

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
(Compiled from Private Sessions and Earlier Lectures)

QUESTION: Are you able to receive thought messages from us at any time?

ANSWER: At particular times, yes. I am not able to receive them while I manifest through the medium, because matter then stands in the way. Other than that, I receive messages, but sometimes I have to relay them to others. Sometimes I am allowed to take care of these messages myself and sometimes I have to disregard them. It all depends. Thus, some of you have already experienced that I received your messages, because answers were forthcoming. At other times it was not so, because it could not be. This was due to circumstances you may ignore and not because the message was not received. Sometimes an answer is given in a different way than you expect. Consideration has to be given also to the motive of a person sending a message by thought instead of pronouncing it aloud. If the motive is mere embarrassment and unwillingness to overcome pride, we are not allowed to heed it.

QUESTION: Is it possible to send messages to all our other spirit friends who are around us?

ANSWER: Oh yes, of course. Again it depends what kind. If they are spiritual messages -- messages to help and advise spirits who may be more receptive to you personally -- then it is most certainly possible. If it is something mundane, they are often prevented from seeing it, although sometimes they do see it and this too is for a purpose.

QUESTION: What is the difference between an emotionally mature and an immature person? How can you recognize it?

ANSWER: An emotionally mature person is one who understands life as it is, namely that it brings not only joy but also pain. Intellectually, most everyone, if normal, understands that, but emotionally many people do not. They say life has its rainy days, but emotionally they cringe from the pain. That is a sign of emotional immaturity, not facing life and reality as they are, and lacking the courage to accept them that way. Another sign of emotional immaturity is the rejection of responsibility. I do not mean that merely in the obvious sense, in the sense that a mother will care for her children or a father will provide for his family. That is so obvious I do not need to mention it. Besides, it does not even indicate a specific lack of emotional maturity not to do that. This would be immaturity throughout. I mean the responsibility to the innermost person, the responsibility to God, the responsibility to oneself, the acknowledgment of being responsible for one's own trouble and the responsibility to get out of trouble by using one's own power -- by finding within what has caused it. And there are other responsibilities, such as the responsibility to protect weaker people physically and emotionally. You can recognize an emotionally mature person quite

easily if you yourself increase your own emotional maturity. It is often a clear indication of emotional immaturity to shy away from taking on certain responsibilities, even though doing so would entail joy, fulfillment, and development. The fear of love and its risks is a sign of emotional immaturity. This is only to give a few of the most obvious examples. With this in mind you will be able to find many more specific and detailed answers.

QUESTION: If a person wants to know the truth from a doctor or an astrologer, what should the doctor or astrologer do? Tell the truth, lie, or avoid it?

ANSWER: You mean an unpleasant truth?

QUESTION: Yes, about disease or death.

ANSWER: That depends very much on the case, my dear friend. It is impossible to make a general statement here. There are cases when the truth is kinder and there are certain cases when it is not. I cannot possibly generalize. I would have to know the specific case, if you have one in mind.

QUESTION: I would like to ask you if the instinct for self-preservation has anything to do with a person's choice of choosing the road of evil, that is rejecting the road of self-development.

ANSWER: Well, in a distorted, ignorant way, yes. A spiritually blind person always thinks that being unduly selfish preserves the self. But in reality this is not so. The instinct of self-preservation, if unblurred by all layers of ignorance, would always lead a person to take the road of self-development and purification in the deepest sense and, certainly, it always does. You will understand this better if you think this over carefully. The rejection of self-development and purification does not come from the instinct of self-preservation. This is really nothing but rationalization.

QUESTION: I would like to hear about the matter of selfishness in prayer.

ANSWER: I have discussed this on various occasions, but I shall do so again, perhaps with a different slant. I know that many people are afraid that they pray out of mere selfishness. Here I can only say, my friends, that it depends very much on how you pray and what your motive is. You cannot say about anything that it is selfish or that it is not, except for crass acts. In all your desires and attitudes it is the motive that counts. It always depends on the how.

The answer to this is really very simple. If you pray for things because you want them merely because they are pleasant and that is all there is to it, then of course this is a selfish prayer, and it will do no good at all. For only a spiritual force coming out of your soul will have any effect. Selfish prayer indicates a misunderstanding of life and is therefore an untruth, even though you do not commit a deliberate lie. Nevertheless, an untrue thought, as innocent and in good faith as it may be, cannot meet with the true forces of the cosmos. Like attracts like, and this law cannot be changed. One of the first things you learn on this path is to ask yourself about your own motives, why you desire a certain thing. You learn to ask yourself the "why" of certain of your emotional reactions and if you cannot give yourself the answer, a good beginning would be to pray for the will to

recognize yourself fearlessly and in truth. This cannot be construed as selfishness. Thus you will pray that your motives become purified.

Furthermore, there certainly is nothing selfish in it if you wish other creatures well and if you can bring yourself to pray for those who have harmed you -- and mean it. That in itself is purification. And if you pray for strength and understanding to be able to overcome your cowardice to face yourself, to overcome your resistance to developing yourself, there is nothing selfish in that, though you might believe that the unavoidable happiness that results from purification -- after a certain point is reached -- is in itself a selfish act. If you believe that, then it would seem a higher aim to remain unpurified so as to be unhappy because this would mean selflessness. In this connection you must understand that God's laws work in this way: Only one who is happy can give happiness to others. I do not mean a cheap and easily obtainable happiness, but the real thing that comes only through hard labor and that no one can take away from you. You will never see an unhappy person who can truly give happiness to others. That is impossible. One may do a certain good deed, a single unselfish act, but cannot make another person happy. So if you are afraid of selfishness because your purification and development would make you happy -- and this should be your main prayer as distinct from prayer for others -- consider this happiness as a byproduct, as a means to an end, and not as the end itself. Even if selfishness, namely the desire to become happy, enters a little at the beginning in your striving upward, recognize this, but do not mind it too much. Accept yourself as you are -- and you are still imperfect. This selfish motive is not as pure as the one stated here, namely that happiness should be only a byproduct, a means to an end, but it is certainly a step forward on the path of truth.

Only by purifying yourself can you become happy, while the person who has a lower degree of consciousness believes that happiness results from giving in to all the desires coming out of the lower nature. If you are not free from selfishness -- and a human being rarely is -- it is certainly healthier to see this clearly instead of pushing and forcing it away. In that way it will only hide in your soul and cause you more harm than the clear and courageous recognition of its existence. Know that the aim is a higher one, but know that you are emotionally not yet there. Also realize that secluded happiness is impossible. The separating wall must fall, and that is what all of you are afraid of. You feel endangered without it. You do not realize that in desiring to keep your separating wall, you defeat your own purpose, and you illogically contradict your desire to develop that persists just as strongly, in spite of your fear of it. You all desire happiness and you all desire to make others happy. Yet, you cannot achieve either one without losing your separateness. And how do you lose your separateness? By doing the very thing that seems hardest for you -- perhaps by giving up your pride, by going through your apparent shame. When you approach the problem in this way, you will realize that in a prayer of this kind there is certainly nothing selfish. For God wants you happy. It is a long tradition of misunderstanding, an often unpronounced conception that to be godly means to be unhappy and severe. This image is engraved in humankind. This is supposed to be martyrdom. No, my friends, it is not so. Do not feel guilty if you also become happy. That certainly does not mean that you should pray directly for happiness. What you should pray for is the strength and the ability to overcome and remove the obstacles you have placed between yourself and happiness. This removal must mean to go through the self-inflicted unhappiness out of error and ignorance, not to shirk it. At the end of the tunnel you will find the clear light of peace, harmony, beauty and joy that must be yours regardless of others' actions. That is the spirit you should have when you pray.

QUESTION: May I ask why is it so difficult at times to start praying at all?

ANSWER: You all know that your development does not go in a steady line upward, or let us say, to speak in the terms I have used in this lecture, "downward." It fluctuates. It goes up and down, up and down, in spirals. And sometimes, while you are on a downward curve, you do not realize that this downward curve is a step higher than the last upward curve you were on. Although the last upward curve was, on the whole, lower than the present downward curve, you do not realize that this downward curve is a step higher than the last upward curve you were on. You felt an elation and a liberation that you do not feel on the downward curve you have worked yourself up to.

Whenever you are on a downward curve, you encounter conflicts and problems and contradictions that you have not solved yet. They disquiet you, they make you restless and fearful until you have laboriously worked them out and understood them, until you have fitted them into the whole picture as far as this is available to you now. When you have done this, the upward curve sets in again, and you enjoy the clear air of having climbed a little further and gained more ample truth. But when the downward curve comes again, you must delve into the darkness of your own confusion and error, which cuts you off from the divine stream. You may oversimplify this by saying, "Things are depressing. I experience unpleasant things and that is why I am cut off from the divine flow." You are right, but it is a half-truth and that is always dangerous. The unpleasant things you are experiencing are but a reflection and a necessary effect of the cause you have within yourself waiting to be dug out. And that is why in such times of being on the downward curve -- this may vary in length, according to the personality and the inner problems to be solved -- the flow is cut off. You are surrounded again by the strong impressions of the world of manifestation. You cannot penetrate anymore into the feeling of reality you have tasted at other times. And it is necessary. It demands a battle on your part to attain victory again. Every victory means a new upward curve. It is quite natural that in such periods of temporary darkness you cannot feel God's absolute truth, that you do not vibrate with it. You cannot force this by will. But what you can and should do in these periods is to think clearly and reasonably about your findings in the light of what you now know, although temporarily this knowledge sits only in your brain. And you have to wait until you become filled with the knowledge again.

QUESTION: What is the role of heredity as distinct from and in addition to the original spirituality and karma and the plan?

ANSWER: Heredity can only work in coordination with the plan, with karma, with the qualities of the spirit who is destined to be born with certain parents to find the conditions needed according to his or her qualities. It all works as one. For instance, a child apparently inherits certain qualities from the parents, let us say a talent. That spirit had that talent, and did not inherit it. But the spirit was sent to parents with the same talent because in all other respects circumstances fit perfectly, so that this spirit can best fulfill his or her life. The karma influences the plan and the plan determines the parents, the country and circumstances into which the spirit is born, and which qualities should come out, and which ones remain hidden for a future life. Some may be in accordance with the parents -- then one speaks of inheritance -- others may not. So heritage is not something that works arbitrarily. It is part of the whole scheme.

QUESTION: And physical resemblance?

ANSWER: The same thing. I explained it already in connection with the genes. The genes work in such a way that certain physical resemblances will occur, others will not. There is a good reason and purpose for every detail, my friends. The purpose may be a symbol, yet there is a significance.

QUESTION: If our souls go into the Spirit World while we sleep, what is the reason for old people's insomnia and what causes insomnia in younger people?

ANSWER: What causes insomnia in general for all people? The cause of insomnia is usually a fear -- a fear of letting go, a fear of letting the subconscious rise, a fear of going into the world of the spirit and, perhaps, hearing something one may not wish to hear. If insomnia exists, it should be a very good indication that the person is subconsciously not willing to face something. What is it? For if you had faced everything in yourself, insomnia would be impossible. That I can promise you. But on the other hand, I want to make it quite clear that everyone who sleeps well and does not suffer from insomnia should not think that he or she is facing everything. This is a question of emotional constitution. And those who sleep very well may have other symptoms. Older people often have insomnia because, approaching the time they must go into our world, they are unconsciously aware of not having faced and settled everything according to their personal plan. They become more and more uneasy because less time remains available. Younger people may subconsciously tell themselves that they may still fulfill their personal plan at a later period. Furthermore, those who are afraid of death can in younger years push this thought away. The nearer the time comes, the less this is possible. People may not realize this fear consciously at all. Consciously they may have a superimposed faith. All their lives they heard what their respective religions taught and -- due to inner fears -- held on to these teachings ferociously. True as a lot of these teachings are, they do not genuinely believe them. There is a great difference between believing something out of fear, and believing something after having faced your doubts and come to terms with them as well as with your fears. In such cases, the good foundation you are gaining on the path is lacking. And therefore, when approaching old age, subconsciously they know the time is approaching to go to the other side and they want to avoid this. It is as though their own unconscious said, "I will have enough time over there. I want to remain on this plane now." If the plan has not been fulfilled, the spirit of the person knows it and rebels against it. The spirit is unhappy about it, yet the unconsciousness goes on doing everything to counteract the desire of the spirit. When life approaches its end, it is as though the spirit said, "Stay here. Stay on this earth plane. Perhaps by being nervous and unrestful you will find a different way of thinking and have a different reaction and fulfill the purpose for which you have come to this earth." No older person who is really serene and is fulfilling all he or she has set out to fulfill will suffer from insomnia. It is an entirely different matter that older people do not require as much sleep, but that is not insomnia.

QUESTION: Why did Jesus call Himself the Son of Man?

ANSWER: Jesus, the highest created Being, was incarnated as a man. The Son of God was born as any other man. That was the greatness. And when Jesus said of Himself that He was the Son of Man, He wanted to indicate in a subtle way, as He often did, that His birth happened in accord with universal law which God created in perfection. In this statement a truth can be found that has sometimes been distorted by well-meaning people who thought that the birth of Christ would be slighted if He, too, was born as other human beings.

QUESTION: At our lecture on the Bhagavad Gita it was asked why certain spiritual geniuses, like Ramakrishna and others, were actually very sick physically.

ANSWER: In some cases the reason is -- and I do not say this holds true for all -- that a highly developed spirit who undertakes a mission on this earth voluntarily takes on such suffering so as to show humanity that suffering is not so terrible, that it can be gone through and can even enrich life, provided the right spiritual and psychological attitude is assumed. In other words, as explained to you before, great religious teachers took suffering upon themselves not because it was something they had to go through -- this happens too, of course, and then this karma is used in combination with the task -- but to prove and show the world to accept suffering and use it for purification, too. Many people are ready with the excuse that they cannot do the work of purification as long as they suffer, physically or otherwise. This always serves as a pretext. They claim that if they did not have this or that difficulty or pain, they would certainly do it, but this way they are not able to. Great religious teachers want to set an example. This is very important. If all spiritual leaders and teachers had a perfectly easy life, people would say, "This way it is easy. He has nothing to worry about. He is healthy, his daily bread is taken care of. He can devote his time and energy to such luxuries." But a leader who sets the example of attaining his goal on the path of development while having his own difficulties brings a great deal more than the mere words of the teachings. Often this is the reason why such very great ones voluntarily choose a hardship, even though it is not in their karma anymore. It might also be that a karma is still to be paid off and these two tasks -- the teaching and the paying off -- are combined. We cannot generalize and it is not necessary to know what holds true in which case. It is sufficient to see that it is possible to suffer and to develop at the same time.

QUESTION: Is it correct that Jesus is the greatest example of the one and Ghandi of the other? Jesus voluntarily accepting the suffering, Ghandi paying off a karma?

ANSWER: Yes, that is right.

QUESTION: If there is a danger that people might think somebody who has an easy life can therefore, in peace, turn to spiritual matters, isn't there also a danger that, to one born with afflictions, spirituality serves as an escape?

ANSWER: You cannot do justice to all. Someone who just does not have the goodwill can always find an excuse, no matter what. In one case an easy life will be used as a rationale, while the very same person may use the difficulty in another teacher as an excuse not to work spiritually. By the same token, the relative perfection and love of one teacher may be used as an excuse not to be able to do it oneself: "For him it is easy, he is so advanced; if I could see an ordinary, failing human being work that way, that would convince me" -- while the very person raising such objections may use the imperfection of another teacher as an excuse. Excuses are always handy. You all know that. Many of you have gone through this stage yourselves. There are all kinds of teachers and leaders, each working in his or her own way. This variation should serve to open your eyes to your own rationalizations. It must be said, however, that turning away because a spiritual leader has a difficult life lends itself less to rationalization. You see, your subconscious struggle against this path is always busy finding believable rationalizations. The more believable they are, the better they serve the unwilling part of the human being. All of you who are busy with the image-finding know that you must not be misled when you find an unrealistic current hiding behind a rational excuse. You must look under it just as carefully as when it is irrational.

QUESTION: Will you please tell us how to recognize an organized spirit, either incarnated or from the spirit world?

ANSWER: You can recognize a spirit -- we will not discuss a human being -- by what it tells you regarding purification and its work in the Plan of Salvation. But I will purposely not give you more detailed information on this. For, on the one hand, it might influence your subconscious, which should move freely. On the other hand, it may lead others to think that you, being a medium, use what you have heard. So, for the time being, it is better that you be ignorant in this connection. In addition, your knowledge might influence the spirits to the extent that they can use it. Be content, all of you who participate in this circle, to simply see what happens, and learn from this test. What the spirits tell about purification work and of their tasks will be their identification. You should then discuss it. And, incidentally, I want to say that your discussion after the last session was a very productive one. All the spirits who attended then are here tonight because they have been greatly influenced by your discussion and they were helped very much, not so much when you talked to them as by the discussion afterward, among yourselves.

QUESTION: Is there any possibility of reaching a very sick friend who does not recognize me anymore?

ANSWER: That might be possible, but not for the average human being. You would need to have attained a high state of purification which none of my friends here have reached.

QUESTION: What did Jesus mean when He said, "Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink of His blood, He has no life in you"?

ANSWER: Of course, you realize, my friends, that this saying is entirely symbolic. As I have said repeatedly, the flesh means the earth matter that has to be accepted. The question for humanity always revolves around the unwillingness to accept the difficulties of life with all its obstacles. You reject matter, you reject the difficulty of life, you try to escape these difficulties by various, often unconscious means. Imbibing matter, symbolized by Jesus' body which came from man, means to say yes to this earth life and all it stands for, good and bad. Everything is included in that. It may be a good mediation exercise to think what earth life includes and what should be accepted. Many people reject different things, even good things, either out of fear to sin, or of fear that these good things bring increased unhappiness. The symbolism of Jesus' blood is pain. Blood is associated with pain. You also have to drink pain, my friends. Again, accept it instead of escaping from it. Accept it in a healthy way, not fleeing it. Accept it as a necessary byproduct of life and your own temporary state of imperfection. Accept it as the effect you have set in motion through your own inner causes. And if you drink the pain instead of turning away from it, you will be revived and come out of pain, as Jesus demonstrated by His death and spiritual resurrection. That is the symbolism of these words.

QUESTION: In astrology it is said that the flesh is the matter and the blood the emotions. Is this explanation valid?

ANSWER: Exactly, that is what I have explained. Pain is always felt in the emotional body.

QUESTION: Will you explain the saying of Jesus, "Come as a little child?"

ANSWER: The childlike attitude that Jesus refers to is the lack of prejudice so necessary in the approach to this whole path. Prejudice is something extremely widespread and general. We can observe human beings who are constantly suffering because of the prejudice of others. Why are they suffering? If there is a consistency here, this is a good indication of an image and the chances are that they themselves have the greatest prejudices, perhaps in a different way. Prejudice is a wall of darkness, while a child is usually without prejudice, an unwritten page, at least so far as the outer subtle body is concerned. All these influences that later form prejudices and images have not yet had a chance to work and build such a wall. That is why children can often approach truth with clearer eyes than grown-ups.

At the risk of boring you, I must come back again to images, for that is our main concern now. Another indication of help in finding your images is to think where your prejudices are. And later, when more of your images come to the surface, you will clearly understand why you have them, what defense mechanism and rationalization has made you adopt them. What does the word "prejudice" mean to you emotionally? Everyone has a different concept of this word. What people usually are most emotional about concerns the prejudice to which they happen to be most sensitive, and they overlook the fact that prejudices also exist in their own minds. Perhaps these are even stronger than those that one encounters in others. One who is constantly haunted by the prejudices of others finds a pattern here to look into, to dig for. This would be a strong indication that there is an image in the soul which magnetically attracts prejudice. Therefore you project on others what you actually feel in a different way yourself.

Another hint, my dear ones: Think of what you are constantly concerned with. For one person it will be rejection, for another prejudice, for a third the fear that somebody will steal something from him -- each has a pet idea. Become clear about yours. Do not go on living with all these emotions without clarifying them. Once you have clarified them, you will get a good idea what to search for. There are so many who feel rejected. Those who constantly feel rejected should think, "Perhaps I am rejecting others in one form or another." It may be done out of fear, it may be done because you are so afraid of rejection that you reject others before they can reject you. And then, when they react, you are hurt because you have been rejected. Yes, my dear ones, that goes on constantly. We see these soul forms. Only an extremely wise human being will react to your obsession with rejection in such a way that the vicious circle between you will be avoided. That is, a mature person will not hook in. But most people, in one form or another, are so insecure that your warding-off attitude will have an effect on them. Then you misunderstand and hurt each other -- and reject each other. The only way to break the circle is by not waiting for others to be the first to open their arms to you, in spite of the soul picture that your emotional currents show. Forget about your own vanity and insecurity and open your arms yourself, and then see what happens.

QUESTION: I understand that when we are reincarnated we have no memory of our previous lives. Now, when we get to the beyond, after this life, do we then have the memory of previous lives, at least for a short moment and then forget it or do we carry these memories with us as long as we are in the beyond?

ANSWER: That depends entirely on the case, mostly on the development of the entity, and also on some other factors. Generally and briefly I may say this: As a rule, when souls return to

their spiritual home, they will, after a while -- not always immediately, sometimes sooner, sometimes later -- be in a position to see either the incarnation before their last one and that they remember in part quite well, or several preceding ones, depending on the case. They may also see the past life plan and how this is connected with previous incarnations. In some cases it is necessary to see a few incarnations in order to evaluate the task and the cause and effect going from one life to the next. Thus, the personality will see whatever is important for judging and evaluating its progress, or lack of it. Since all entities are trained to become strong in self-evaluation, each soul is always given the chance to pass judgment on itself first -- to form plans for activities, for learning and purification in the Spirit World, as well as for advance planning for the next incarnation. Only when proper self-evaluation is still lacking do the higher spirits step in. For this purpose, certain past lives have to be uncovered. Whatever is uncovered remains with the spirit in the beyond and the memory is only taken away during life on earth. When the spirit comes back the next time, other incarnations will be shown to it.

Only upon reaching certain important stages of overall development -- decisive milestones -- is the spirit given the whole chain, its entire life from the time of its creation and the Fall down to each individual existence. That may occur at various high points on the upward path. At every few hundred incarnations or so there may be such a point. And when the cycle of incarnations is completed, then the degree of consciousness is so raised that it is no longer a question of preventing the struggling soul from gaining harmful and hindering knowledge, or helping the soul to regain some favorable knowledge. It will all be there. And what you then choose to forget is up to you. You forget things, or you consider them useful to remember. That is up to your free will. But when the cycle of incarnations is over and the soul is ready to return home, it is no longer necessary that it be helped, forcefully, with certain measures, to remember, as it is done before this stage is reached. Does that answer your question?

QUESTION: Yes, in a way. But the purpose of my question was to find out whether one is aware between incarnations or not.

ANSWER: Of course, I just said that.

QUESTION: But isn't that a burden?

ANSWER: No, it is not a burden, because only what will be productive and helpful will be revealed. What would be a burden remains hidden. And the more one advances, the less knowledge of previous deviations will be burdensome. Even if some information is not exactly pleasant, it may be necessary in order to accomplish whatever remains to be accomplished. You cannot do so if you do not realize where, why and how you have failed. Compare it with a child going to school, from one class to another. While in the middle of learning, it does not have the perspective to scan the whole curriculum. The child learns its lessons day by day. But there are subjects on which it may have to particularly concentrate in the next semester. I realize that this comparison is inadequate, but in some way it is like that.

QUESTION: In the last lecture it was mentioned that clairvoyants can see the aura, but human beings do not always carry pictures of their sphere with them. How can that be?

ANSWER: What is it you do not understand?

QUESTION: Well, what one is doing and what one is, is always outpicturing, and that creates the sphere.

ANSWER: Each person has many spheres. You cannot live in every sphere at the same time. Therefore, you do not "carry" it with you, so to speak. This is symbolic. Broadly speaking, you have your higher self, your lower self with all its different gradations, and you have all these in-between stages. Each creates a different sphere. According to the life you lead, the occupation of your mind and heart, you reside -- symbolically speaking -- in the sphere that is the outpicturing of those attitudes and trends. And therefore the other spheres are for the moment blurred, they are in the background, yet they are yours as well. They may come into the foreground at a different period of your life. It is very difficult to make you understand. I have no other way to explain this.

QUESTION: Eventually do all spheres of an entity become one?

ANSWER: Absolutely. It is only as long as the personality is split that each part of the personality has a sphere. Do not take the word "split" in the medical sense, please. No unpurified person is one, for you have so many different and contradictory currents and these are splits. Purification means one-ness.

QUESTION: If some of our dreams are sent to us by the Spirit World in order to teach us a lesson, why then are they so covered by symbolism?

ANSWER: In the first place let us not say a dream is "sent." Dreams are not really sent. This is difficult for my human friends to understand, but there is a difference between the so-called psychological dream and the spiritual dream. The dream that is given by the Spirit World is really a memory of your sojourn in the Spirit World while your body was asleep. You know that often you experience events in sleep. You are taught or advised about something and then you can take a memory along to help bring out what your soul has been impressed with. Even without such a memory, this soul-impression from a spiritual experience will eventually affect your life, your endeavors, your attitudes. But often it is helpful and more effective if this is a fortified picture. The reasons that dreams are blurred by complicated symbols are manifold. I could not go into that thoroughly in a simple answer. It would need at least a lecture on this subject, which I may give at a later period. But for now, I would like to say this: There are so many levels of the human personality, as you all know, and they all have their various messages to convey. One blurs into the other. That is one reason for the distortions.

The second reason is that the language in the Spirit World is a picture language. When you are in the human state, accustomed to a completely different mode of expression, the symbolism of the pictures is something you have to translate. This, incidentally, is one of the reasons why it is so very hard for a spirit to express itself in human language. It is a limitation. Imagine it in the sense of translating a text from a foreign language. If you are not very familiar with that language and you have to translate the meaning into the language that is familiar to you, it will sometimes be a difficult, laborious task. It needs effort. You have to think. Perhaps you have to look up a word in a dictionary. That is the difficulty here also. The phenomenon in itself is not confusing. In fact, it is much less confusing than your human language, which is so much more limited.

And a third reason, last but certainly not least, is another element: Again, you all know that people have resistance to finding out truth about themselves. That resisting part may interfere when your soul wants to convey a message to you. One part of your being wants to give and show freely to your consciousness what the inner problem is. It projects these pictures, but then there is this other part in you at work that tries to blur such messages, whether they are from the part of your personality that wishes to advance and become more aware and conscious, or memories from the Spirit World that wish to serve the same purpose in a different way, by a different method that often you do not know how to distinguish. It is not important that you do so as long as you get the message itself. The resisting part desires to cover up, to camouflage messages that lead you toward self-recognition and inner change. That is all it can do, if your will is strong enough. It cannot prohibit, even if the outer will is still paralyzed, the Higher Self speaking and working and showing you the way. This often happens through dreams. But the lower self always interferes. It sends in disturbances. Radio messages can be interfered with in a similar way. All these elements are responsible for the difficulty to interpret dream language.

QUESTION: Is one of the reasons you gave just now somewhat parallel to the reason why Jesus spoke in parables and why the Bible is symbolic?

ANSWER: Part of the reason, but not entirely. The reasons why Jesus spoke in parables are manifold too. For instance, humankind at that time was less developed. The state of mind of humankind in general was more like that of a child. When you explain things to a child, you do it also more in a picture language, in simplified terms. When the child grows up, it becomes more intellectualized and more open for abstract ideas. An adult is capable of understanding an idea or a concept in abstract terms. If you want to convey an idea to a child, if you want to tell a story to a child, you do it through a picture book. The same holds true for humanity as a whole. It has, however, grown a little bit since the time of Jesus and is therefore more receptive to abstract ideas. Incidentally, Jesus did not speak that way to some of His disciples or to close friends. To them He spoke very abstractly and not at all in these parables. Parables were easier for the masses to understand than -- they are often less prone to misinterpretation, either willfully or ignorantly. The picture language used for children or used in parables has nothing to do with the picture language of the Spirit World. The latter is infinitely more subtle and has a much wider horizon than the human language. On the other hand, human picture language is more limited than ordinary human language. You must distinguish between the two kinds of picture languages. The one you experience in dreams only appears more limited to you but actually is not.

QUESTION: What is the difference between sleep and being under a general anesthesia? And how is it with local anesthesia? Do the subtle bodies leave that particular area of the physical body?

ANSWER: Sleep, as well as anesthesia, or any other form of unconsciousness, means that one or several of the subtle bodies leave the physical body. The etheric double, as it is often called, is the subtle body most similar to the physical one. It is of subtle matter, but of a much coarser texture than the other subtle bodies. After death, this etheric double disintegrates -- not always immediately, but after some time. A manifesting ghost, or any earth-bound spirit is an entity that has maintained its etheric double due to its inner state of mind.

During natural sleep, the etheric double remains in the physical body, while the astral body leaves. If sleep is very deep, other layers or subtle bodies may be slightly drawn out too, but, if sleep is natural, the etheric double will remain. Therefore, it is sensitive to pain or other physical sensations. Under anesthesia, the etheric double goes out: therefore one is insensitive to physical pain in that state. In various states of trance or hypnosis this may also happen, but not in all trance states.

QUESTION: What subtle bodies remain in a state of very deep anesthesia?

ANSWER: Then all the subtle bodies are drawn out, but, of course, they are still connected with the physical body by a cord, or elastic spiral-like band, also of subtle matter. This cord is not severed. The connection still exists, so that when the temporary state of unconsciousness is ended, the band will bring the subtle bodies back. When this cord is severed, death occurs. In local anesthesia, the respective organ of the subtle body will remove itself from the physical body.

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