

3 December 1973

## READING 10

I had prepared a learned paper in answer to the many fascinating questions last week about human life; but then I realised that we have only two more weeks before the Christmas holidays and that, in view of the material crises through which we are passing, learned discussions had better be postponed till better times! So here is something for now!

Last week's excursion into the long time-scale of past, present and future *lives* was really intended to demonstrate the universal Law that everything that manifests in time or space repeats and repeats – but always with a difference. It doesn't really matter whether or not you believe that we have lived before, or whether you believe in some future existence. It all comes down to what we can achieve at any moment *Now*. However, for some, eternal recurrence is a strong incentive to put against the 'eat and drink for tomorrow we die' kind of fatalism.

The way up this Ladder lies in the increasing realisation of the *immediacy* of our aim, that is by reducing the time-units we work with. We can study 'recurrence' quite well in repeated *days* instead of lifetimes; yesterday had its effect on how we woke up this morning, and today will have an effect on tomorrow. Our lifetime is made up of days:

Ah, fill the Cup: what boots it to repeat  
How time is slipping underneath our feet;  
Unborn Tomorrow and dead Yesterday,  
Why fret about them if Today be sweet!

(Omar Khayyam)

And, as we ascend the Ladder, we shorten our time-scale still further – to each *moment*: 'Each moment of life should be lived with radiance, energy, and firm ideas'. Days are different, some contain more possibilities, some less; but at each and every moment – one heartbeat, one breath – we can put some wine into the cup, some money into the bank, a drop of fine energy into the machine.

All this can be achieved by us in one way only – remembrance of the Supreme Self in the mind, in the heart, and in our behaviour. The Shankaracharya reminds us that in Chapter 14 of the *Gita* the Lord Krishna when asked by what mark a Realized man is to be known, replied that he is 'Self-abiding, alike in pleasure and pain; the same in honour or disgrace; the same to friend or foe; ... For I am the refuge of the Spirit, the Eternal and Unchanging, the Source of Right Action and of infinite Joy.'

A strong stability in the midst of a changing world is the hallmark of such a man and his tradition. Very lately, we have been given a universal prescription for achieving this:

1. For two half-hours each day we relinquish everything to visit the Treasury for money (or energy) to spend the rest of the day.
2. Last thing at night, first thing in the morning, and whenever during the day we finish one job and get ready for the next, we repeat a 'Mantra' a few times, or say a short prayer or an inspired sentence, and
3. The following recipe for action:

Our material desires are like so many strings that pull us towards the world around; let this pull be towards the Supreme Self instead. The method is to form a permanent attitude that everything (including our physical body and mind) belongs to this Self. Whatever actions we perform, whether eating, drinking, reading, writing, or attending to our routine duties, they should all be dedicated to our True Self.

This is the meaning of Bhakti [the Yoga of Devotion – by far the quickest way to our goal]. Done in this way, each and every act of ours becomes an act of devotion instead of being merely a worldly obligation. Then the worldly ties are broken, and the presence of the Supreme Self supervenes.

In the absence of such an attitude, there is the ‘world’ and, with the world, come all our troubles.

(Record, 1 May 1971)

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What we are showing you today is a short cut through generations of tedious experience of the ‘maze of time and change’ – to the ‘still place’ where all our questions can be answered. First, to essence that remembers its successive existences; and finally, to the illumined Soul who knows that the films of ‘past, present and future’ all run *concurrently* as one single film that the Self is observing. Thus memory and precognition<sup>†</sup> are really the same:

When we wake from a sleep, the [sensory] world stands up before us as it is; when we perceive a dream, however, it is a dream-world that we see. When we go into the area of mind that keeps awake in dreamless sleep, then everything of the world merges into the Self, and only that Self is all in all. That is why we try to merge everything into our own Self in our day-to-day life.

The advantage of this would be that the thought of the past and of the future would weaken and you would find yourself in a special state of Self-consciousness. As this practice deepens, you would see the states of waking and dreaming more and more alike. With your eyes open or shut, it would be the same world before you. A condition of sameness would possess your heart. The mind (Manas) would shed its burden and become filled with joy instead. A feeling of perfection and limitlessness would supervene.

(Record, 8 August 1972)

So we now approach that picture of the Realized man in the *Gita* – as stable and true today as it was all those centuries ago.

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<sup>†</sup>See many (not *all* of course) of the examples given by Arthur Koestler in *The Challenge of Chance*, Hutchinson, 1973, which are causing such a stir just now! But see also the much more telling ones in *The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*. It is impossible to explain the very great number of these apparent coincidences except in terms of memory of recurrence and telepathy.