

13 February 1979

READING 3

A chance remark from a group taker last Monday made me feel that there is an artificial barrier blocking people's way to Self-realization. He said, 'Since *very few people* hear the voice of the Atman, we decided to do so and so.' Perhaps this totally untrue idea is shared by quite a lot of people. The Atman or Real I, the Self of the individual, exists in everybody all over the world, and in all places and at all times is revealing himself in a great number of different ways. But these pass unrecognised and even his existence remains unknown, except in early childhood and at the time of physical death. This is due to the fact that with the development of the speech centres in the left hemispheres by the age of three years, the active brain which looks at the outside world becomes increasingly dominant. And it is this brain with all its verbal thoughts and speech which knows nothing about the existence of the Self except from hearsay. What available teachings are there in general education or in the religions which describe the Eternal Presence and the nature of the Self, and its relation with the Self of the Universe of which it is an atom or particle?

Perhaps the expression 'hear the voice' is the cause of this. It is rare for people to become sufficiently quiet to hear the Voice of the Silence which always speaks without words. If there is a voice speaking in words, that voice comes from the personality interposing itself. But there are many other ways by which the Atman can reveal his presence and which are much more easily recognised and occur much more frequently. Perhaps most reliable is a momentary feeling of joy arising spontaneously, for no apparent reason – that is, not triggered by anything in particular. This joy (often accompanied by a feeling of clarity, truth or liberation) is the hallmark of the divine nature and the divine presence and the Grace continually proceeding from it.

This feeling of joy, called by the Shankaracharya *Ananda*, is to be encouraged by a complete reversal of one's customary attitude. Instead of being always on the make, he says we should try to find what this Divine Self would like most. After all, He has to live in this physical body for threescore years and ten in an extremely dull situation with precious little joy coming in! And yet all good things come from Him and if we are grateful, we should try to give him what in fact is his rightful food. On one occasion His Holiness said to the crowds: 'Every living being has its own proper food: a baby's food is milk, an adult's food is grain, a snake's food is rats, and the Atman's food is joy.' If, therefore, we feel a little joy, we should consciously remember to share it with him. Then we shall find that the relationship quickly gets closer.

There are other ways besides recognising this feeling of Ananda by which evidence of his existence in everybody can be brought home to them if they are taught to recognise it. Everybody originally has an innate sense of good and bad, right and wrong for him or her, to be listened to at the moment of choice or opportunity. This certainty about what is right and what is wrong comes from the Self and is often far removed from the conventional points of view; so it pleases Him if we obey that impulse instead of following our usual habits, which are borrowed from outside and which return mechanically again and again. Such changes of attitude can be cultivated at moments when we are not doing anything in particular. But there is an even more important field in which evidence can be collected. This is the confidence that comes from

doing a job well for a very important person who is always present, instead of doing the ordinary work we do simply for one's own profit. Doing any job, the more difficult the better, with this kind of attention and with detachment from personal feelings ('Am I doing it well or badly?') and from expected results shows one again and again that the job succeeds, is done far better, and things one couldn't do before become possible. It is from these observations that the confidence comes. Now this confidence is a very important part of the realisation that one has a source of energy and confidence within one, to which one can apply in moments of need. Then slowly there begins to dawn on one that there is in one's soul an eternal and magical Presence always ready to help with wisdom and energy if appealed to, and that by bringing heart and mind into a single unity of Consciousness it enables the individual to accomplish everything that is required of him in a way he could never ordinarily believe to be possible.

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