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## SHAME: A LEGACY OF CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES, EVEN FAVORABLE ONES

Greetings, my dearest friends. Blessings for all of you. Blessed be your efforts, your progress, and your life as a whole. May tonight's lecture again help you advance a step forward on your path. Perhaps it may also encourage some new friends to enter this path. This lecture is primarily destined to reach inner areas ready to be uncovered in deep self-exploration.

Your every effort, even if at the moment you feel discouraged or hopeless, must be crowned with success if you persevere. What may now appear as defeat will soon prove to be victory, an absolutely necessary experience. Please remember, when you go through a difficult period, that the difficulty is not caused by this work, but by your unresolved problems that still exist. Remind yourself that awareness is the key -- becoming aware of what is in you at the moment. My friends, you are not yet sufficiently conscious of what really bothers you. If you realize this, you will know how to proceed in the right direction. You will not be in despair, because you will see the missing link and cease to be confused and lost.

Tonight I should like to discuss two specific topics. At first they will seem unrelated, but they are not, and we shall establish their connection. The first topic is shame. This was discussed in the past in certain connections, such as the shame of the higher self, or shame of certain shortcomings. I now will focus on this topic from a very specific perspective.

When you pursue this path, you discover certain areas in yourself that you are ashamed to acknowledge, even to yourself. What you may be ashamed of may be faults, but not always and not necessarily. You may be as ashamed of very legitimate needs as you are of faults, or of assets, for that matter. First you are not even aware that such shames exist. It takes a considerable amount of time and effort before you become aware of those facets within yourself you are deeply ashamed to face. You cover these facets with a pretense that is the reverse of your specific shame.

Slowly but surely, as your pathwork progresses in the right direction, you learn to admit the shame to yourself, but are not yet able to reveal it to others. When this phase is reached, a certain amount of self-deception has been eliminated. Whatever your personal particular shame, and consequent pretense may be, varies. But whatever it is, when you come face to face with such an aspect, it takes a considerable amount of struggle and courage to admit what so far has been inadmissible. When the struggle is overcome, a significant amount of inner freedom and ease has been reached. Such a struggle rarely culminates in one ultimate victory. The process may have to be repeated because usually the psyche is not ready to face all its pretenses at once. To the degree you stop pretending to yourself, and face what you had regarded as too shameful to admit, you will feel emotional ease and comfort. Those who have reached the point of such self-admission can exactly pinpoint their shame, their pretense, their self-deception. They have indeed reached a major step in

self-realization. They are way ahead compared to those who are as yet unaware of their own shame and pretense and who therefore believe they are not hiding anything.

But then there is a further step. This next step will give you a wonderful opportunity to measure your liberation. How freely can you discuss your shame with your helper? The degree of ease and emotional comfort with which you can do this indicates your inner freedom. This important mark on the path is often bypassed, and then you gradually forget the significance of what you had admitted to yourself. As long as the partial admission is not fully explored, the pretense continues toward the outer world, and even toward the self.

I should like to give specific advice in this respect. First of all, keep your attention alert in this direction. The first stage on this particular road within the path is to become aware of what you have so far hidden from yourself. When this is done to some degree, ask yourself if you have utilized such findings, or whether you have allowed them to become hazy again. True liberation cannot come in half-measures. Making the conscious recognition half-conscious again is due to the specific reason, my friends, that you may not yet be ready and free enough to express to another person -- your helper -- the shame that you have finally admitted to yourself. And because you cannot make yourself admit it, you becloud it again. The recognition becomes foggy again.

It would be much better and vastly more constructive for you to admit to yourself, "I can't yet bring myself to reveal and discuss this or that aspect of my personality." Do not force yourself, because then your anxiety will cause such a strong counter-current that the benefit may be lost and you would present the aspect you find shameful in a slightly distorted, untruthful, colored way. Hence the gain would be questionable. This would make you feel guilty and, in turn, breed new problems in the relationship between yourself and your helper. This is more harmful than the free admission, "I am not ready to reveal myself." In this admission you are honest. You do not use too much force. Then you do not breed guilt and therefore resentment. This is infinitely better than speaking out of a dutiful and harried self-discipline, doing something you are not yet ready for.

Ascertain in your daily review, "This or that factor brings me embarrassment. I feel too uncomfortable to discuss it." Come to terms with it, instead of neglecting to face the significance of your lack of freedom. Find out where you stand, how far you have come, what remains to be accomplished to gain your freedom from shame and pretense? Come to terms with your restraint and inhibition, and tell yourself that perhaps in a week, in a month, in a year, you may get to this point. But in the meantime observe yourself and perhaps, little by little, without forcing yourself, you will reveal more than you thought you could. At the beginning you will be uncomfortable and anxious, embarrassed and inhibited, but each time it will become easier. As you gain inner comfort while freely expressing what seemed to be so shameful, suddenly you will see that your entire shame was an illusion. This is your yardstick of liberation.

I advise all of you to think about this specific part of the path. Are you aware of what you are ashamed? If not, you will need to find it. If you are, to what degree do you tackle the issue? Take it into your self-confrontation, by yourself, and probe deeply, bringing out the issue that causes your shame. Do not try to find immediate reasons and answers, explanations and justifications. Simply admit those aspects that cause you shame. Write down in exact and precise terms what it is and why you feel you need to be ashamed. The usual answer is that you are afraid of appearing less in the eyes of others, less lovable and respectable, inviting belittlement and humiliation. Find how this

general observation applies specifically to you. Then challenge yourself to confront the issue of discussing it openly. Observe the increase of inner freedom as you succeed, even if only to a small degree at a time. Maintain your awareness. Do not force your self-revelation unduly, though some courage may be necessary. If you decide to wait, do not forget the issue; continue to observe your daily reactions from this angle. You may be sure that your deep-rooted unresolved problems stand in direct relationship to your shame, your inhibitions and your daily disharmonious feelings.

Each private session gives you an opportunity to open this particular door a little further. Each time you will find it easier to discuss what was formerly inadmissible. After each session, note your reactions, how far have you come, compared to previous occasions, in revealing yourself, and how much you still falsify and present a different front, if ever so subtly? Perhaps a good way to begin would be to discuss with your helper how you still have restraints and feel that you are as yet unwilling or unable to give them up. In this way you touch upon the general area of your shame, without as yet going into details. This may prepare the way and create the proper climate. It goes without saying that what is "inadmissible" applies much less to certain facts in your past life than to an emotional pretense, a falsification of personality. The latter is infinitely more damaging.

You cannot begin to know how important this approach is for your progress and your inner health. I also advise those of my friends who are helpers to be aware of this factor, not only in themselves but also as an issue in those they are helping. They should remember that to the degree they are still unfree in this respect, they cannot expect the freedom of self-revelation from those whom they help. It is so important to remember not to whip yourself with self-condemnation if you do not succeed, but to quietly observe where you stand.

Those who claim that there is no area within themselves they cannot freely and comfortably discuss, have not found it yet. They do not see to what degree they still live in inhibition and self-deception. If you discover that you are not as far as you thought, this should not make you uneasy. If you go about your self-discovery in the way I advise, accepting your present state and working on it in a relaxed way, there need be no compulsion, no guilt, no impatience with yourself -- only acknowledgement of your good will.

The second topic I wish to discuss is something we have looked at only in a fleeting way so far. For a long time, in this work to understand and resolve images, misconceptions, distorted unhealthy attitudes, in short, everything breeding problems in your life, we concentrated on unhappy, painful childhood events and conditions. We found that they were responsible for creating psychic conditions damaging to your self-unfoldment. Hurts and frustrations in childhood have been recognized as the cause for deeply embedded problems in the personality. Now I would like to shed light on the exact opposite. Apparently favorable and positive factors in childhood can be equally responsible for inner distortions.

Offhand, this may appear quite impossible, for it seems so much the opposite of what is currently believed. But let us look a little closer at this subject. You may note that I said apparently favorable conditions. Your evaluation of what is good or bad, constructive or destructive, right or wrong, is often tied in with what is momentarily pleasurable or unpleasurable, or with what conforms or is contrary to temporary, superimposed values. You may deem something constructive and good because it seems pleasant to you, but you may also say yes to something unpleasant because it conforms to the superimposed, arbitrary value system you often follow.

I sometimes mention the difference between eternal values and to temporary values. Temporary values may remain the same for centuries, but that does not make them eternal; they are temporary if their essence is non-eternal. They come into being because of the needs of a particular civilization and remain because of humanity's limited ability to grasp eternal values. The temporary needs are dictated by the conditions of a specific society. Social, economic, political factors play a role, as does geography, as well as the type of spirit predominantly incarnated in the society. For example, values differ drastically in a patriarchy from those in a matriarchy. They differ in a monarchy and in a democracy. Many other factors also contribute to determine the value system of a society. Due to people's inclination to laziness, they blindly follow what is established, and retain values long past their temporary usefulness. People's self-alienation and lack of independent thinking make them cling to what is handed to them.

This is why it is so important on this path to question everything you accept or reject and find your own reasons for doing so. This is the only way eternal values can be found. Each case, each incident, each issue must be tested and probed, questioned and sincerely answered from the depth of one's own convictions. They must be deeply examined. Only then can divine attributes be found and accepted -- not because everyone says so, not because societal standards, but because one finds it to be true oneself. The divine attributes and eternal values are unchangeable in themselves, but their application keeps changing. It is the exact opposite with temporary values. Temporary values often ignore the eternal ones, but even when they appear to be the same, their climate is very different.

Love, truth, wisdom, courage -- what is good and constructive in the long run, and therefore for all concerned -- are the sole criteria of eternal values. These values are not accessible through blind acceptance. Eternal values may seem pleasurable while going against the temporary value system, or they may be unpleasurable yet conform to the temporary value system. However, if you act according to true values only because they conform to the temporary value system and remain unaware of the eternal values, you will not be at peace with yourself. Any personal choice and decision, any action or emotional direction or attitude, is dependent on whether or not the decision derives from one or the other value system. There is no formula. You cannot come into selfhood by adhering to unexamined values, but by examining, feeling, and living according to your own perception. Then you can say, "This is the way it is."

The treatment of children has undergone a drastic change in your society in recent times. Until a relatively short time ago, restriction and severity were generally accepted as the right way. The parents' unresolved problems found an outlet in such rules and they acted out their pent-up hostility by following the existing value system. In recent times, the norm has been permissiveness, lack of discipline, indulgence. This does not mean that the parents' pent-up hostility does not communicate itself to the child. They follow the new values by using indulgence and permissiveness to compensate for their latent hostility. Conforming to the new rules may outwardly appear as love. Real love may certainly exist as well, but to the degree it is diluted by guilt for the hostility which is not recognized, as well as by the guilt for not really conforming to present values, the pleasurable indulgence and permissiveness will create as many problematic conditions in the child's psyche as hurts and frustrations do.

If parents are not sufficiently motivated by love and are not farsighted enough to restrict the child, if necessary, then their guilt, confusion and inability to cope with the problems that a child represents will create an inner disturbance. To atone for having common human failings, such as impatience or irritation, parents may overindulge and pamper their child. The child may experience this as favorable and pleasurable at the moment, but there may be a negative effect. It is not the act or its consequences alone that create the damage, but the guilt, confusion and conflict of the parents. The identical act may derive from overindulgence, or from a clear, unconfused psyche. The effect on the child depends on whether it is one or the other. Moreover, the child's inborn health or its lack determines whether it is affected by the parents' unresolved problems. This applies not only to inflicted hurt, but equally to pleasurable overindulgence. It too will have no adverse effect on the child's psyche if no corresponding problems exist.

Now let us examine what the specific effects of apparently pleasurable circumstances, such as growing up in a permissive, pampering, indulgent environment, are. The psyche gets accustomed to it, and when life later prohibits similar gratification, the personality is driven to seek to duplicate the pleasurable state it once enjoyed. He or she seeks what was experienced as love during childhood, over and over again, but cannot find it because other people, not bound by guilt, will have no need to atone for it and therefore will not provide such pampering. The inability to repeat what one once had causes hurt, anger and hostility. The insistence on having the protection, and the real as well as pseudo-love enjoyed in childhood, is connected with the hurts and frustrations suffered. In other words, just as the parent may overindulge the child to substitute for feeling irritated, and unwilling to tackle the problems the child has, so may the child use the compulsive need for overindulgence to compensate for the negative currents in the parents that it unconsciously feels -- and sometimes even consciously experiences.

It is time, my dear friends, to examine those aspects in your childhood which you experienced in a pleasurable way. It took considerable insight into yourself to uncover the hurts and frustrations. A child is apt to take for granted, and as a permanent condition, what it experiences. If the child is hurt, it may suffer from it, rebel against it, but a child cannot evaluate its life circumstances in objective terms. The same holds true with the pleasurable aspects. Both are part of the general climate the child does not question. Therefore you need considerable probing and self-examination to become specifically aware of these elements. The experience of the work that some of you have already done in the past, pertaining to the hurts and pain during childhood, will now prove useful in that it will be easier to become aware of the opposite, the pleasure. This will require attention, concentration, and self-examination.

When you make some headway in this respect, you will discover how important it is to understand the totality of your present personality, how much the past plays a role in your mental and emotional makeup. You will see how you strive to reproduce not only your feelings about what you did not have, but also about what you did have. In other words, you not only attempt to correct what you lacked in your childhood, but you also try to re-create what you did have then. This angle is vastly overlooked in the exploration of human psychic disturbances.

I again emphasize that conduct alone does not indicate whether the action taken is right and constructive. The inner conditions, motivations and the underlying unification of the psyche make all the difference. In one instance it may be right to be lenient, in another to restrict and even punish. Those who depend on outer rules to tell them what alternative to choose on what occasion,

must be lost and confused, and their actions will prove unsuccessful. But those who know themselves and understand their inner problems will also know what choices to make, even long before their inner problems are completely resolved. One is then in a position to act and to be in accord with eternal values. This applies to the treatment of children as well as to any other human relationship or situation. Confusion always signals that knowledge about the self is missing.

So, my friends, examine this new angle. Be on the lookout for the following: to the degree you felt unloved, the conflicted feelings of love and guilt will have damaged you. Both play a role only because psychic unrealities were already in you before you were born into this life. You will see that a great deal of anger and resentment exist not only in connection to what you did not have, but also in respect to what you did have and wish to continue having.

Offhand, you may wonder what the connection between tonight's two topics is, and why I have chosen to discuss them in one lecture. But once both subjects are more profoundly understood, the connection is quite evident. It may be constructive, my friends, if I now let you participate. Can any of you see a connecting link? Who has an idea?

PARTICIPANT: I think it would be a very shameful feeling not to be grateful for what was meant to be good, if you didn't feel it was good, or if you were given something you did not want.

ANSWER: This may be quite true, but what I was actually referring to was not that you were given something you did not want, but something you very much enjoyed; however, you may be as unaware of the damage as of a hurt.

PARTICIPANT: If a girl loves her father very much she may ask for the same love in a man, later. The child may experience the love for the father, almost in a sexual way, and later she wants the same love from the man, but can't get it, then she may have a shame in this respect.

GUIDE: This is a good example.

PARTICIPANT: If parents are neglectful in some ways and, through their guilt, are particularly indulgent toward a child when it is sick, the child will want the sickness in order to get the love. Later in life, when the person is sick, he will be disappointed and hurt when the love is not forthcoming. At the same time, he will be ashamed for using sickness to get love.

GUIDE: This is a good example, too.

PARTICIPANT: You may also be ashamed when you are told you are loved as a child, but don't feel it.

GUIDE: Yes.

QUESTION: Shame is always connected with guilt, isn't it?

ANSWER: Not always. It is also possible to feel shame without guilt, and guilt without shame.

**PARTICIPANT:** When the child receives an allowance and he feels guilty for keeping it, while not actually deserving it, he later feels shame for receiving a salary.

**GUIDE:** Such a case requires further understanding of why this guilt and shame for having received an allowance exists.

**PARTICIPANT:** I know a case of an adopted child where the parents gave the child too much leeway, continuously admiring it. This was probably due to lack of real love. Later, when the child was about eighteen years old, he became even more demanding and the parents could not gratify these demands. I think the child was ashamed of not having his real parents.

**GUIDE:** This may be so. These are partly good examples. Such participation will help you to assimilate my words better. Let me now show you, in principle, the connection between the damage of pleasurable childhood experience and shame.

If a human being wants to reproduce pleasurable childhood conditions in later life, it indicates a desire to remain a child. It indicates greed and lack of self-responsibility. This may be difficult for some to admit, particularly for those who pride themselves on being mature adults. Most people wish to be regarded as mature, while at the same time desiring the advantages of childhood. The desire to be a child, as well as anger for the frustration, must create shame. This tendency completely contradicts the ideal which is superimposed and is presented to the world and to the conscious self.

As you know, the idealized self-image denies all limitations. It pretends possessing all that the personality feels is lacking. The pretense of the idealized self is the crux of the matter. The pretense not only hides what the child felt to be missing in its life, but also what it did have and what it wants to continue having. If you examine your idealized self, this double pretense must be found. Underneath lies its opposite. To reveal it seems a dreadful admission. You cannot discover the shame if you do not envisage the exact opposite of your pretense. It is this opposite which creates the deep shame and which is also connected to both pleasant and unpleasant childhood conditions.

The consideration of the exact opposite of the idealized self-image should now be taken into this work by all of you. Look for the shame, and how it also connects to certain pleasurable circumstances in childhood. Perhaps you were praised for some real qualities you suspected you did not possess to the same degree your parents claimed. Or maybe you still think these qualities are absent, because they are diluted with your various self-doubts and distortions. Find what is specifically significant for you. If you study this lecture and work through it, I promise that your liberation and progress will be considerable. This will indeed be the crux of understanding what makes you suffer, of what alienates you from life and yourself, of what makes you puzzled and confused. With this approach you have a direct key, my dearest friends, each and every one of you, each in a different way. For some friends this exploration may be premature. Many other aspects may have to be explored first. It is not always a matter of the length of time, though. Occasionally, someone who has been on the path a shorter period may discover certain aspects another individual will come across only after more extended work. It all depends on the type of character and on psychic conditions, as well as on the attitude to one's problems. Wherever you stand now, take this into consideration.

Are there any questions pertaining to this lecture?

QUESTION: If a child was a favorite and in a privileged position, is it that later he may unconsciously claim a similar privileged position? That he wants special consideration?

ANSWER: Yes, indeed. This may be absolutely unconscious, for it may be diametrically opposed to one's idealized self. If the child held this special position because it was a good child, being good then becomes an integral part of the idealized self. Goodness means also self-sacrifice and unselfishness. Yet this contradicts the claim for special treatment. In this inner confusion so much is obscure and repressed. When all the various inner demands and attitudes are out in the open, the clarification, liberation and relief must be great. I tell you, my friend, you are on the way, you are almost there. With asking this question, and the light that flickered in now [sic], you are almost there. You will also understand your specific God-image.

Love streams to each one of you. It is a vibrant force of reality. May all of you who make such valiant efforts in self-confrontation realize how meaningful and significant these efforts are. Continue -- all of you! Life will thank you for it, but I do not mean this in the sense of a rewarding or punishing God. The cosmic forces with which you come into harmony by truthful self-examination respond according to law, while self-deception and lack of awareness cannot bring you into harmony with the cosmic forces. Be blessed, every one of you, so that your continuous efforts will be strengthened, so as to become freer and happier. Be in peace, be in God!



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