

24 April 1978

READING 2

The audience quoted in Reading 1 (21 September 1975) developed as follows: Recognising that one has nowadays only to mention some such idea as a 'presiding Deity' or a 'Being' responsible for the universe, to provoke immediate disbelief and opposition on the part of quite a few people, R. tried to express this by saying that 'we see in the physical world all kinds of tragedies around, often involving large numbers of seemingly innocent people, and it is this drives many people away from God. How do we get past this misunderstanding?'

S. One has again to understand here the two facets (of deity) – the Samashti or Universal and the Vyashti, the individual. The presiding Deity (or the responsible Being) of the Universe is the Param-Atman, and the responsible being of the Vyashti is the individual, oneself.

Comment: So we can understand right away that the individual is responsible for his own private life – his psychology and its consequences in the physical world. While he is in no way responsible for what happens in the world around, yet for that part of the Law of Cause and Effect which arises within himself, he alone will be held responsible. No 'God' can be blamed for the cause of our personal troubles, which are due to the *absence* of any recognition of the Atman.

S. (cont.) There are two sets of laws upon which the government of these two levels depends. With regard to large numbers of people in the world about us, there is a big set of laws which we call the Laws of Nature, and also the national man-made laws and we usually see these as affecting individuals by chance or luck (He gave a number of examples, as we also tried to do in *The Bridge* article). Then:

The set of laws which govern the individual are the outcome of the activities which have been performed by him in the cycles of birth and death. The consequences, both good and bad, which he has performed in his previous life will be presented to him in this life.

Comment: The mechanism seems akin to that experienced in the small cycle of day and night – the events, the colour and the mood of what happened during the day are repeated (at high speed like the reverse of a tape or film) during the night whether or not one remembers ('plays back') even one out of many dreams on awaking next morning. Overtones and after-images also appear, as do some of the unfulfilled desires and secret fears. In his chapter 11 ('Eternal Recurrence'), chiefly on pages 480 to 485 of the 2nd edition of *A New Model*, Mr. Ouspensky cites a number of different possibilities for different types of people in these cycles of birth and death. Although there are so many different possibilities, yet two facts seem certain:

First, that all this is incompatible with our ordinary sense of 'passing time', and *second*, that people show clear evidence of growing or diminishing tendencies which must have been established *before* this physical life and are seldom attributable to laws of heredity. This fact of course does not form part of scientific theory, nor is it to be seen correctly described in the transmission of any religion; where can you find a single hint in the New Testament of any teaching about life *before* birth?

In the present conversation the Shankaracharya gives a picturesque story from which we could learn much, just as we could (though in very different language) from Mr. Ouspensky's novel for the cinema, *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*.

There was a judge living in Varanasi (Benares). Being a sophisticated person and having attained a certain eminence in his legal career, he did not have much respect for the religious life nor for the idea of Param-Atman; so, though living in Varanasi, which is the main seat of worship of the God Shiva, he never went to pay his respects to the Lord, since he did not believe in him. But his mother, being a dedicated and religious soul, was constantly trying to persuade him to come with her, just for once, to the Temple of Shiva. But the judge always retorted that he was a busy man with many important things to do, and that all this religious nonsense was done by ignorant and idle people, so 'they can go and pray to their God but he would have nothing to do with Him.'

But one Sunday morning the mother insisted that today was Sunday and her son was evidently idling about and has no business to attend to, so he must come with her to the Temple, and he grudgingly obeyed. While they were approaching the Temple in their vehicle there was an accident, from which the judge sustained only minor injuries, but which made him very agitated so he blamed his mother for involving him 'in this horrible accident which was quite unacceptable to a man of his importance.' He called a doctor and had himself bandaged up; but during the night he had a dream.

In this dream the Lord Shiva appeared before him and told him: 'You silly man! You were destined to have a really serious accident in which some of your bones would have been broken – in consequence of some of the misdeeds of your previous life. But because, on the insistence of your mother, you came to My doors, your sentence was reduced and you were given only a small penalty. Had you not come with your mother this Sunday, you would have been in hospital for months and months.'

So when the judge got up next morning, he went to his mother, apologised and prostrated himself before her; and ever after he was a believer, a believer in the existence of God.

S. comments: This set of laws exists to govern the individual and (whether he knows about it or not) they will keep on governing! Whatever happens to one's personal life is the result of one's own thoughts and deeds.

But the presiding Deity of the Universe is the Param-Atman, who responds neither by sorrow nor pleasure; so far as He is concerned he has devised the set of Laws by which the Drama of the Universe is being enacted and He is not in any way involved in the 'justice' of what is being performed, for these laws must continue to operate. Since the individual must take the consequences on either level, then the need for understanding is doubly necessary.

If one understands these two sets of laws, then one refrains from becoming identified with or 'attached' to whatever result comes in life, whether arising from oneself or from the larger space-time scale of the natural evolution of the earth.

(Record, 21 September 1975)

POSTSCRIPT TO READING 1

Some doubt was expressed about the claim made there that there is evidence of a presiding Deity within each individual in the accounts given of near-death experiences. This writer can only say that similar experiences of his own confirm the following sentences in the 'ideal' or majority account given on p. 22 of *Life after Life*: 'A being of light appears before him. This being asks him a question, non-verbally, to make him evaluate his life, and helps him along by showing him a panoramic instantaneous playback of his life.' Later the author writes (p. 64): 'It is often evident that the being can see the individual's whole life displayed and that he himself does not need information.'

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N.B. As there will probably be no further paper until 15th May, the first two Readings will be used for the first three group meetings.

