

26 November 1973

## READING 9

### BIRTH AND DEATH

#### PART 1

From meeting accounts, it is clear that we must try now to find a more realistic way to think about basic problems relating to life and death. To do that we must get rid of the totally false picture established in all human personalities about them. Even though most of us don't worry about our own death until it confronts us, we are constantly meeting it in relation to those we love, admire, or pity, and we should be able to help some of them to banish their own fears. There's a built-in sadness about death –

Lo! Some we loved, the loveliest and the best  
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

(Omar Khayyam)

Really death is not sad at all (see Part 3). Looking at it *from above* (perhaps after meditation), we can respond to Francis Thompson's opium dream expressed in his 'Ode to the Setting Sun,' which begins:

Alpha and Omega, sadness and mirth,  
The springing music, and its wasting breath –  
The fairest things in life are Death and Birth,  
And of the two the fairer thing is Death.  
Mystical twins of Time inseparable...

Here the poet sees in a flash the same truth that Ouspensky explores in his chapter on Eternal Recurrence:

In order to arrive at a right form of thinking in relation to these problems it is necessary to remember that they are connected with the idea of Time. We understand these problems to the extent to which we understand Time.

(*A New Model of the Universe*, Ch.11, 2nd Edition, 1934)

How far have we progressed in the sixty years since then? For example, it has now been established that, for the biosphere ('Nature') as a single living organism, time is counted according to the earth's seasonal and geological rhythms. Yet the individuals (of all those species possessed of brains) have built-in counting systems of their own. For example, several species begin their preparation for hibernation a couple of months *before* the cold weather sets in!

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## PART 2. THE TIME UNITS OF BODY, ESSENCE, ETC.

Though human bodies are part of the biosphere, 'psychological time' is an artefact depending on the individual measurement of inner and outer change.

The 'clocks' of the brain's computers have fixed ways of counting *everything*, and with regard to counting 'time' they use certain units rather as our watches count seconds, minutes and hours, only with a much bigger differential ratio.

Both Mr. Ouspensky and the Shankaracharya knew these counting systems used in our organisms, and both their Systems agree that, for all practical purposes, the 'time of essence' is 3 body-lifetimes. We have to reckon with our last life ('yesterday' or 'the past'), the present life ('today') and the next life ('tomorrow' or 'the future').

You may remember the statement at our last visit that 'the film of this life is already made'. Well, this film we are witnessing now was made during the last life – 'yesterday'. Most people are so wholly engrossed in the film that they just repeat it with ever-deepening tendencies, improvements or the reverse. Perhaps we may have been lucky at certain key points this time but if we don't do something about it, we are unlikely to be so lucky next time.

If we don't like that idea (and I assure you I hate it), we have to be making a *new* film 'on location' in this present life, but *internally* on the causal level. That could be done by remembering Param-Atman all the time and living accordingly. Only through Self-remembering would we be able to prepare an entirely new film to be manifested physically in another life at some other time. This is accomplished by witnessing the existing film as it runs from moment to moment and 'simultaneously covering every action with remembrance of Param-Atman, the Ultimate Observer.' We shed all worry about personal profit and loss, because when we are just watching a film there is *nothing to worry about!*

The brain, of course, has many clock systems – some with smaller units (e.g., photons and sound frequencies) and some with larger units, lunar months, generation times, etc.). These are inter-gearred, but run at different *rates* in different individuals, just as do their pulse and breathing rates. Our own films, or tapes, can record or play back at different speeds. This answers many (but not, of course, all) such questions as: 'Why does the length of life of different people vary?' 'Why do geniuses so often die young?' Mozart, for instance, recorded in a letter how he composed his music both by day and by night (in sleep) thus, beginning as an infant prodigy, he lived at twice the ordinary rate, having only half the normal life-span to accomplish his work (less than thirty-six years).

There are many further implications of both these counting systems, but it is essential to understand this much at any rate for a start now.

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## PART 3

His Holiness told a story to the crowds at the Mela (Religious Festival) in January, 1972:

An Indian went to Africa. When his money was finished there, he went to a money-lender to ask for a loan. Just then, there was a death in an Indian family living in that neighbourhood and the people of that family were weeping. The money-lender asked the Indian why his countrymen living in that house were weeping. He replied that it was a custom in his country to weep when there is a death in the family.

The money-lender asked again, 'And what do you do when there is a birth in the family?' The Indian said, 'Then we rejoice.'

The money-lender said, 'Then, if you are the sort of person who rejoices when receiving a thing but weeps when you have to return it, I certainly won't lend *you* any money!'

Everybody fears death – whether great or small, learned or ignorant; but there is no such thing as death. The so-called 'death' is nothing but a natural corollary of the phenomenon of birth. The only way to avoid death is to avoid being born. It is not possible to be born and not to die.

Actually the individual Self, living in the body, is immortal. It gives up an old body in order to put on a new body, just as we give up our old clothes and put on new ones. If we are happy to discard an old garment and put on a new one, there is no reason to be unhappy when the Self discards an old body and adopts a new one.

A person who dies has never written back to say what happened to him after death. Therefore, the only course open to us is to take authority from our Holy Scriptures on subjects relating to death and thereafter.

We can find a lot of information there on these subjects. The following teachings from the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* tell us how to deal with death:

1. Forget the past. Do not fear the future either. Devote the *present* to the Bhakti of the Param-Atman. A devotee of the Param-Atman never perishes.
2. For two half-hours a day, give up all duties and obligations; surrender yourself completely to the single care and protection of the Param-Atman. He will save you from all evil consequences, and therein would lie the end of all your worries.
3. One who sees Param-Atman in everybody and everything, and sees everybody and everything in Param-Atman, Param-Atman never becomes obscure to him and he never becomes obscure to Param-Atman.

We fear death because, under the influence of Maya, we have forgotten ourSelves. And it is this forgetting of the Divine Self which makes for us all the troubles we get. It is not a God who is the maker of our troubles.

(Record, 13 January 1972)

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