

10 December 1973

READING 11

Yesterday I got from Mr. Whiting (the head of the School of Meditation, here) some of the questions and answers he put to the Shankaracharya beginning November 9th – a month ago. The start of those conversations will be refreshing to you at your last meetings this week; others specifically concerned with meditation can be given at our Meditation meeting tomorrow. The talk began like this:

W. May we convey to your Holiness the appreciation of all the members of the School for the words he sends us, from all the people who have not seen his face, but whose eyes light up when these words are read?

S. Through the words, the Self was also present. It is not only the physical body that has to be there in person, but the finer levels of Being are embodied in the words, and with the words the Self appears. Any effort made on the Way is itself a realization of the Way. Slowly and steadily the necessary is being done, and one doesn't have to worry about the end of the journey where nothing further will need to be done at all. All one can do is to make those efforts from day to day.

A certain man had to go out to another town miles away. It was night and pitch dark, and all he had was a tiny little lantern which could, at most, light a couple of steps. Because the journey seemed so long, he was depressed and unsure – unsure of reaching his destination with only this tiny light.

While he stood at his door in utter disgust and helplessness, a Realized man happened to appear there and asked him why he was standing at his door with a lantern. The man replied that he really did not know what to do; though he was all set for the journey, it appeared so long, and the night so dark, that his small lantern could not really be of much use.

The Realized man explained to him that it was not necessary to have a big light illuminating the whole way. 'As you proceed,' he said, 'the light will move with you, so that the next two steps will always be clear. All you need to do is to hold on to this light and start walking. Presently the darkness will go as the sun rises, and if you keep walking you will reach the destination in the full light of noon.'

The same applies to one's little efforts. After hearing the words, however small the efforts one can make, the Light will be enough for the goal to be achieved. Then there will be nothing else to do except enjoy the full bliss of Union.

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A Christmas thought:

I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.

(St. John 8: 12)

At last week's meetings some of you asked to be told about the two Conscious Shocks described in our System. The word 'shock' describes their *unexpectedness*, and does not mean that they are necessarily anything but pleasing and encouraging.

First, the *mind* has to learn something of the nature of the Self and be convinced, by many examples, of its power and its continuous presence. As its marvellous nature becomes known, the *emotion* follows suit and we begin to develop an unshakable faith in that Self and its unlimited goodwill. Though there has been a complicated theoretical description of the two Conscious Shocks, the above is all we need to know for the present.

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In giving the Meditation, it has become our custom over the years to say something of this sort to the initiate after the first minute: 'Follow the rhythm to the silence, where you will become reacquainted with your True Self who is always present to help, but whom we don't hear because of all the inner noise. Once that contact is re-established, nice things begin to happen but always unexpectedly and unpredictably.' We have, of course, collected innumerable examples of those 'nice things' which are so very individual. We have also realised that many ordinary people have them, but that without some discipline of Knowledge and Meditation they remain rather rare in any person's life.

These 'nice things' are happening all the time, but we notice them only if our attention is called to them, because we explain them away as mere coincidences or chance. But there is abundant evidence to prove that they arise from Consciousness and cannot be explained away.

Recently a questionnaire was sent out by Sir Alister Hardy's research unit in Oxford inviting examples of apparent coincidences. All sorts of answers were received (and added to by correspondents of Arthur Koestler's[†]). They range from some which appear trivial to all but the recipient (such as giving up the search in a library for a reference and, in desperation, picking a book at random from a likely shelf and opening it at the right place), to matters of graver concern, and even to life and death.

I here quote one of these (No.1575) which I had already picked *before* seeing His Holiness's story above. Both stories are concerned with Light; in the darkness of uncertainty a light is shed on what to do in the immediate situation. Again, it is not coincidence that brings the two stories together in this paper:

In 1968 my daughter was jilted for the second time and I could not comfort her or stay her weeping. I went into the kitchen to get a drink and prayed desperately to be able to give her words of comfort as I am usually inarticulate in such situations, although I feel keenly. As I waited for the kettle to boil I distinctly heard the words 'As the sun sets, it also rises'. At the time I accepted this without astonishment, and only afterwards did the full impact of that voice come to me. However, I went back to my distraught daughter. Giving her a drink I said, 'As the sun sets, it also rises'. She seemed quieter and I went to bed.

A year afterwards my daughter was getting married. I booked the reception at a country Jacobean mansion recommended to me, and having photos taken it was decided that the lack of sun at the main entrance would not make for a good picture, so we went to the garden entrance where steps led down to a terrace. Out there in the old stone of the door lintel under which the happy pair were standing was: 'As the sun sets, it also rises.'

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[†]See *The Challenge of Chance*, Hutchinson, 1973

But to one who meditates and looks constantly towards the Param-Atman (for whom there is no 'Before – Now – After'), there ceases also to be any such concept as *chance*. And so, with discrimination, he uses his own, and other first-hand examples, to increase his knowledge of the apparently miraculous powers and illogical nature of the Self.

The more he knows this nature, the more he loves it and longs to learn the Laws governing the subtle and causal levels, which are very different from the physical laws that can be investigated scientifically by controlled experiment. In evaluating experiences such as the above, one should remember that as the chief Law of the subtle level is cyclical repetition, precognition becomes the same as Memory. Also, that the characteristic of the causal level is simultaneity or 'altogetherness' in one single Whole.

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