

14 November 1977

READING 3

BIRTH AND DEATH CONTD.

Before going to India we asked you to go into certain fundamental questions about the meaning of human life on earth such as:

Why are we born? What is life for? What happens when we die? What is the ultimate objective of this School? What do we need to do each moment – Now – in order to keep facing this ultimate objective?

When we set out on any journey we have both to keep in mind our ultimate destination and also we need a map of the route so that we take the right turnings. It is the same for the journey we are travelling together. Each group really ought to formulate and pin up in a word or a sentence their agreed target and keep it constantly in mind.

Readings 1 & 2, the article called 'Travelling Light' in the current issue of *The Bridge* and perhaps the book referred to there called *Life after Life* were made available for you to ventilate these questions, for we knew the Shankaracharya would shed fresh light on them.

Our eight audiences with him on this visit have indeed fulfilled our expectations, and we want as many people as possible to hear as much as possible. To achieve this we ask that all the groups should try to *keep in step* each week. We shall try to give the corrected recordings piece by piece in the weekly papers. How you deal with them is your own affair, but it would be to your advantage to be ready for the next piece each week. Up to now you've had a pleasant ramble in the undergrowth, but from now on we must keep to the path!

Our questions on this subject did not follow a logical order – they seemed to spring up spontaneously from within and we had to choose the right moment to present them to him. Now we are trying to find the best order in which to hand them on to you. We hope you will find that this paper follows naturally from the sample given at last Tuesday's Meditation Meeting (a copy of which will be in the library).

(From Sixth Audience)

Q. At one of the Shankaracharya's discourses to the people here in this Ashram on the subject of Bhakti (the Way of Devotion to the Supreme Self) he said: 'Bhakti purifies you, decorates you and presents you before the Param-Atman at your best.' Can this be taken not only as applying to any moment 'Now' but also to the moment of physical death? For the Holy Tradition maintains that 'it is the last desire of the dying man that determines his new life'.

S. This question of 'unity with the Absolute' has different degrees: To begin with, it can be said that every human individual in the world has *some* unity with the Absolute every twenty-four hours. If he did not have some unity and communication daily it would be almost impossible to maintain life. Nothing in this Creation can go on without some link with the Absolute.

For everyone who sleeps at night, there is in their deepest sleep *some* union with the Self which recharges his body, makes it fresh, and does away with fatigue, so that he can start another day's work. This is a kind of union, but it is not a conscious union; it is just

part of a natural cycle. But even though the ordinary person knows nothing about it, nevertheless the union *does* take place.

Then there is the initiation into Meditation and into the meaning of the scriptures relating to it. Those who genuinely meditate go into the same unknown region every day, seeking to establish and deepen that relationship – not through deep sleep, not through ignorance, but with *some* consciousness. By this means, a closer relationship is established with the Absolute; and days go by until one day each will have to transcend the physical and subtle realms and establish a deeper (Causal) relationship still.

For, if you think about these relationships or degrees of unity with the Supreme Self, you will see that it is not the physical body that unites; the mind also remains outside; and everything is left behind except the individual Self (the Atman). So the union that takes place is only Self (Atman) with the Universal Self (Param-Atman). Everything else is left behind.

All one can do from day to day is to prepare oneself and do one's duty as best one can. If one has learnt to do one's best every day, one need not think about the end of the journey, because what one has been able to do is enough. Nothing more could have been done; the rest will be supplied by the Absolute. And when nothing more could have been done in your particular circumstances, the Absolute will look after the union.

Even if there remains something still to be accomplished, the Absolute will create the favourable situation for the next life in which one would be able to work better for the complete union. We here, in this room, are free to do whatever we think right; more than that is not demanded of us. Though we can make no claims, we need not be afraid. The dispensation is in the hands of the Absolute and we should have complete trust that He will bring good to everyone who has tried to establish the relationship with Him.

(Record, 31 October 1977)

Summary: You will gather from this that the Realized man tries to counteract one's tendency to over-dramatise, and encourages a reasonable or rational approach to these questions. Thus he brings them within the scope of our day-to-day practice and away from wild speculations, dreams and fears.

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