

5 February 1973

READING 3**MORE STORIES LEADING IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION****PART 1**

From a talk with the Shankaracharya in 1968:

R. After reading what you said yesterday, I woke early this morning with a picture of the world of humanity as a great gambling casino. Would not an individual need not only meditation and a guide, but also considerable good luck to avoid getting entangled and losing all his money?

In reply he gave a story (first told in 1961):

A Greedy Ruler

There was once a lord or baron who possessed a private army and, being very ambitious, often crossed his own boundaries to subdue other lands. His people supported him loyally, so these raids were always pleasant adventures for him, and each time he returned to his castle he was flattered and honoured for his glorious victories. After which he would go to his mother and ask for her blessing; but she would never give him her blessing.

On one such occasion he plucked up courage and asked her why she seemed displeased with his success.

She replied: 'My dear son, you are pursuing a wrong line. I would be happy if you were to overcome your real enemies – those that are within you: passionate desires, anger, greed, envy, malice, and so on, which all arise from the ego which says: 'I am so-and-so' and 'this is mine'. But because of your external triumphs you are making those inner enemies only stronger. In fact, you are losing the battle every day. Conquer those enemies and I will give you my full approval.

(Record, 24 September 1968)

(pause)

COMMENT:

Subsequent references to this story have shown that it is to be taken psychologically, and we must find the greedy baron, his mother, and our own chief desires within ourselves. Have you experienced something like this?

PART 2

Years later (in 1972) the Shankaracharya told another story on the same subject, but in a different context, when pointing out that each religion or System has its own corpus of Scriptures which describes the Truth in all possible ways. He said:

These Scriptures are a complete repository of all ideas including all shades of opinion and leaving out nothing... But the greedy personality grabs one idea, then forgets it and grabs another – getting nowhere.

The Monkey and the Cap

A monkey sat on the roof of a railway carriage, and when a passenger put his head out of a window, the monkey quietly descended, pinched his cap and climbed back on to the roof. The bystanders advised the passenger to give the monkey something to eat, in order to get his cap back. When he passed up a banana, the monkey held the banana in one hand, but hung on to the cap with the other. When offered a second banana, the monkey took it but dropped the cap on to the railway line where it was irretrievably lost!

He commented:

The unselective human mind (Manas) is temperamentally greedy like the monkey, and there are innumerable temptations in the world to attract our greed. The force of these attractions is irresistible and we continue to fall victims to them all the time. These forces are desires of all kinds, which with identification lead to anger, greed, vanity, jealousy, etc., which keep beguiling so that we find it difficult to escape.

(Record, 17 April 1972)

[Our thoughts and attitudes arise from these desires leading to our ever-changing ego. What is the remedy?]

Pause and silence

CONCLUSION

The conclusion he gave was:

The only way out is the renunciation of every desire but one. It looks difficult, but it comes with practice; just practise transferring your love of these attractions to the Param-Atman (Universal Self).

PART 3

You will notice that since desires belong to the inner, emotional, part of our nature, the remedy must, ultimately, be an emotional one – a single overriding emotion. The intellect can take us only a certain distance, but once it has signposted the way for us it can only thereafter observe and compare results; it has no power to control.

The year before, in a talk to the people in his Ashram, he had said this:

Once we apply ourselves to the Param-Atman with a single-minded devotion, we... attain permanent peace – as Lord Krishna stated in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Chapter 9, verses 29–31):

29. I am the same to all beings; to Me there is none either hateful or dear. But those who worship Me are in Me and I, too, am in them.

30. Even a bad man, if he begins to worship Me with single-pointed devotion, is seen to be good; for he has formed a holy resolution.

31. Soon does he attain virtue and eternal peace. Know for certain, Arjuna, that no devotee of Mine is ever destroyed.

And then continued:

If once during our life-time an unshakeable faith in Param-Atman is established, that is, that we belong to the Param-Atman and Param-Atman belongs to us – then we are out of reach of all harm.

At that stage things change their properties for us, as if a harmful drug were to become harmless. This is how a cup of deadly poison given to Mira, a perfect devotee, lost all its poisonous properties in her hands.

We know that substances change their properties during a chemical reaction, i.e., on a chemical plane. Then, why can this not happen on a more subtle plane, where much more powerful forces come into play? Bhakti (devotion to Param-Atman) can do all that. It cleanses you, purifies you, decorates you, and presents you before the Param-Atman at your best.

(Record, 7 March 1971)

[Note: (R) I can assure you that this works and, in fact, is the only remedy that invariably works in our kind of life.]

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