

12 November 1973

READING 7

THE LADDER AGAIN

Last week's meetings produced some most interesting discussions and a high standard of questions and observations. Don't forget, though, that the classification 'body, personality, essence, soul and Spirit' is only meant to encourage us and prove the enormous (and mostly unrealised) power latent in our human nature. Any moment it can make one feel liberated and uplifted from the narrow conventional view that permeates all sophisticated communities today, namely, that we consist of body and personality only. But we haven't time to go into all the details and complications; we must press on to the final stage of having 'no thoughts about oneself and one's personal profit and loss':

We must never entertain a doubt. Even if we have only a single moment to live we must forsake all worry about the past and the future and make a good use of the present, with dignity and the adornment of holy thoughts... Each moment of life should be lived with radiance, energy and firm ideas.

Although on the physical level change looks long and slow and difficult, on the subtle and causal levels a total change of values can happen in a few moments.

In a talk last April, His Holiness referred to the chief Saint of this century in India – Sri Ramana Maharshi (who died in 1950): 'He went on meditating for fourteen years over the question 'Who am I?'; but as soon as he got on to the right path, it took him only a minute to realize that he was – *everything!*' (good, bad and indifferent).

So why not have this realization *now*? We have less than a month before the Christmas holiday: many of us should be sure of this Truth by then. And when we go to see His Holiness in January, we shall be able to tell him that it would then be exactly fourteen years ago that some of us first received the Meditation, so we'll be after that final minute of Realization! Of course, 'many who are last shall be first, and the first last' – the Param-Atman is no respecter of personal status or reputation! So that gives all of us an equal opportunity.

'SWEET ARE THE USES OF ADVERSITY'

Two emotional extremes produced by the circumstances around us, can evidently get us up this Ladder. One extreme is the sudden happiness and clarity of the 'peak experience'. But don't forget that the opposite – adversity – can be used with even greater profit.

In the epic of the *Mahabharata* it is recorded that when Krishna (an 'incarnation' of the Param-Atman) was leaving after the war, he invited people to come and ask for a boon. With only one exception, everyone asked for this or that *favour*. The exception was Kunti (the bereaved mother who had lost her sons in the war), who said when her turn came: 'Give me some *adversity* to remain with me all the time.' 'But why adversity?' 'Because in the past I have always thought of You and brought You near me whenever there was adversity, and never when there was none.'

And, nearer home, our top Bard put the same idea into the mouth of the banished Duke in the Forest of Arden (*As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 1): Just as, physically, ‘the icy fang and churlish chiding of the winter’s wind’ can make him smile and say: ‘...these are counsellors that feelingly persuade me what I am’; even so, ‘sweet are the uses of adversity... I would not change it.’ To which the faithful Amiens replied, ‘Happy is your Grace, that can translate the stubbornness of fortune into so quiet and so sweet a style.’

PRACTICAL

Many of us are entirely on the right lines but two points need watching in order to get maximum acceleration:

1. To carry the idea of Param-Atman *all* the time and turn our minds to the great Self whenever we have attention free – not just at a particular time of day.
2. To make sure that we are genuinely giving up *all* worry about the past and the future and *all* thoughts about one’s personal profit or loss.

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