

"Pathways" Problems

ESSENTIAL DYING

In the discussion of "Sleep and Death" (Section XLIX) it is stated: "If a man, while embodied, has not learned to integrate consciously the embodied with the disembodied levels of percipience, then so far as the personal consciousness is concerned, death involves entering a state like dreamless sleep." It is further stated that the resultant state is not an unconscious one in the higher sense but is unconscious in the personal sense except for a sort of dreaming consciousness organized along the lines of subject-object consciousness. This results in the radical interruption of the continuity of self-consciousness and the individual, as individual, has proved to be no more than a mortal being.

An especially thoughtful reader of "Pathways" has brought to my attention the fact that the above thesis appears to be contrary to the general outline of after-death states as given in authentic esoteric sources, for in the latter a radical break of continuity of self-consciousness after physical death is not indicated, but the reverse. This point is a very important one and I appreciate its presentation. I can see how confusion could arise because of the very great brevity of the discussion. But a careful reading of the third sentence of the paragraph beginning on page 108 will reveal the fact that I was not speaking of death in the usual sense of dissolution of the physical body. That sentence states: "But it is a fact that I cannot too strongly emphasize that the essence of dying is not dissolution of the physical body". Next it is said: "Fundamentally, it is a change of level of percipience and appercipience." I think that with this point in mind we can clear the issue.

The discussion in "Pathways" is oriented, primarily, to death in the mystical sense and the effort was made to show that mere physical dissolution does not solve nor help to solve the problem of the mystical re-integration of consciousness. All too many among men seem to think that death, in the physical sense, will solve man's metaphysical problems, without preparation during life. This is a grievous mistake since, on the contrary, preparation for death is the most important business of life, in the ordinary sense. The state of consciousness, after physical death, being generally but one of effects does not afford a condition in which new causes may be set up. The process of the Second Birth must be at least started during physical life or there is no hope until a later embodiment when there is a new opportunity.

In the sense of "change of level of percipience and appercipience", physical death is no true death. The dropping of the physical body is scarcely more than taking off an overcoat. As a rule, it appears that the immediately following state, when not one of sleep, is essentially a continuation of the kind of consciousness known on earth with certain changes of content. A second death follows the exhaustion of the astral vehicle, leaving the man, in a sense, disrobed, but still having an embodied organization of consciousness. This is the consciousness like a blissful dream

organized on the pattern of the subject-object consciousness. The esoteric teaching is clear on the point that this is a reward (or penalty) for the personal individual whereby injustices (pleasant or unpleasant) incurred during physical life are balanced. This period lasts until effects are exhausted and then, and not till then, the real death of the personal entity (the "I am I and none other") takes place. In the ordinary rebirth this particular "I am I and none other" is not born again. The psychical complexes which made up the old personality are reorganized to form the new "I am I and none other" of the new personality. This is radical interruption of continuity of self-consciousness and there is more than mere suppression of memory involved. The old John Smith or "I am I and none other" is gone and is not reborn nor does he dwell anywhere, save as a sort of impress in the astral light. (However, resurrection is possible by means of the Recognition or Mystical Birth in a subsequent life of the Inner Entity. This is a part of the dark meaning of the dark saying that through Realization man redeems his ancestors. But Nature does not bestow this. Man achieves it.)

I do not remember reading, or having heard, anywhere in the esoteric teachings the explicit statement that the real death of the personal entity takes place, not before, but at the conclusion of the Devachanic interlude. But the implication is there for anyone who stops to reflect. And here there is a manifest break in the continuity of the personal self-consciousness. Otherwise, memory of past lives would be the rule and not the exception. The compound decay and reintegration of the psychical complex which forms the personal entity involves continuity of what, we might call, the raw-material but not of the organized structure of personal consciousness. In this connection refer to the Buddha's discussion of the subject, especially, in the Sutras from the Pali.

I said in "Pathways" that ordinary death involves entering a state like dreamless sleep. It is not identical with dreamless sleep, else there could not be the Devachanic dream. But something leaves the man that was with him during objective life. This is the power of discrimination which is a projection from the Higher Man. It is this subtle part of objective consciousness which vanishes for the personal consciousness in the Devachanic state. It is this vital part of the empiric man that is veiled from the Devachanic as the consciousness of dreamless sleep is veiled from the ordinary personal consciousness. He who would follow this "Life-line" must, while living (in general) have achieved the power to shift from level to level of perception and apperception. Now, because of the Life-line of Discrimination from Above, the personal self-consciousness of the objective physical man is not exclusively personal. Recognition or the Mystical Awakening effects a stringing of the personal self-consciousness upon the Life-line, thereby achieving the conditional immortality. The opportunity for doing this is during physical life, possibly a period immediately after death and in rare cases where the Devachanic is so high as to fuse in something of the Turya or even Nirvanic. But, in general, it is not possible after physical death.

It is important to remember the helplessness of the Higher

Man during objective embodiment. He is a prisoner of the lower man, escaping at times during dreamless sleep and after ordinary death. If the Higher Man achieves His possibilities during objective life, it is the lower man who renders this possible. The latter must cease to be the jailor, and this is really the whole meaning of the self-sacrifice of the ~~Rtx~~ Path until and unless the Great Renunciation is made. If the lower man makes the necessary sacrifices there is a great reward, though this cannot be the motive. The lower man achieves immortality and assimilates, as far as possible, the consciousness of the Higher Man. Ultimately the sacrifice is found to be insignificant.

Many persons are appalled by the esoteric eschatology. It is quite different from the traditional Christian teaching and certainly does require self-induced and self-directed work-effort upon the part of the individual. But, whereas the Christian eschatology offers the hope of being nothing more than a perpetual babe, the esoteric and true teaching opens a way of unlimited possibility. Furthermore, no sincere effort is without fruit. To be sure, few may in any one life attain the highest possibility, for this is not easy. But it is not hard to break the power of the dream. He who cannot attain to Turya or the Nirvanic (fixed or not fixed) states may yet achieve the permanent astral and be born in a series of lives without the radical break in consciousness, although memory may be more or less blocked. And, also, failing this, he may achieve a Devachan without the complete break of the line of Discrimination in which case a certain continuity is retained in following lives, which is more than is true of the ordinary incarnations. No sincere student has the merely ordinary after-death state nor is subject to the radical discontinuity of the ordinary man. Further, there are Helpers who help those who help themselves - by self-forgetfulness and striving.

I hope the foregoing discussion will clarify the confusion. In the original article the subject was approached from a more metaphysical point of view that is usual and from that angle the problem is much more simple than from the objective perspective. Much that is very simple from the Subjective perspective is quite complex when approached from the objective base, and there is also much where the reverse is true. It is important that the objective and Subjective should join hands for thereby the Crossing is rendered much easier.