mother couldn't bear the situation any longer, and told her parents the truth that the real father of the child was a young man who worked in the fishmarket.

The parents of the girl at once went to Haku-In to ask his forgiveness and after many apologies took the baby back. In cheerfully giving up the child, all he said was, 'Is that so?'

So, while complete freedom from 'attachment' represents an advanced stage of awakening and self-conquest, it is easy to see how many relations would benefit from the study and practice of 'detachment' even in small degrees.

Comment: By continuing to set our sights on Consciousness by observing and recalling how our minds work in moments of liberation from identification, we shall make some discoveries. For example, we can find what specific and favourite forms of identification tend in individuals to keep them in prison. These tendencies seem to be very repetitive and stereotyped for each person and are often well-known to his friends! Once recognised they can be evaded at source when they arise.

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