

27 January 1975

READING 2

(for general distribution)

PART 1

At the start of a New Year (and this one looks like being difficult), it would be a good exercise, perhaps after meditating for a few minutes, for each of us to ask ourselves the time-honoured questions, 'Who am I?' and 'What is it I want?' What did life seem to hold out to us as children, what did we promise ourselves as adolescents, what made us take some trouble to get the Meditation, what has made us come here this evening?

Maybe we can't find at once any really satisfactory answer; if so, we should ask ourselves the same questions daily after a period of meditation and return next week with the best answers that came up.

Just for now, take note of these two points:

1. Until you get the right answer to the first question, you won't be able to answer the second; for unless you find the Real 'I' that never changes, you cannot say what 'you' want and have always wanted.
2. To know what you want, is really to keep recalling something you once had but have lost; how else could you know what it is?

Once a wise man was taken across a turbulent river by a boatman, to whom he said in gratitude, 'Today I will give you whatever you want.'

The boatman answered at once: 'Please arrange for my next meal.' In his surprise at so trivial a request, the saint realised that this poor man had no vision beyond his next meal. He cannot, of course, be blamed, for he can't ask for something he doesn't know. So he just got the price of one meal.

(Record, 22 January 1974)

Our question then changes to: 'What is it I once had and lost, but still want beyond everything else?' One has to keep putting this to oneself in the most cogent way until at last one realises that every human being really wants, and has always wanted, the same thing, though usually without realising what that is.

PART 2

In 1970 we heard the Shankaracharya say to the crowds at the big religious Festival:

The basis of this human civilisation is union (Yoga). Yoga means 'union by fire'. Man uniting with the Divine Self is Yoga. A pupil uniting with a Realized man as his teacher is Yoga. A boy and a girl uniting in marriage is also a form of Yoga. Yoga comes true when the united persons never separate...

Next, he said that the Divine Consciousness pervades all beings living and non-living. Therefore everything is Consciousness and nothing is lifeless or senseless. Any natural object, such as a crystal, a shell, a flower, or a tree, can teach one very much about the nature of that Universal Consciousness, but only if one has the will to learn.

Union with the Divine Self is only to be obtained through an inner renunciation (Tyaga) of all lesser desires, and to illustrate this he told a story which he never lets us forget:

A king who had grown old decided to abdicate from his throne in order to retire to the forest to practise penance. He proclaimed that he would give away his kingdom to the first man who came to see him at 11 o'clock on the morning of the seventh day. Many people were attracted by this offer and they set out with the intention of appearing before the king at the appointed hour.

But the king had laid out a well-constructed plan to select the most suitable person. On the way to his palace, he had built a beautiful tank with lotuses blooming – so beautiful that people were tempted to stop there and have a dip in it. Then the way led through a market which contained the best possible garments, which anybody could take. The third stop was a big dining hall with luscious foods and drinks laid out. The fourth was a big sleeping room containing voluptuous appointments and bedding. In the fifth there was beautiful music provided. The sixth contained gold and jewelry. At all these places, people stopped to help themselves, and lost time or forgot their quest.

But one man (who was the last to start), overcame all these temptations, and met the king at the appointed time. To him the king formally handed over his throne before leaving for the jungle. The first act of the new king was to put under arrest all the persons who had started out to see his predecessor, on the charge that they had taken things which did not belong to them. Thus renunciation brought him a kingdom.

We want pleasure, but we get pain instead. This comes about because each pleasure contains the seeds of pain. The seeds of a thorny plant do not show any thorns; the thorns appear only much later when the seed has germinated and has grown up into a bush.

(Record, 1 February 1970)

The interpretation of this story had been given personally as follows:

S. This story is not just a story of a king and his subjects; it is really a parable of the Atman (your own Ultimate Self) and the 'Self of all beings' (Param-Atman).

The 'gates' and their attractions are obstacles in your own Nature; all the different people are in *you*. But one out of them all had a clear vision and a paramount desire to meet the Absolute, so he went straight through without yielding to any of the attractions offered by Prakriti or the Natural World. That one alone can you truly call yourSelf ('Real I').

(Record, 8 September 1964)

With all this very much in mind, R. went out the next year and asked further about it (1971):

S. Those 'gates' are the covering layers of your Prakriti or Manifested Nature enclosing (in the most inaccessible depths of the 'inner organ' or Soul) both the individual and the Universal Self. The former actually sits in the lap of the Universal, but the trouble is that in spite of such close proximity, it possesses an external outlook, and is over-concerned about those external layers of Prakriti – i.e., the 'gates' of the story.

If the Self of the individual could turn its eyes inward through Meditation, then it would see where it is, namely in the lap of Param-Atman; and then those barriers, the 'gates' and their temptations, cease to matter, and there is a state of unbroken joy all round.

(Record, 28 January 1971)

PART 3

Returning to the questions in Part 1 of this paper which you were asked to put to yourselves again and again, something more was said on this subject at that first interview in 1971.

I had asked a question (based on one of his answers by letter the previous November to a remark by D.B.C.) about 'the need for guidance, as in the children's game of 'hunt the treasure' – the need for someone to say 'you are getting warmer or colder'.

S. Before answering, let us get the question right. The *eyes* are present and, moreover, they are performing their proper function of seeing all the time. The reason why the child is not finding the thing he is looking for, is that he is searching for it in a place other than where it actually is.

For example, suppose we have lost a certain thing in our house, and that in searching for it we labour under the false impression that we have lost it somewhere outside the house.

Similarly, there is this false impression in this case of the individual and the Universal Self. In order to correct this we must constantly get directions from someone more experienced.

(Record, 28 January 1971)

COMMENT

People are always looking for the secret of happiness, the Source of true Knowledge, self-confidence, the power to influence others, etc., etc., in the outside world around us, but the Source of all these lies within oneself.

N.B. This paper is the first one for use at meetings this term, and is meant to last for 3 weeks.

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