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## Accidents & Synchronicity: Messages from the Soul

by *Ashok Bedi, M.D.*



### Synchronistic Events

The soul often whispers to us through synchronistic

events. A synchronistic event occurs when we recognize that two or more causally unrelated events resemble each other and catch our attention. For example, you're trying to remember the name of a childhood classmate. In the course of conversation, somebody mentions the very name you had been searching for. Synchronistic events can be a powerful "heads-up", calling us to pay attention. Another example that many have experienced is the thunderclap that resounds just as we are making some very important statement. Of course, not all synchronistic events are so

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transparent, and sometimes we do not recognize a synchronistic series until we look back and see all the clues.

For example, one patient kept noticing advertisements for exercise cycles. Time and again, he opened the newspaper and there was a store advertising exercise equipment, including cycles. Then, he reported that his neighbor had an exercise cycle in his garage sale, but my patient did not buy it. For six months, he noticed no exercise cycle ads. Then he had a mild heart attack. As part of his rehabilitation program, his doctor prescribed exercise, specifically on an exercise cycle!

## Accidents

When we don't pay attention, the message has to be more powerful, perhaps in the form of an accident. Once, when I was on a radio talk show discussing dreams, a listener called in to report that, for several years, he had a recurring dream of falling off a roof, but never hitting the ground. Then he no longer had the dream. He asked me what I thought. To answer his question, I had to find out more about him -- how he lived, what sort of work he did. He told me that he worked as a roofer. He liked to live it up -- no challenge was too outrageous, no risk too great. "Doc, there's nothing I wouldn't try at least once!" he boasted. "Well," I said, "sounds as if, for you, the sky's the limit." "Oh, yeah! Try anything at least once." "So," I continued, "what was going on about the time you no longer had the falling dream?" "Well," he said, "I don't know. I was out of work for a while there. Seems

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as if I didn't have that dream after that." "Oh, you were out of work? How did that come about?" I asked.

"You see," he said, "I was up on this roof one day and just stepped off the edge. Dumbest thing I ever did! Hit the ground and broke my pelvis. Laid me up for months. Hurt, too."

"I think I understand," I replied. "Seems as if you took lots of risks without considering the consequences; always pushing the envelope. Dreams try to show us an image that balances and corrects our conscious view of things. Repeatedly, you had the falling dream. Then, when you fell, or stepped, off the roof, you no longer had the falling dream. It looks as if the dream were trying to show you how risky your lifestyle was. When you didn't get the message from the dream, the next step was the accident."

"Well, Doc," he said, now more thoughtfully, "I guess you're right. That fall sure did knock some sense into me."

## **Symptoms and Illnesses**

What happens if we don't pay attention to dreams, collapsed projections, synchronistic events, or accidents? Often, we develop symptoms and fall ill (as did my patient who suffered the mild heart attack). Illnesses often develop over time, heralded by symptoms. We don't feel well, aren't as energetic as we are accustomed to be. Symptoms alert us that our body is not functioning properly, that we are not

**taking care of ourselves adequately, or that we have contracted something noxious. Of course, medical conditions call for medical diagnosis and appropriate medical treatment. But we also do well to consider that medical and psychiatric symptoms may be encoded messages from the soul. In other words, symptoms may also be symbols.**

**It is important to clarify what is and is not a symbol, and why a symptom may mean more than the medical condition to which it refers. As I use the term, a symbol is the best possible expression for something otherwise unknown to us. Something whose meaning or reference is fully known -- like the red octagon bearing the word "STOP" -- is not a symbol in my usage. An image becomes a symbol for us only when we still find the image fascinating and meaningful, even though we are at a loss to say what its unexpressed meaning is. In this sense, a person to whom we have a powerful emotional response or reaction that we cannot account for becomes a symbol. In other words, the carrier of our projection (of a part of ourselves we don't recognize) is, for us, the best possible representation of that unknown aspect of ourselves.**

**Likewise, a medical symptom can be symbolic. We have all heard someone say, "It's all in your head!" when the doctor has been unable to identify a medical condition even though we feel miserable. The term often applied to these sorts of complaints is "psychosomatic". Fortunately, medical practitioners are becoming more sensitive to the reality of "psychosomatic" complaints,**

**although many people fear being labeled as crazy when no organic problem can be identified. While we should exhaust all the possibilities of medical diagnosis, we should also seriously consider these sorts of conditions as messages from our soul encoded in the body. The hard-driving executive (or middle-manager trying to survive) who has a heart attack at 40 or 45 is a classic example in our society.**

**Working sixty to eighty hours a week leaves very little time for anything but eating, showering, commuting, and a little sleep. Usually, the overworked person in our society neglects personal health and "matters of the heart" -- meaningful relationships, compassion, empathy. Eventually, the heart protests against such mistreatment in the form of cardiac problems, sometimes preceded by noticeable symptoms. When people see their doctors about symptoms, we hope that they find one who knows that lifestyle has an effect on physical conditions, and who will listen to the symbols.**

## **The Soul Speaks Through the Small**

**The Primal Soul often presents itself to us in seemingly insignificant events and experiences. It is the "still small voice", something we can easily overlook in the rush of modern life. It may speak to us in a dream, a chance encounter, a meaningful coincidence, or even an accident or illness. Yet if the Primal Soul is to help us, we must help it by listening carefully, by nurturing its message, and building a**

**place for it in our conscious lives.**

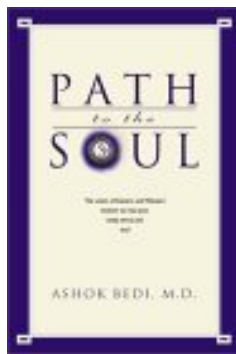
**We do not travel the path to the soul by leaps and bounds. The path to the soul is a life's work made up mostly of seemingly trivial acts and events. The devil, as people say, is in the details. So also is the higher power. C. G. Jung tells the story of the person who asked the rabbi why it was that, although people used to hear the voice of God, now nobody does. The rabbi responded that perhaps they did not stoop low enough.**

**People usually manage the "big" events of life pretty well. It's the daily challenges that get many people down. The big events -- births, deaths, catastrophes, all of which are ancient experiences of the human race and are therefore appropriately called archetypal -- lift us out of the daily round. Big events, archetypal events, cut through our personal idiosyncrasies to our human core where archetypal responses to archetypal challenges take over. The seemingly "small stuff" of life challenges us because we have to learn to respond from our essence, from our soul. We all know how to manage "big" events in life, but how we spend time listening to a friend in need when we are preoccupied, or help a child with homework when we are tired, or play with a dog when we would rather watch the ball game are the times when our soul can speak the loudest.**

**When we look back over our life history, or when someone writes our brief obituary, the big stuff is often glossed over. What is recognized as important are the "small" encounters**

of life through which our soul spoke. A spiritual life honors the small, the seemingly insignificant, the undervalued, the marginal. As Jesus said, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me" (Matthew 25:45).

For most of us who are seeking the Primal Soul in the "big" events, in momentous enterprise or magnificent insights, it is worthwhile to remember that, often, the soul speaks through those aspects of our experiences and relationships that may be considered marginal, devalued, and insignificant. Many of us look for clues to the soul in the joys or tribulations of the past or seek a reflection of our individual soul in glorious events, experiences, and endeavors in the future. Yet, clinical experience and spiritual wisdom reiterates time and again that we discover the soul only here and now, or not at all.



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