

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

‘Walk While You Have the Light’



Izvor Collection



P R O S V E T A

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Izvor Collection – No. 244



P R O S V E T A

Chapter One

So you will never again have to say,
‘If only I had known’

Human beings are perfectly capable of understanding the difference between good and bad, in relation to themselves and others, and yet they keep making the same mistakes. It may be difficult to admit it, but it is so. You can explain things to them and they understand and agree, but then they do exactly the opposite of what they assure you they have understood. Why? Because it is not enough to address the intellect; you have to touch a person's feelings. You cannot really rely on someone who says, 'Yes, I understand,' because if their feelings and desires urge them in a different direction, that is the way they will go.

So, I have no illusions. I know that the possibilities of a spiritual Master are limited. His task is to enlighten people, to help them understand how to get out of the morass they find themselves in and to describe to them the marvellous realms awaiting those who succeed, but he remains powerless to change their inclinations and needs. Only the disciples themselves have the power to

do this, when they sense that by doing so they will find salvation.¹ In fact, even if they sense this, it’s still not enough. Yes, even if they wish with all their heart to commit to the path of light, a third difficulty arises, the most terrible of all: something in them, which we call habit, prevents them from changing direction.

Let me give you a very simple example. A programme about famine in Africa is shown on television. Everyone who sees it understands that something must be done about it, that it is inhuman to let people continue to suffer in that way. Many, in fact, will be so upset by the sight of all this suffering that they will be reduced to tears. But, suppose you tell them what they could do to make sure that these people have something to eat, how many will be willing to abandon their habits and their tranquil way of life? How many will be ready to forgo their own comfort and pleasure by using even part of their savings to ease the sufferings of these unfortunate people? Well, this is exactly what happens when it comes to changing our way of life: our thoughts and feelings may be in agreement, but there is a great distance between that and getting our will to overcome its bad habits of laziness and selfishness.

When they listen to my talks or read my books, I know that some people think, ‘Poor man! How can he believe that it’s easy to get people to follow

the path of wisdom, justice and love?’ No, I am not so naïve as to believe that it is easy. I talk in order to enlighten those who come to listen to me, because all inner change begins with understanding, but I am well aware that the rest does not depend on me. I cannot make anybody love truth if they prefer illusions.

In fact, it would be true to say that it is when you discover truth, when you love the truth, that your difficulties really begin. I discovered these difficulties in myself first. I realized that you can receive the light and love the light, but when it comes to getting your psychic self to surrender to that light and be suffused with it, my God, what a time it takes and how difficult it is! At times, it seems to be docile and willing to be moulded, and then it suddenly resists and rebels and gains the upper hand, and everything has to be done all over again. But it is important not to be discouraged, because, little by little, your psychic matter does eventually give in. As long as there is understanding and love, success is bound to follow one day. In any case, of one thing you can be sure: without understanding and love, it is useless to hope for even the tiniest of results.

Understanding and wanting what is good may not be easy, but it is still less difficult than the third phase, which is putting it into practice. People will readily admit that it is better to be sober, to remain

faithful to their husband or wife, to control their outbursts of anger and to act honestly. They may sincerely want to achieve these things, but when temptation comes how can they resist? Resistance is possible only if the question is quite clear on the three levels of mind, heart and will, and the greatest difficulty lies in persuading the will to change its habits.

A bad habit is like a stereotype, imprinted on our subtle bodies.² Once the imprint exists, it reproduces itself indefinitely. Even if you regret the failing, it does not make much difference: you will repeat it and regret it all over again. It is an endless series of failings and remorse. More often than not, all your struggles, tears and contrition are ineffectual, because remorse, too, becomes imprinted: it follows every fault but it does not help to prevent it. It is as though the fault and the remorse are two separate entities with no connection between them. They follow each other, and that is all. Perhaps you will say that people are weak. Yes, they are weak. They are weak because they are ignorant. Once they have the light they will overcome their bad habits.

And what should they do then? Replace the old stereotypes, the bad habits, little by little, by consciously cultivating different thoughts, different feelings and, above all, different gestures. These will be like new recordings, new imprints,

which will neutralize the old ones. The old ones are not erased, for nothing ever disappears in nature, but they are overlaid by the new ones, which will function in their place.

A man once confided in me that he was irresistibly attracted to very young girls. He asked for my advice, because he realized how dangerous this attraction was but did not know how to fight the tendency. This is the advice I gave him: 'Try meeting a young girl who leaves you indifferent. With her you will find it easier to keep control of yourself, and you can begin consciously to practise keeping your distance. Then, you can meet another and then another, and continue to behave correctly. In this way you will gradually create a new attitude within yourself. This new attitude will gain the upper hand, so that when you find yourself in the company of young girls who would once have caused you to lose your head, your behaviour will be beyond reproach. But be on your guard! Continue to practise with those who are no temptation to you.'

But, what generally happens? Exactly the opposite: people make a beeline for the people and things that attract them and turn their back on the rest. If you want to overcome a temptation or weakness, you must replace the object that constitutes a danger to you with one that is innocuous. In this way, you will create new stereotypes, which will protect you.

But even if you are not exposed to temptations that would be ruinous to you if you succumbed, you should always remember to create new and better habits in order to progress.

And did you know that it is the devil – well, let’s say the devil – that often encourages people to repent so that they will pursue their path of error with new energy and greater ardour? No, of course, you didn’t know that. Feeling sorry and crying only reinforces the opposite desire. It is as though our tears and regrets are a source of energy our desires draw on to renew their attacks. Yes, that is human nature, and those who do not understand its twists and turns and its snares will keep repeating the same mistakes.

So many people think they behave in accordance with the good that they understand and love, when, in reality, their behaviour is in complete contradiction to it. But it is impossible to get them to admit this. Why? Because they imagine that recognizing an ideal intellectually and wanting it to be true are enough for it to be so. Well, no, unfortunately that is not the case. In fact, this is where things begin to get really difficult. And this is why lucidity is one of the most important qualities for a disciple to have.

It is certainly better to behave well, but bad behaviour is not the worst thing. The worst thing is not being aware of it. Those who are incapable of

recognizing that they have behaved badly end up becoming inextricably entangled in contradictions. Their endeavours fail; they are shunned by others, and they do not understand why. They thought they were faultless and that others would approve of them, even admire them. They are upset by what happens to them and imagine that the whole world is in league against them, and this has a very negative effect on their thoughts and feelings. They rebel and, in their rebellion, lose both their light and their love. And all this just because they refuse to admit that they have failed to work on the third level, the level of realization.

It is almost pointless anyone embarking on a spiritual life if they do not understand just how tough the lower nature is and the degree of vigilance, humility and abnegation³ required to work on it. Far too many people think that, just because they have discovered a spiritual teaching, they will be transformed in no time. Not at all! It is far more difficult than they imagine to achieve mastery of their psychic life. Every human being possesses the capacity for renewal, regeneration and becoming divine, but it is a very slow process, and the progress they can achieve in this life depends on the work already begun in previous incarnations.⁴

For those who embark on a spiritual life unaware of the difficulties they will inevitably

encounter, it is impossible to make any progress and even more impossible to help others, and with so little to show for their efforts they are soon discouraged. Their instructor or spiritual guide may explain repeatedly and have the impression he has been understood, but then he sees that those who say they follow him do the exact opposite of what they seemed to have understood. In time, how would he not become tired, discouraged, even irritated? And yet the qualities required of an instructor are stability, patience and tolerance.

The sun is the example for this indispensable stability, patience and tolerance.⁵ Like the sun, therefore, a spiritual guide has to give light, and then those that are given it do what they can. I look at the sun every day, and I see that it doesn't get annoyed or become less bright or discouraged just because human beings are unable to appreciate and make use of its light. So, I tell myself that I mustn't get annoyed or become discouraged or less bright either.

I do not need anyone to explain to me how difficult it is to help human beings to improve. Even those who call themselves disciples often believe that they know what is good for them better than their Master. They want to experience things for themselves, and that is what they do. It is only some time later, after they have been badly treated and betrayed by life, that they finally understand.

At this point they would like to give others the benefit of their newly acquired knowledge, but why would anyone listen to them? They too want to experience things for themselves. This is why the wisdom that some have gained at the cost of immense effort so rarely benefits others.

Human beings have to be well and truly stung and bitten by life before they will admit that what the wise say is true. And now it is their turn to be wise. But there are not very many people who will want to benefit from their wisdom. This is why each new generation repeats the errors of those that have gone before. This is true for individuals, and it is also true for collectivities. How many people really want to draw lessons from history?

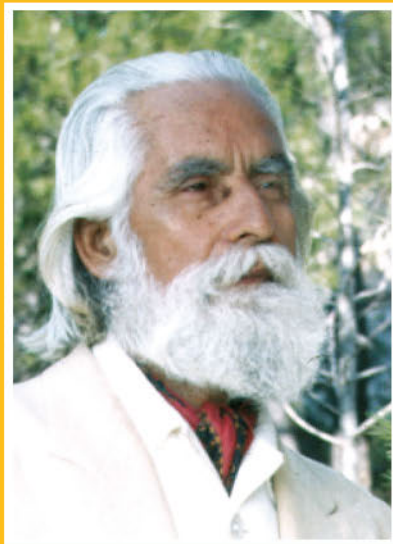
You are given light to illuminate your path. Make the decision to walk. Jesus said, *'The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you.'* The light Jesus was talking about is obviously not daylight as opposed to the darkness of night. It represents the good conditions, both inner and outer, that are given to us to help us progress.

So often, when people find themselves overwhelmed by difficulties and trials, they suddenly realize how weak and ignorant they are, and they say, 'If only I'd known!' They could have known, for at one time or another all the conditions

they needed for learning, making an effort and becoming stronger were available to them, but they ignored the good conditions they were offered. Spiritual life requires effort, and other activities, other concerns seemed more important to them at the time. ‘So, is it too late now?’ you may ask. No, it is never too late. The path of life is long, infinite in fact, and you will be given other opportunities in this or some other life. Try not to let them slip by next time, so that you will never again have to say, ‘If only I’d known!’

Notes

1. See *What is a Spiritual Master?*, Izvor 207, chap. 7: ‘A Master is there only to give light’.
2. See *True Alchemy or the Quest for Perfection*, Izvor 221, chap. 6: ‘Stereotypes’.
3. See *Man’s Two Natures, Human and Divine*, Izvor 213.
4. See *The Philosopher’s Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor 241, chap. 11: ‘The regeneration of matter: the cross and the crucible’.
5. See *In Spirit and in Truth*, Izvor 235, chap. 16: ‘The truth of the sun is in giving’.



The French philosopher and spiritual Master, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov (1900-1986), was born in Bulgaria and came to France in 1937. Although his work addresses many aspects of initiatic science, he explains: 'The questions with which we are faced will always be the same: to understand who we are, to discover the meaning of our lives and to overcome the obstacles which we find on our path. So, do not ask me to talk to you about anything else; I will always return to the same subjects: our development, our difficulties, the path to be followed and the methods we need to follow it.'

'Life is a long chain of moments that have to be lived with awareness one after the other.'

'All the efforts you make are recorded in the book of life, on high, and thanks to these efforts, many, many blessings are being prepared for you. When you receive them and you ask, "Why am I receiving these presents?", you will be told, "Because, as a result of your work, you have risen to the regions of light, and you have also brought light and peace to beings who were in darkness and distress."

'There is nothing more I can tell you. Keep walking the path of light. And what will be at the end of the path? You will find out when you arrive, and you will be dazzled.'

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

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