

SEEKING IS MORE THAN JUST FINDING

Jesus said, Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All. (2)

Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. For some reason, in reading over the above verse there popped into my mind a memory of the old Dragnet television show. During one episode a woman whose son had become a dangerous criminal whined to Sergeant Friday: “God knows I tried.” With his usual dry aplomb Friday retorted: “Yeah, but how hard did you try?” That question applies to these words of Jesus. It is not mere seeking that ends in finding, but *effective* and *prolonged* seeking. Jesus is being a bit like Humpty Dumpty in *Alice in Wonderland* when he told Alice: “Begin at the beginning, and when you come to the end, stop.” Just keep going until you reach the goal. Very simple and often very hard to do.

Yet we must grasp this necessary fact of spiritual life: “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22). Sri Ramakrishna told the parable of a man at the edge of a forest who was told by a monk: “Go

forward.” So he did. And although every so often he found increasingly valuable things, he recalled the words “Go forward” and kept going on until he discovered abundant wealth. We, too, have to keep going forward, further and further, “from glory to glory” (II Corinthians 3:18), until we reach the supreme goal—for that alone is what we should be seeking. *We must never stop the search.* It has been said that the desire for God is the way to God. Those who slacken or stop have slacked or stopped in their desire for God. Where, then, is the possibility of finding?

When he finds, he will become troubled. Johnson has “bewildered” rather than “troubled,” and Patterson and Maeyer have “disturbed.” But others concur with Lambdin in rendering it “troubled.”

We read in the book of Acts that Saint Paul and his companions were once described by their religious enemies as “these that have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:26). We have lived for entire creation cycles in complete delusion. Only now, after more years than human mathematicians can calculate, has a glimmer of reality entered into our purview. And the result? It has seemed to disrupt—if not actually shatter—our life! Look at how people agonize over a very little spiritual insight. In the West it is to the point of absurdity and often insanity. I am not speaking of theory and speculation—westerners love such mind-games. I am speaking of the sledgehammer impact a few grains of practical truth—for that is what reality *is*—has on everyone’s life. It is easy to forget, so maybe you may not recall what it was like the first time reality “struck” in your life. But if you will sit and look backwards you will see that every advance in true knowledge has necessitated a real struggle and perhaps even pain in bringing your life into conformity to it. If not, it still lies ahead for you.

Spiritual history is filled with accounts of people who when given a vision of the truth of things were devastated and disoriented. For never again could they go back to where they were the moment before the lightning struck. Many have foolishly wished it had not taken place. When Sri Ramakrishna opened the consciousness of Naren (the future Swami Vivekananda), his reaction was to weep bitterly and ask: “What

have you done to me?” Such is the power of ignorance over our hearts. Like long-caged birds we fear freedom. Many people become upset and even angry when something occurs to open their understanding and make them see more clearly than they did before. What should be a cause for rejoicing becomes a matter of regret and complaint—such is the extent of our spiritual insanity.

It takes great courage to face truth and rise to the level it requires. Before reaching the human form, consciousness evolves blindly, automatically. But humans are on a different plateau, and although they may be forcibly faced with higher reality, they have to agree to it and move up on their own volition. In time they must come to consciously and willfully evolve themselves through the cultivation of inner life. They must become yogis (I mean this in the broadest sense, for every valid religion has produced ways to cultivate higher spiritual consciousness.) Without yoga, spiritual life can be nothing but haphazard, however sincere and devoted the seeker may be.

Even men and women of great wisdom have trembled and shrunk back at the dawning of higher vision, for such vision means a death of much that has heretofore flourished in the twilight world of half-knowledge—much that we have fostered and increased through ages, identifying with it and dominated by it. It is excruciatingly painful to acknowledge that our wisdom has been folly, our living has been death, and our faith has really been only superstition.

When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished. But when the leap is made, when the truth has been not only seen but assimilated into our consciousness, great wonder will arise within us. Lambdin uses the term “astonished,” but others prefer “marvel,” “amazed,” and “wonder.” It is said in India that Shiva, the divine yogi, usually sits in profound samadhi in total communion with his Self. But occasionally he emerges from that state and dances in bliss, exclaiming: “O! Who I am! Who I am!”

To enter into hitherto unknown and undreamed-of dimensions of consciousness is a delight and blessedness unthought of by those yet to

open those doors of the spirit. Just as the hem of Jesus' garment flowed healing virtue (Matthew 9:20; 14:36), so even the borders of the inner kingdom flow with a glory impossible to describe—but very easy to experience. I well remember the joyful awe that I lived and breathed daily when, after finding the path of yoga I began moving toward the dawning Light. It was something I could never have imagined possible, something undreamed of by the murky religion in which I had been brought up. At last I had found the real gospel (good news) of “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). Light had come to me from the East, just as it had to Jesus, and earlier to the Essenes through Moses and Aaron.

Yes, if we can hold firm and bravely move on into the new territories opened by the inner sight, we will be astonished from day to day. Expanding awareness terrifies and panics the ego, but it rejoices the spirit. Many turn back to the ego's realm, but others hasten on into the world of freedom in spirit. Perseverance becomes no longer a trial, but a happy anticipation. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

However, the order of things is never changed: first comes the troubling and then the wonder. We cannot have the second without the first.

And he will rule over the All. Jesus is not speaking to us of some kind of abstract intellectual delight or marvel, but of something eminently practical. “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, is the limitless expanse of that infinite Consciousness that is God. Those who persevere to the end shall enter into the essential life of God, for “the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (Daniel 7:18). “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of

the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Daniel 7:27).

Jesus spoke of this attainment when he told Saint John: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21). The identical status which Jesus attained shall be attained by all who seek, find, become troubled, and become astonished. They, too, shall rule over all.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.... Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:5, 6, 9-11). That this shall be said of each one of us is indicated by the words of Jesus: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do” (John 14:12). The Kingdom shall be our kingdom, the Power shall be our power, and the Glory shall be our glory. Amen.

SEEKING THE KINGDOM REALISTICALLY

Jesus said, If those who lead you say to you, See, the kingdom is in the sky, then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, It is in the sea, then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty. (3)

Spiritual leaders?

The first problem the seeker encounters in spiritual life is lack of spiritual guidance. The second—and usually even worse—problem is when he gets spiritual guidance. This is no joke. If “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31), what is it to fall into the hands of incompetent or dishonest spiritual teachers and “gurus”?

I have to confess that I am continually appalled at the thought of what will happen today to the soul that decides to take up meditation or find a teacher of spiritual life. Like a reverse of the radio ads for Ivory Soap that I heard as a child, the entire situation is “ninety-nine and

forty-four one-hundred percent” *impure*. In Chinese Buddhism they speak of the unlikelihood of a blind sea turtle surfacing directly beneath a floating log, and that is about how unlikely it is to receive competent spiritual instruction, especially in meditation. Bamboozled by the raz-zamatazz of the hawkers in the meditation market, people wander for decades in futility and confusion. Few find the way, particularly in the West, not that those who travel East manage much better. I do not even give thought to those who only want to learn intellectual “truth.” Their wandering and hopelessness is guaranteed by their very interest. That is why Sri Krishna tells Arjuna in the Gita (6:44) that a person who simply inquires about yoga goes beyond the scriptures.

Soul friend

In medieval Europe the expression “soul friend” was used for a spiritual advisor. How much better this is than the teacher/master expressions common today, for they imply a control and dependency that can only produce a spiritual pathology—on both sides. How rare is a friend of the soul that will teach the needful—and no more. It is only the incompetent teacher that keeps the student enthralled in a personality cult that substitutes for the spiritual development and experience the teacher’s instructions cannot lead to. My beloved friend Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh would advise a disciple to live with him only a few months and then go and attain something for himself and not turn Sivananda into some kind of private deity to be adored and served to the neglect of the disciple’s progress. Swami Ramdas of Anandashram was also insistent about this. In the May, 2002 issue of *The Vision*, the Anandashram magazine, the following words from one of his letters appeared on page 294: “You cannot deny the fact that those who attached themselves to the person of a guru did not rise up to the guru’s stature. The spiritual heroes are those who, through the contact of a saint, get inner awakening and by standing alone develop divine perfection. You know a plant beneath the shade of a big tree

does not flourish. A short stay in the service of a saint is admittedly helpful for the disciple's spiritual progress; whereas, a long, continued company of the guru is far from helpful and elevating. This has been Ramdas' experience since our Ashram came into existence. The pearl oyster receives the drop and dives down to fashion it into a beautiful pearl by its own tapasya as it were." Earlier in the issue he states that real service to the guru is doing spiritual practice and attaining enlightenment—not flattering the guru and running enterprises and projects in his name. Such honest teachers are rare, alas. Right now I know of only one, and his disciples are continually griping because he refuses to run their lives and dot all their i's and cross all their t's for them. They have no idea what a treasure they have, perhaps because they do not really want what he has to give: the path to liberation.

Blind

"And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke 6:39). The idea is clear. So also is the statement of Saint Paul that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). And before that Isaiah: "I am the Lord thy God, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isaiah 48:17). The internal guide—our own spirit in communion with the Supreme Spirit—can and will do the needful. Looking outward for lifetimes we have only become increasingly enmeshed in ignorance. Only when we look within will we find "the way, the truth, and the life." Remember the dictum of the Upanishadic teacher: "Thou art That" and act accordingly after finding your true "thou" through meditation and spiritual discipline.

*If those who lead you say to you, "See, the kingdom is in the sky," then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, "It is in the sea," then the fish will precede you. The poet-saint Mirabai expressed this idea in one of her songs quoted by Yogananda in the seventh chapter of *Autobiography of a Yogi*:*

If by bathing daily God could be realized
Sooner would I be a whale in the deep;
If by eating roots and fruits He could be known
Gladly would I choose the form of a goat;
If the counting of rosaries uncovered Him
I would say my prayers on mammoth beads;
If bowing before stone images unveiled Him
A flinty mountain I would humbly worship;
If by drinking milk the Lord could be imbibed
Many calves and children would know Him.

The error of all these views cited by Jesus and Mira is that God is far away—far from us in some inaccessible hidden depths. Such a view suits opportunistic religionists very well, because it necessitates a chain of intermediaries upon whom the aspirant must be forever wholly dependent.

Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. The divine kingdom is right at hand, not far away and unreachable or accessible only through terrible struggles. Yet, we do not see the kingdom, much less dwell within it on a conscious level. What must be done to perceive the kingdom?

When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known. Self-knowledge is essential and imperative. These words of Jesus are a distillation of a part of the Chandogya Upanishad which was surely well-known to him. Though a bit long, I am inserting it here in the excellent version by Swami Prabhavananda in *The Upanishads, Breath of the Eternal*:

When Svetaketu was twelve years old, his father Uddalaka said to him, “Svetaketu, you must now go to school and study. None of our family, my child, is ignorant of Brahman.”

Thereupon Svetaketu went to a teacher and studied for twelve years.

After committing to memory all the Vedas, he returned home full of pride in his learning.

His father, noticing the young man's conceit, said to him: "Svetaketu, have you asked for that knowledge by which we hear the unbearable, by which we perceive the unperceivable, by which we know the unknowable?"

"What is that knowledge, sir?" asked Svetaketu.

"My child, as by knowing one lump of clay, all things made of clay are known, the difference being only in name and arising from speech, and the truth being that all are clay; as by knowing a nugget of gold, all things made of gold are known, the difference being only in name and arising from speech, and the truth being that all are gold—exactly so is that knowledge, knowing which we know all."

"But surely those venerable teachers of mine are ignorant of this knowledge; for if they had possessed it, they would have taught it to me. Do you therefore, sir, give me that knowledge."

"Be it so," said Uddalaka, and continued thus:

"In the beginning there was Existence, One only, without a second. Some say that in the beginning there was nonexistence only, and that out of that the universe was born. But how could such a thing be? How could existence be born of non-existence? No, my son, in the beginning there was Existence alone—One only, without a second. He, the One, thought to himself: Let me be many, let me grow forth. Thus out of himself he projected the universe; and having projected out of himself the universe, he entered into every being. All that is has its self in him alone. Of all things he is the subtle essence. He is the truth. He is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU."

"Please, sir, tell me more about this Self."

"Be it so, my child:

"As the bees make honey by gathering juices from many flowering plants and trees, and as these juices reduced to one honey do not know from what flowers they severally come, similarly, my son, all creatures, when they are merged in that one Existence, whether in dreamless sleep

or in death, know nothing of their past or present state, because of the ignorance enveloping them—know not that they are merged in him and that from him they came.

“Whatever these creatures are, whether a lion, or a tiger, or a boar, or a worm, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they remain after they come back from dreamless sleep.

“All these have their self in him alone. He is the truth. He is the subtle essence of all. He is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU.”

“Please, sir, tell me more about this Self.”

“Be it so, my son:

“The rivers in the east flow eastward, the rivers in the west flow westward, and all enter into the sea. From sea to sea they pass, the clouds lifting them to the sky as vapor and sending them down as rain. And as these rivers, when they are united with the sea, do not know whether they are this or that river, likewise all those creatures that I have named, when they have come back from Brahman, know not whence they came.

“All those beings have their self in him alone. He is the truth. He is the subtle essence of all. He is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU.”

“Please, sir, tell me more about this Self.”

“Be it so, my child:

“If someone were to strike once at the root of this large tree, it would bleed, but live. If he were to strike at its stem, it would bleed, but live. If he were to strike at the top, it would bleed, but live. Pervaded by the living Self, this tree stands firm, and takes its food; but if the Self were to depart from one of its branches, that branch would wither; if it were to depart from a second, that would wither; if it were to depart from a third, that would wither. If it were to depart from the whole tree, the whole tree would wither.

“Likewise, my son, know this: The body dies when the Self leaves it—but the Self dies not.

“All that is has its self in him alone. He is the truth. He is the subtle

home; and as one thus entreated may loose his bandages and give him comfort; and as thereupon he walks from village to village, asking his way as he goes; and as he arrives home at last—just so does a man who meets with an illumined teacher obtain true knowledge.

“That which is the subtle essence—in that have all beings their existence. That is the truth. That is the Self. And that, O Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU.”

“Please, sir, tell me more about this Self.”

“Be it so, my child:

“When a man is fatally ill, his relations gather round him and ask, ‘Do you know me? Do you know me?’ Now until his speech is merged in his mind, his mind in his breath, his breath in his vital heat, his vital heat in the Supreme Being, he knows them. But when his speech is merged in his mind, his mind in his breath, his breath in his vital heat, his vital heat in the Supreme Being, then he does not know them.

“That which is the subtle essence—in that have all beings their existence. That is the truth. That is the Self. And that, O Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU.”

What more could possibly be said about self-knowledge?

There is one point of interest. Jesus says that when we come to know ourselves we will become known ourselves. Saint Paul wrote a little more fully of this, saying: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; *but then shall I know even as also I am known*” (I Corinthians 13:12).

And you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. The idea is that of conscious communication with God—God knowing us fully and us knowing Him fully. It is a matter of identity, of our oneness with God and His oneness with us.

But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty. In Revelation Jesus speaks to us all, saying: “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art

wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). This is the plight of those who know not themselves, to whom Jesus makes the stern indictment:

And it is you who are that poverty. Those without self-realization are poverty itself.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matthew 13:44). The wise seek the inner treasure that makes all men more than rich.

