

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

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The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: Mother Earth and Father Sky adorn this Navajo sand painting which is used in a healing ceremony. A thin line of pollen, which stands for positive energy, connects the heads of the two deities. Native American symbol by John Drummond, main image courtesy of Wheelright Museum of the American Indian (PA-#4A, background from Corel Stock Photo Library 2, CD ROM: “Textures II”; #404032. (See p. 37 for more details.)

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

The Power of Sacred Places

TIM BOYD

THERE is a fundamental principle that defines spirituality. It can be expressed in one word — Unity, or Oneness, or interdependence. Reconnecting with a lost, or dimmed sense of Oneness is the basis of a genuine spiritual path. Any attempt at the spiritual life is challenging. There are certain inherent difficulties associated with it. The initial challenge we face is becoming aware of a lifetime of misdirected self-training, then trying to reverse the flow of our life energies. The vast majority of our time during this life has been spent pouring enormous effort into training ourselves in a direction that takes us away from a spiritual approach to living.

When we look at the way that the normal life is lived, its primary focus is self-centered. The daily scope of our activity and thinking is *my* life, body, thoughts, family, nation, plans, happiness, future, health, and so on. It is a list with which we are all too familiar — an endless emphasis on our personal wants and needs. For many people reincarnation is a fact of existence, but even without the compounding effect of multiple lives engaged in the karma-producing activity of self-centered living, an honest analysis of solely this present lifetime should convince us of the manner in which we condition ourselves.

Whenever we reach a point that our attention turns toward the possibility of the spiritual, there are difficulties and hurdles that we have to face. Sooner or later, in this life or some future one, we are exposed to some expression of the spiritual which breaks through upon us. It might be a person that triggers it, a book, or a personal crisis. Finally a vision of a different possibility dawns on us. Although it is not something that has ever been hidden, for some reason the possibility becomes apparent to us in a way that seems new. Many describe the experience in dramatic terms — a rebirth, an awakening, a restoration from blindness.

We become aware that there is a *need* for something more. First of all, there is a need for guidance along this path. Throughout human history many people have come and given guidance on reconnecting with this deeper, ever-present dimension of our being. One thing we become aware of is the need to develop some pattern of behavior that enhances our access to this deeper dimension.

In many spiritual traditions great teachers tell us that in order to fully experience the spiritual life we need to step out of “your world and into ours” — the “ours” being the reality of the teacher. We need tools to help us in this effort. One such tool is the power of sacred places. We all know of, or at least have

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heard of sacred places — spots on the Earth, where anyone who goes there experiences an energy of sacredness and blessing. On the west coast of the United States there is the famous Redwood Parks populated by some of the largest and oldest trees on the planet. As a child, my father took my brothers and me there. Being typical boys we would play and laugh and shout. I remember how when we first set foot in the forest our conversations became whispers. Without direction, without thought, the response of even a child was to speak softly in the presence of the sacred.

Such spaces exist all around the world. Some of them are features of the natural world — mountains, lakes, rivers, forests, and caves. These are created by lines of energies in the earth that attract inner forces and beings to those places. Then there are places that become sacred because of human use and interaction. In many ways such places are designed for a particular work. The focused presence of generations of people who commit their lives and understanding to work in that place draws forces of the spiritual nature.

The history of the Theosophical Society (TS) and its place in Adyar is like that. The Masters of the Wisdom and their agents appeared to gatherings on the terrace at its Headquarters building, precipitated letters in its shrine, and advised and assisted in the work of the TS to such an extent that Annie Besant termed the TS in Adyar “The Masters’ Home”. Places such as this become sanctified from human use — a creative alignment with deep and purposeful forces. It can be of great value to place ourselves in connec-

tion with such places, and bathe in those energies and presences.

There is a story from the Buddhist tradition that can illustrate this. There is a powerful and well-known form of practice called loving-kindness, or *metta* meditation. Simply described, it involves generating and projecting the wish that all beings, including ourselves, have a sense of safety, security, peace, happiness, and health. The *metta* meditation came about in this way: During the rainy months, when the Buddha’s disciples could not travel, they would set up camp in one place. It would be a time of meditative retreat. At one time, a group of his monks found a lovely spot in a forest, near running water — a perfect place. Once they settled in, they found that their meditation and peace of mind were constantly disturbed.

Apparently their presence was upsetting to certain local Nature spirits. The spirits (elementals) would constantly harass the monks by making strange and frightening sounds, foul odors, anything to drive the monks away. The monks went to the Buddha seeking his approval to leave the place and find a more harmonious location for their retreat. The Buddha told them to stay put and taught them the *metta* meditation daily to generate the wish for peace, happiness, security, freedom from harm, and safety of these upsetting spirits and of all beings. They did it, and with time everything became pacified. It became a holy place.

Human involvement in creating sacred spaces is something that we have some control over. These same spaces must be created where we live. Yes, we can go to a temple for peace and upliftment of spirit,

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but we should not have to leave our own homes to find it. So how do we do that? How do we create a connection to a constant source of spiritual influence?

An example: Someone has a very fine incense and they burn it in a particular place. If we are approaching that place, we smell the fragrance before we enter the space. When we enter the place we find ourselves bathed in it. If we remain long enough in that place, we barely even notice it anymore; it becomes the norm for us. Whenever we do leave, that fragrance has permeated our clothing, our hair, our skin, our atmosphere, and without any thought we carry it to others.

In our own spaces we have to provide ourselves with spiritual reminders. We will always need specific places where we eat, sleep, where we bathe, but always we should have some space, even if it is a corner of a room that is dedicated to our connection with the spiritual life. We have rooms dedicated to every activity in our lives, but the highest and most profitable activity, meditation, quieting the mind, goes without. Create a space where this energy can become concentrated in our own homes. When I was in college, sharing a dormitory room, I remember I made a space behind a chair in a corner of the room where regularly I experimented with deepening a sense of quiet.

Pictures of profound people or iconic images are reminders of possibilities. Even unconsciously, when we walk past them they react upon us. These are the things that we can do. It is said that when we practice meditation, and when we actually do become quiet, that state is extremely at-

tractive to a variety of unseen life, and according to the depth of our stillness, it can draw magnificent orders of beings to us (or more correctly, it can draw us to magnificent orders of beings).

The color and fragrance of a flower attracts honeybees and butterflies. A pile of garbage is equally attractive, but to other forms of life less conducive to our health. We need to treat our thoughts as material of a similar nature. According to the focus and awareness of our thinking process we are accompanied in this world.

In the first of the Mahatma Letters written to A. O. Hume the point is made that in response to our thinking we are continually “peopling our current in space”. At every moment we are creating an atmosphere a “crowd” that accompanies us through life. Normal parental advice to children is to choose their friends wisely because of the influence they have on their life. Diligence in that choosing is the challenge.

If we take that advice to heart about the quality of thoughts we befriend, at a certain point we become established in another world. We have not gone anywhere, but the company that we keep changes dramatically, and in that change we find ourselves influenced and influencing. Moving among people, without saying a word, they are touched. This is the result of our own awareness, our own focus, our own practice committed over time. It does not happen today because I thought of it yesterday. It is a process. With time, patience, and intelligent effort we become effective instruments for a new direction in this world. ✧

Light and Darkness in *The Voice of the Silence*

DAVID P. BRUCE

There is a cave
Within the mount of God, fast by his throne,
Where light and darkness in perpetual round
Lodge and dislodge by turns, which makes through Heaven
Grateful vicissitude, like day and night;
Light issues forth, and at the other door
Obsequious darkness enters, till her hour
To veil the Heaven, though darkness there might well
Seem twilight here. *Paradise Lost*¹

UPON reading the manuscript of *The Voice of the Silence* (*VS*) for the very first time, G. R. S. Mead enthusiastically described it as “the grandest thing in all of our theosophical literature.”² This was not gratuitous or unwarranted praise, for Mead knew a thing or two about literature: he was an eminent Gnostic scholar and the author of several books. His choice of the adjective “grand” requires explanation, since it has several meanings, one of which is to indicate immense size. Had he been describing *Isis Unveiled* or *The Secret Doctrine*, that would have made sense but not with the *VS*, a book of only 316 verses. What Mead was most likely depicting as “grand” was

its style — the splendid beauty of the verses, their inspirational tone, the sublime imagery that abounds throughout.

In speaking of H. P. Blavatsky’s (HPB) style of mentoring, Annie Besant made a short but revealing observation: “As a teacher HPB was inspiring and suggestive, not didactic.”³ We see evidence of this by her skillful use of poetic imagery in the *VS*, which is generally uplifting and evocative, but never didactic. Phrases such as “the cloak of darkness” or “the dust of our illusions” stir the imagination and invite an emotional response in a way that a dry metaphysical treatise is incapable of doing. To really benefit from its study, we need to savor the imagery, giving it time

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to resonate before rushing on to the next verse. This is not as easy as it sounds; we live in an age of frenzied actions and endless distractions. The restless urge to “move on to the next thing” seems to be ubiquitous. If we can resist this unfortunate tendency, we allow the visual elements time to elicit deeper insight and understanding, thereby avoiding the superficial familiarity that comes with speed reading.

Returning to Blavatsky’s teaching style, Besant added that she expected her students to “fill with quick intuition the gaps she left in her outline.”⁴ We should keep this in mind when reading the *VS*, for the intuition and imagination should be given wide latitude. Again, this may prove difficult for some, but for an entirely different reason than simply being restless and impatient. There are people who are highly intelligent and have the capacity to understand abstract concepts with ease, but at the same time lack the ability to appreciate the language of the artist. As T. S. Eliot noted in one of his essays: “There is a logic of the imagination as well as logic of concepts. People who do not appreciate poetry always find it difficult to distinguish between order and chaos in the arrangement of images.”⁵ For those who prioritize reason over imagination, the words of the Romantic poet Shelly are in order: “Reason is the enumeration of qualities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those qualities, both separately and as a whole.”⁶

As the title of this article indicates, our present focus is on *light* and *darkness*. Students of *The Secret Doctrine* may be

aware of their metaphysical basis, as this excerpt reveals:

Nothing is added to darkness to make of it light, or to light to make it darkness, on this our plane. They are interchangeable, and scientifically light is but a mode of darkness and *vice versa*. Yet both are phenomena of the same noumenon — which is absolute darkness to the scientific mind, and but a gray twilight to the perception of the average mystic, though to that of the spiritual eye of the Initiate it is absolute light.⁷

The emphasis of this article, however, is not on metaphysics but rather on the artistic value and effect of the poetic language that makes the *Voice* such a timeless treasure. You may have noticed that on some level there seems to be a relationship between poetry and music. In this case, the images of light and darkness occur so frequently that they function in the manner of a “motif”, the definition of which is as follows:

MOTIF: A melodic, rhythmic, musical unit which, as Schoenberg declared in *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* brings “unity, relationship, coherence, logic, comprehensibility and fluency” to a composition, by means of its repetition and varied recurrence.⁸

Clearly, a motif — whether in music or poetry — is not mere embellishment or ornamentation but an essential part of the composition. Regarding its use in the *VS*, it is worth quoting the famed 20th-century cinematographer John Alton: “The light has to tell something. There’s

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a meaning, and it establishes a mood.”

Let us now discover how Blavatsky uses light and darkness in the *Voice*. All references to numbered verses are from the 1982 Adyar Centenary Edition. It should be noted that many of the citations below are excerpts, not entire verses. In these cases, referring to the text will give the student a better understanding. We will begin with *light*, followed by *darkness*, and as a subgroup of the latter, special attention will be paid to *shadows*.

Light Motifs

The first instance appears in verse fourteen and begins with a suppositional clause:

If thy soul smiles while bathing in the sunlight of thy life . . . (14)

What does the sunlight represent? Not true and lasting happiness, but pleasure based on outer circumstances. How do we know? The concluding words of the verse make it obvious:

If thy soul smiles while bathing in the sunlight of thy life . . . thy soul is of the earth.

This material happiness is ephemeral, since outer conditions are always in a state of flux. Notice, too, the dichotomy between the verbs of the suppositional clauses:

If thy soul **smiles** [emphasis added] while bathing in the sunlight of thy life; if thy soul **sings** within her chrysalis of flesh and matter; if thy soul **weeps** inside her castle of illusion; if thy soul **struggles** to break the silver thread . . . thy soul is of the earth. (14)

Smiling and *singing* are contrasted with *weeping* and *struggling*, indicating a soul

that vacillates between pain and pleasure, not having found the way to true and lasting joy.

Two types of light now appear side by side: one is weak and dim, a mere facsimile of the “true light”, which is genuine, self-sustaining, and everlasting:

This earth, O ignorant disciple, is but the dismal entrance leading to the twilight that precedes the valley of true light — that light which no wind can extinguish, that light which burns without a wick or fuel. (18)

Below, the teacher encourages the disciple to seek the light of truth, which is portrayed as luminous and powerful:

Seek for him . . . in the Hall of Wisdom . . . where the light of truth shines with un fading glory. (32)

Have patience . . . as one who fears no failure, courts no success. Fix thy soul’s gaze upon the star whose ray thou art, the flaming star that shines within the lightless depths of ever-being, the boundless fields of the Unknown. (137)

Light can be a symbol of temptation or danger. In this series of verses, light is seductive, captivating, and mesmerizing — something to be avoided at all costs:

This Hall is dangerous in its perfidious beauty. . . Beware . . . lest dazzled by illusive radiance thy soul should linger and be caught in its deceptive light. (33)

The senses it bewitches, blinds the mind, and leaves the unwary an abandoned wreck. (34)

The moth attracted to the dazzling flame of thy night-lamp is doomed to perish in the viscid oil. (35)

It may also symbolize a state of

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unblemished and untainted purity, while at the same time appearing to be somewhat remote and impersonal:

All is impermanent in man except the pure bright essence of Alaya. Man is its crystal ray; a beam of light immaculate within, a form of clay material upon the lower surface. (250)

Thy soul-gaze centre on the one Pure Light, the Light that is free from affection. (255)

Leaving the austere tone of transcendence behind, the mood now shifts to one of joyful and sparkling innocence. Instead of remoteness, the feeling is one of approachability:

Heaven's dew-drop glittering in the morn's first sunbeam within the bosom of the lotus. (53)

As so often happens, one image is followed by another of an entirely different type, thus creating dramatic tension. Upon reading the entire passage, we discover that the innocent, and perhaps naive, optimism is short-lived, perhaps resembling the prodigal son in the Gospel of Luke:

Heaven's dew-drop glittering in the morn's first sunbeam within the bosom of the lotus, when dropped on earth becomes a piece of clay; behold, the pearl is now a speck of mire. (53)

In contrast to the familiarity of the dewdrop sparkling in the early morning sun, the light in the next passage seems wondrous, even beckoning, but also mysterious and unknown:

I see the PATH; its foot in mire, its

summits lost in glorious light. (205)

The fact that the summit is not visible is also an analogy for the limitations of our perceptive abilities:

As we rise in the scale of our development we perceive that during the stages through which we have passed we mistook shadows for realities.⁹

Every step forward is a going into a greater light, in comparison with which the light just left is a shadow.¹⁰

Even at the climax of the *Voice*, when the disciple has scaled the heights, there is still that mysterious, albeit alluring, quality about the light:

Hark! . . . from the deep unfathomable vortex of that golden light in which the Victor bathes. (312)

Compare these next two lines. The feelings generated by the imagery could not be more different:

Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun. (59)

Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye. (60)

In back-to-back passages, the sun is first depicted as soft, nurturing and healing; secondly, as glaring and unforgiving.

Light can also be linked both to courage and fear:

The path that leadeth on is lighted by one fire — the light of daring, burning in the heart. The more one dares, the more he shall obtain. The more he fears, the more that light shall pale. (239)

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Fear has degrees of intensity and operates on a scale that is analog, not digital. In verse sixty-nine, the setting sun is the harbinger of a dark and ominous night, suggesting a state of imminent panic, or even terror:

His vices will take shape and drag him down. His sins will raise their voices, like as the jackal's laugh and sob after the sun goes down; his thoughts become an army, and bear him off a captive slave. (69)

This imagery, which includes light and darkness, is delightfully counterintuitive and therefore quite unexpected:

Step out from sunlight into shade, to make more room for others. (140)

Instead of spirituality, the sunlight represents pride and a preoccupation with self. Moving into the shade is analogous to stepping out of the limelight and giving consideration to others, instead of feeding one's own sense of self-importance.

Darkness Motifs

In the hands of skilled writers, poetic imagery is suggestive and stirs the imagination; in the hands of mediocre writers, motifs of light and darkness tend to be predictable and one-dimensional. We have seen that Blavatsky's use of light is pliant and malleable, expressing diverse moods and shades of meaning. This is equally the case with her use of darkness.

We have discussed verse eighteen before in relation to light, but notice that the dismal entrance suggests a tunnel of psychological darkness; twilight, on the other hand, is simply a midpoint between night and day. In other words, the implied

darkness of the entrance and the relative darkness of twilight are not permanent states, but stages of growth leading to greater insight and wisdom:

This earth . . . is but the dismal entrance leading to the twilight that precedes the valley of true light. (18)

The next two verses contain both light and dark imagery. The light of Spirit is unfading and always present, but that light is blocked and filtered by the darkness of matter, which is represented by the dark clouds and the thick foliage. As it says in *The Secret Doctrine*, the soul's "whispers may be too soft, the sound of its words too far off the plane perceived by our physical senses",¹¹ but it is the task of the aspirant to remove those impediments so that the light flows unimpeded:

The light from the ONE Master, the one unfading golden light of Spirit, shoots its effulgent beams on the disciple from the very first. Its rays thread through the thick, dark clouds of matter. (80)

Now here, now there, these rays illumine it, like sun-sparks light the earth through the thick foliage of the jungle growth. (81)

The elegant metaphor in verse 33 is an obvious reference to the various conditionings and prejudices that shroud one's view of the world, thereby making it impossible to see things as they really are:

Thou must divest thyself of thy dark garments of illusion. (33)

In the statement below, where the disciple is speaking to the teacher, "ignorance and darkness" are not judgmental. He wants the teacher to share his enlightenment with those who suffer from

nescience, or lack of knowledge. The fact that they are knocking and waiting indicates a willingness to learn on their part:

Behold all those who, knocking for admission, await in ignorance and darkness. (101)

The image of dark forests represents — literally and figuratively — a state of isolation and aloofness that is motivated and driven by personal pride:

Believe thou not that sitting in dark forests, in proud seclusion and apart from men . . . will lead thee to the goal of final liberation. (132)

Instead of symbolizing ignorance or pride, the motif of darkness now represents a higher spiritual state, which is hazy or imperceptible to our present faculties. We presume there to be glorious light at the apex, but since we are presently unable to perceive such subtle states of consciousness, that light appears to us as darkness:

And to the second gate the way is verdant too. But it is steep and winds uphill; yea, to its rocky top. Grey mists will overhang its rough and stony height, and all be dark beyond. (233)

The oscillating phantoms cast by the unsteady flame are delusory and misleading, emphasizing the aspirant's need to develop one-pointedness (see v. 266):

The jet will flicker and the quivering flame cast shades deceptive, dark and ever-changing on the Soul's white shrine. (267)

The mood of this next verse is absolutely chilling. It is both alarming and horrifying. Such imagery may seem fantastical to some, but those who have succumbed to their inner demons know

the reality of it from personal experience:

For it will grow, increase in size and power, and then this thing of darkness will absorb thy being before thou hast well realized the black foul monster's presence. (54)

Shadow Motifs

There are multiple references to shadows in the *VS*; as a group they may be considered as a subset of darkness. The examples below are not comprehensive, only illustrative; they are arranged in sequence from the benign to the malignant.

In this passage, the teacher once again offers encouragement to the aspirant. The moniker “perceiver of external shadows” is one of many used by the guru when addressing the disciple, just as Krishna in the *Bhagavadgītā* uses a variety of epithets when speaking to Arjuna. “Shadows” refer to that which is unreal, transitory, or lacking in real substance. To know the difference, discernment must be developed:

O fearless aspirant, look deep within the well of thine own heart, and answer. Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows? (243)

There are numerous warnings in the *Voice*, but those admonitions are balanced by gentle words of encouragement. The glossary explains that “shadows” is a proxy for physical bodies or personalities, since they are impermanent:

Have perseverance as one who doth for evermore endure. Thy shadows live and vanish. (138)

An interesting excerpt from *The Secret Doctrine* provides additional context:

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The “Watcher” and his “Shadows” — the latter numbering as many as there are incarnations for the Monad — are one. The Watcher, or the divine prototype, is at the upper rung of the ladder of being; the shadow, at the lower.¹²

Shadow imagery carries a different meaning in verse thirty-two, symbolizing deception, falsity, and counterfeits, none of which exist in the Hall of Wisdom:

Seek for him who is to give thee birth in the Hall of Wisdom, the Hall which lies beyond, wherein all shadows are unknown. (32)

In this next passage, the shadow acts as a filter, beclouding or obscuring the light from the soul:

Withhold thy mind from all external objects, all external sights. Withhold internal images, lest on thy soul-light a dark shadow they should cast. (86)

Still another meaning is found in verse fifty-four, in this case representing the proximity or periphery of unclean thoughts:

Strive with thy thoughts unclean before they overpower thee. . . . Beware, disciple, suffer not, e’en though it be their shadow, to approach. (54)

The dramatic intensity increases by portraying a mind that has lost touch with reality. The elusive shadows seemingly taunt and mock the victim in diabolical fashion:

Thy mind . . . will become as a mad elephant that rages in the jungle. Mistaking forest trees for living foes, he perishes in his attempts to kill the ever-

shifting shadows dancing on the wall of the sunlit rocks. (268)

The mood below is one of dread and foreboding, bordering almost on panic:

The cloak of darkness is upon the deep of matter; within its folds I struggle. Beneath my gaze it deepens. . . . A shadow moveth, creeping like the stretching serpent coils. . . . It grows, swells out and disappears in darkness. (203)

The tone of the next verse is sinister and baleful. Additionally, the realization that the dark stealthy object is one’s own shadow would be somewhat of a shock:

It is the shadow of thyself outside the Path, cast on the darkness of thy sins. (204)

Blavatsky does not provide a footnote, but could “shadow of thyself” be an allusion to the Dweller on the Threshold? Purucker, in his *Occult Glossary*,¹³ says the term is:

a literary invention of the English mystic and novelist Sir Edwar Bulwer-Lytton found in his romance, *Zanoni*. The term has obtained wide currency and usage in theosophical circles.

He goes on to say that it has several meanings, but the one that is apropos here is that the Dweller is the:

embodied karmic consequences or results of the man’s past, haunting the thresholds which the initiate must pass before he can advance or progress into a higher degree of initiation. . . . They are verily the ghosts of the dead men that the present man formerly was, now arising to dog his footsteps, and hence are very truly called Dwellers on the Threshold.

In the final example — another dire

Light and Darkness in *The Voice of the Silence*

warning — the dramatic intensity reaches a peak; the menacing shadow lurking in the dark results in a bone-chilling paralysis on the part of the disciple:

When out it [heart-light] goes, a dark and threatening shade will fall from thine own heart upon the path, and root thy feet in terror to the spot. (239)

Closing Thoughts

The Voice of the Silence has justifiably been called a classic of theosophical literature. It is easy to discount such a statement, because the word “classic” has been hijacked by shameless promoters of everything from clothing to soft drinks to sporting events to popular music. The word has been badly over-used and diluted to the point of losing any semblance of its original meaning. Moreover, the often-used phrase “instant classic” is nothing short of preposterous. To paraphrase Seneca, when

everything is a classic, nothing is a classic.

The Italian writer and journalist Italo Calvino, however, understood the meaning of a classic, at least in the realm of literature: “A classic is a book which with each rereading offers as much of a sense of discovery as the first reading.”¹⁴ A book that is rich in poetic imagery and meaning does not yield all its treasures on a single reading. One has to read and reread such a book in order to uncover all the golden nuggets, especially when they are veiled by metaphor and analogy. Calvino also noted: “Classics are those books which constitute a treasured experience for those who have read and loved them.”¹⁵ No doubt, *The Voice of the Silence* meets both of those benchmarks. In addition, it has also stood the test of time, another measure of a classic. It has been read and loved for well over a hundred years; and that will still be the case for years to come. ✧

Endnotes

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3. Annie Besant, “As I Knew Her”, *Lucifer* 8, no. 46 (1891), p. 94.
4. Ibid.
5. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), pp. 77–8.
6. Percy Shelly, “A Defense of Poetry”, 1840, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5428> (accessed 26 Sep. 2023).
7. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, (Adyar, Chennai: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1979), vol. 1, p. 41.

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11. Blavatsky, vol. 2, p. 424.
12. Blavatsky, vol. 1, p. 265.
13. Purucker, *Occult Glossary*, (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1996), pp. 41–2.
14. Italo Calvino, *Why Read the Classics?* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), pp. 4–5.
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The Descent of *Manas* — I

RAGHAVAN N. IYER

“Lead the life necessary for the acquisition of such knowledge and powers, and Wisdom will come to you naturally. Whenever you are able to attune your consciousness to any of the seven chords of ‘Universal Consciousness’, those chords that run along the sounding board of Kosmos, vibrating from one Eternity to another; when you have studied thoroughly ‘the music of the Spheres’, then only will you become quite free to share your knowledge with those with whom it is safe to do so. Meanwhile be prudent. . . . Do not attempt to unveil the secret of being and non-being to those unable to see the hidden meaning of Apollo’s HEPTACHORD — the lyre of the radiant god, in each of the seven strings of which dwelleth the Spirit, Soul, and Astral body of the Kosmos, whose shell only has now fallen into the hands of Modern Science. . . . Let rather the planetary chains and other super- and sub-cosmic mysteries remain a dreamland for those who can neither see, nor yet believe that others can.”

(The Secret Doctrine, vol. I, p. 167)

THE complex teachings concerning states and planes of consciousness, invisible globes, and chains of worlds, and the evolutionary pilgrimage of Monads, may be grasped through meditation upon the fundamental axiom that Law and Deity are one. It is also necessary to notice the septenary principle in terms of which the Logos emanates everything in manifested Nature. It must be seen at the outset that there is an essential difference between the three highest planes — belonging to the Archetypal Kosmos — and the four lower planes of the world of formation. The latter, along with every-

thing that exists as a manifesting entity, comprises the various sevenfold chains of globes. Further, since virtually all human beings primarily function by using five senses appropriate only to the most material of those globes, their terrestrial eyes betray them into a needlessly narrow and restricted view of Nature and what is “natural”. Seeing illusory forms, sharp contrasts, and seeming divergences at the grossest level, the unwary experience an intense feeling of separateness and a false sense of confinement in their vestures and relationships. Given this sad predicament, a mental bridge must be

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consciously extended from the lower planes to the metaphysical verities which are shrouded in invisible Nature, the heavens above, and even beyond. Outside metaphysics, neither occult philosophy nor spiritual progress are possible. Only when the seed ideas of the Gupta Vidya are vivified through meditation and nourished by *praxis* can they serve as the hidden roots of an expansive consciousness delicately attuned to the deeper purposes of soul-evolution, the music of the spheres, and the heartbeat of the human race.

The marriage of meditation and duty gives birth to the Bodhisattva ideal of renunciation through service. This is the sacred and archetypal meaning of *dhyāna*, *dharma*, and *karuna*, which are all magically fused in *bodhichitta*, the jewel in the lotus, God in Man as in the cosmos. Originally anchored in the notion of “that which holds”, dharma is the self-sustaining factor in Nature through which self-conscious beings in a world of change are able to support themselves in the realm of action by a sublime idea common to a variety of simple tasks, and relevant to humane relationships of every sort. When the power and potency of dharma are invoked through voluntary sacrifices and sacred pledges, through self-chosen obligations and consequent trials, duty becomes a self-validating principle shining by its own light, independent of anything outside it. Those alone who are unequivocally committed to dharma, and who have passed through preliminary initiations, can profit from

the secret teachings proffered to them. Each and every sincere aspirant on the path of duty can truly hope to discover the guiding light and sovereign talisman of selfless service. But, as a Master has intimated, if the disciple would perceive even the dim silhouette of one of the “planets” on the higher planes, he has to first throw off the thin clouds of astral matter that stand between him and the next plane. Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gītā* stressed the critical shift from a sense of duty supported by social structures to a self-consecrated conception of dharma, whereby human beings are continually defining themselves and shedding the light of self-conscious thought within the radius of their obligations to others and to themselves.

Virtually all the practical difficulties encountered in the daily performance of duty — such as trivialization, routinization, and staleness — may be traced to the force of habit and the hypnosis of automatism on the astral plane. Whenever one is passive, one is far from spiritually awake, and hardly functioning from a universal standpoint in the local habitations of particulars. But, if through joyous meditation one secures an elevated basis for one’s emanations into the world, then one’s words and actions directed toward other beings reflect a reverence for them as immortal souls. One can also help to enhance the latent self-consciousness in all the life-atoms of the seven kingdoms of Nature. Such capacities are not superogatory gifts in rare human beings at this stage in evolution,

but rather basic obligations for all. Since the commencement of the Fourth Round all the lower kingdoms of Nature have vitally depended upon man for their continued development and collective evolution. The summoning of elementals into potent and creative combinations is the theurgic task of human benevolence, noetic deliberation, and calm continuity of spiritual purpose. Individuals who come to understand this process will discover an ease and lightness in the pilgrimage of life that seem paradoxical to others who are burdened by a dour sense of duty. Sadly, those who are already weighted down by their own muddled misconceptions often aggravate this burden through compulsive speech, complaining about kindred souls, and against life itself.

Occultism begins when one ceases from all complaints, tortuous games, and cowardly delay, and instead silently resolves to come to terms with the manifold karma of an incarnation. Rather than infecting and polluting the elementals of one's astral photosphere by excessive statements of intention, idle speculation, and resentment of supposedly external duties, one must embrace the initially painful recognition that duty is inherent to one's status as a human being. Even a week of wise and cool reflection upon the dharma of being human and potentially divine can lighten a lifetime, but those who do not even make this effort will never understand the point. On the contrary, they strangely seem to enjoy wallowing in guilt and self-pity, and

thus, as they chew the cud of their ill-digested ideas and stew in the acid juices of their bitterness, they further weaken the fragile connection between the overbrooding Triad and the manifesting quaternary. Whereas, as soon as one takes a firm stand upon what is truly human, and through deep thought and meditation cuts to the core of essential self-respect and inescapable responsibility to the whole of life, one can create a passage in that aspect of *Manas* which is conjoined to the lower principles, through which the light of *Buddhi* can illumine the field of duty. Thus *Kuru-kshetra* becomes *Dharmakshetra*.

The criterion of whatever is genuinely Buddhist is that it is effortlessly self-sustaining. *Buddhi*, as a human principle, correlates with exalted planes of consciousness and ethereal globes of the earth chain, which are impermeable to the discontinuities of thought and feeling that inhibit terrestrial cerebration and emotion. The sense of separation and fragmentation engendered on the lowest plane weakens the will and dulls the mind by rendering the electrical connection with the immortal Triad fitful and inconstant. Spiritual will is generated by and works through seminal ideas. The more one allows the mind to soak in the sublimely abstract, until this is more real than anything else, the more one is able in a Promethean way to direct the flow of consciousness through concentrated thought. Such meditative purification strengthens the spiritual will and provides continuous inspiration in the daily per-

formance of duty. When one becomes familiar with its cleansing effects, one will look forward to every encounter with the spiritual, and even in brief spells of leisure, one's mind will naturally turn to sacred themes. Those who freely benefit from this mental discipline are truly fortunate in their simplicity of stance. Without taking anything for granted, they cherish the profound privilege of contemplating and reaffirming the fundamental principles of spiritual life. They are thereby protected against the errors of futile speculation, and against complex attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable by adapting the spiritual sciences to material conceptions. By honouring the basic rules and sharpening discernment through practice, they stay within the forward current and gain true self-respect. They recognize that the mere thought of falling away from it, through foisting blame upon the external world, rapidly destroys the sacred foundation of discipleship.

Men and women, in general, may not be able all at once to live purely by the power of thought and ideation. But if even a small number of people make an honest effort to do so, lending beauty and significance to their days in the knowledge that others are doing the same, a strong magnetic field may be generated whereby weaker brethren would be held up, whilst those who build strength would not be brought down by the weakest links in the chain. Everyone could be pulled up together; there would be a proper balancing because different people expe-

rience the different cycles of moods at different times. If their minds and hearts are focussed upon the collective effort, if they feel part of and have inserted themselves into a larger whole, reflecting the will and the wisdom of Shamballa, the mighty Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas, then they will move in dulcet harmony with the Demiurgic Mind of the cosmos. They will taste the rapture of self-conscious participation in the Divine Motion of noumenal reality, the awesome Dance of Shiva as well as the playful sport of Krishna and the *gopis*.

To a *sadhaka* or seeker who thinks in this archetypal mode, the sole reason for skilfully performing any act in life is to render gentle and gracious service to others, to human beings as well as to life-atoms. There is, for example, no other metaphysically sound reason to clean and care for one's physical body than the duty one owes oneself as a trustee of Nature and a servant of Humanity. If one grasps the idea of Monadic evolution metaphysically, and not merely statistically or speculatively, it will be evident that there are myriad opportunities daily for engaging in sacrificial acts of service to others. It is the exalted privilege of a self-conscious Monad to be able to serve all life-atoms through the concentrated power of compassionate thought. The humanity of the future will readily associate its healing exposure to the mellow light of the early morning sun, or its cool enjoyment of pellucid water, with a vivid awareness of invisible beings that are magically fused in a divine dance.

Bringing Buddhist perception to creative acts, they will balance the antipodes of human nature, suffusing the most ordinary and simple tasks with the exhilarating fragrance of veiled serenity.

Once a person becomes adept in this art of service, the whole of life becomes a song of ceaseless and silent sacrifice, the true “music of the spheres” intimating the mystery of Apollo’s lyre. A point is soon reached at which one can scarcely believe that one could waste a single hour brooding over the shadowy self, though one will recognize that this is precisely what one did in life after life of ignorance, even in the presence of the Divine Wisdom and its loving exemplars. Then one will appreciate what the wise have always taught, that anyone who misuses, let alone flouts and betrays, a great opportunity, will not in any future life be able to come into a close relationship with any Spiritual Teacher. Where such laws are involved, nothing happens merely for the first time; whenever the karma of groups of people sharing abnormal tendencies brings them together in order to work them off, these tendencies will be made to look normal. The souls concerned may, when they are brought together, actually convert their condition into a general theory of the world, thus reinforcing and absolutizing their abject ignorance. Then, for those who toil for the restoration of the rhythms that are natural to the human heart, there is what a Master called “uphill work and swimming *in adversum flumen*”. He asked why the West should learn from the East

that which can never meet the requirements of the special tastes of aesthetics. He then spoke of the formidable difficulties encountered by them in every attempt made to explain arcane metaphysics to the Western mind. Stressing the intimate connection between occult philosophy and true metaphysics, H. P. Blavatsky conceded:

It is like trying to explain the aspirations and affections, the love and hatred, the most private and sacred workings in the soul and mind of the living man, by an anatomical description of the chest and brain of his dead body.

(*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, pp. 169–170)

The arcane teachings of the sevenfold nature of the earth and humanity are not offered for the sake of those who would “nail every shadow to the wall”. Nor are they intended to be reconciled with the conceptions of a modern science which cannot acknowledge any matter except that which falls under the purview of the corporeal senses. The esoteric teaching regarding septenary chains is intended for those who are dedicated to the sacrificial awakening of spiritual intuition in the service of all, and those who are prepared to make Buddhist application of Divine Wisdom in daily life. For example, it is the enigmatic teaching of *The Secret Doctrine* that the moon which is seen by the physical eye is a corpse, and that this moon, together with all the physical planets, is visible in this way only because it belongs to a particular plane of perception. But if each visible

The Descent of *Manas* — I

world is part of a chain and there are six invisible globes which are involved in the causal forces associated with each planet, it is important especially to understand the relation between the moon and the earth. This is analogous to the relationship between the astral when it is saturated by *kāma* and that aspect of the astral which is ensouled by *prāna*, or life-energy. We often notice that a mentally healthy individual is full of life and therefore very cheerful and generous, reaching out to others, due to this natural energy within the astral-physical body, the energy of *prāna*. But there is also that aspect of the astral which is affected by lunar forces, by obsessional thoughts, and yet is constantly fluctuating like the visible moon.

What is going on within the human being is causally connected with the relations between the different invisible aspects of the visible planets. The moon, as the ancients knew, is much older than the earth, being but the visible remnant of an entire chain of globes that was the parent of the earth chain. And therefore even though what we see as the visible moon does not look, certainly unlike the

sun, to be a parent of the earth, nonetheless what we see is the representative of the corpse, the *kāma rupa* of an entire lunar chain of globes, the higher principles of which have long since passed into the earth chain. Beings on earth have astral forms because these vestures are themselves the progeny of the lesser Pitris, the lunar ancestors. As the lunar chain was dying out in its last Round, it sent all its energy and “principles” into a neutral centre of latent force, a *laya* centre, thereby informing a new nucleus of undifferentiated substance and calling it to active life. The lunar ancestors are also connected with the ancestral germ that was transmitted over an immense period of time and makes even physical conception possible. Metaphysically, everything physical is actually astral, so the process of conception has its roots in aspects of astral form, matter, and substance which go back to the lunar Pitris. Therefore, there is a direct sense in which terrestrial humans are able to function as sevenfold beings only because of this inheritance, which is a mixed blessing.

(To be continued)

There is but one *real* man, enduring through the cycle of life and immortal in essence, if not in form, and this is *Manas*, the mind-man or embodied consciousness.

The Key to Theosophy
H. P. Blavatsky

Pythagorean Harmonics: Sacred Number and the Golden Verses — III

KIRK GRADIN

Examine all things well, leaving thyself always to be guided and directed by the understanding that comes from above, and that ought to hold the reins.

Pythagoras

III. *Hieros Logos*: The Golden Verses

The Pythagorean *Hieros Logos* or “Sacred Discourse” offers a unique window into a pivotal period of antiquity. An epoch referred to by Karl Jaspers as the “Axial Age . . . a deep breath bringing the most lucid consciousness”,³⁸ it begins in 6 BCE with the appearance of Shakyamuni Buddha, Confucius, and Lao Tse in the East and Pythagoras in the West, and ends with the Gnostics and Neo-Platonists in 3 CE. According to H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), it is the last focus left in history wherein converge the bright rays of light streaming from aeons of time gone by, unobscured by the hand of bigotry and fanaticism. Even from the few fragments of the Pythagorean tradition left to us — that were not withdrawn or destroyed by the early Christian church in an effort to “[throttle] the old [, so-called pagan] religions in favor of the new”³⁹ — we can still discern the outlines of the Parent Doctrine, the ever-flowing peren-

nial source of the now Secret Wisdom synthesizing and sanctifying philosophy, religion, and science.

The version of *Hieros Logos* available to us today is translated from the works of Hierocles of Alexandria, a Greek Platonist of 5 CE, some ten centuries after Pythagoras lived. There is evidence that the aphorisms were used as preparatory moral instruction for neophytes of the Pythagorean community for many centuries prior, but it is not until 1 CE that we have more than a one-line quotation from the verses in extant writings. And the first mentioning of the title “the Golden Verses” by name occurs only in the early decades of 3 CE. Nonetheless, Hierocles affirms that:

These verses are . . . nothing but the most complete expression of philosophy, a summary of its more important doctrines, an elementary teaching written down by those who have already advanced on the divine way for those coming after.

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One may indeed also truly call it the most beautiful token of human nobility and a memorial of not one specific Pythagorean, but of the whole saintly assembly, and as they themselves would say, a joint apothegm of the school as a whole.⁴⁰

It is through Hierocles then, that we have a terse summation of Pythagorean teaching on the art of living and the love of wisdom or *philosophia* — not as a mere intellectual pursuit, but as a process of the purification and perfection of human nature. Its sacred altruistic aim, as he reiterates in his commentary, is that the soul may eventually “recover its original felicity by restoring it to the likeness of God”.

At the same time we should remember that Hierocles set these verses into writing in an era when so-called pagan philosophy was being heavily persecuted by the church and the mystery schools forcibly shut down. The language he uses both veils and reveals — the deeper occult or metaphysical teaching requiring lost keys or higher intuitive faculties. But this is also where the teachings of the modern Theosophical movement and the comparative method exemplified by HPB are of critical aid. What the contemporary student has available through the core teachings of Theosophy, are many aspects of the esoteric philosophy composed by adepts — now for the first time in the English language. Though still allegorical, they give expression to many verities that were for millennia kept hidden in blinds, myths, and symbols. They provide suggestive doorways by which we may begin probing the esoteric

layers of meaning in the verses, only a few examples being given here.

1. In the first place revere the Immortal Gods, as they are established and ordained by the Law.

Pythagorean theogony undermined and transformed the anthropomorphism dominating the popular conception of the Greek pantheon based on Homer and Hesiod. Instead, deity and divine law are represented by qualitative number, archetypal geometry, and sound. These were by no means static symbols, but living, vibrant, universal, and generative spiritual essences pervading all of Nature. And as we find in many traditions, the God of gods, the boundless circle that is no number, was passed over in silence.

The original Greek conception of Chaos is that of the Secret Wisdom-Religion. In Hesiod, therefore, Chaos is infinite, boundless, endless, and beginningless in duration, an abstraction at the same time as a visible presence. . . . For in its etymological sense, Chaos is Space, . . . and Space is *the* ever Unseen and Unknowable Deity in our philosophy.⁴¹

As the Upanishads make clear, *TAT* is beyond all utterance or name, beyond both Being and Non-Being. To name or define is to limit That which is beyond all limits. At the same time, the entire superstructure of Pythagorean/Platonic esoteric cosmogony, of both metageometry and Euclidean geometry, begins with and depends upon the inherent properties of the line and circle. According to Nicomachus, the circle is the Pythagorean *Monas*, meaning the Monad or One.

The monad is the non-spatial source of all number . . . holds seminally the principles which are within all numbers . . . the beginning, middle and end of all things . . . without which there is no knowledge of anything whatsoever, since it is a pure light, most authoritative over everything in general, and it is sun-like and ruling, so that in each of these respects it resembles God . . . just as he made this universe harmonious and unified out of things which are likewise opposed.⁴²

In the cosmogenesis of *The Secret Doctrine*, the Monad as primeval Unity is linked with the unmanifested logos, the pre-cosmic origin of every kosmos — the unexpressed center point and circumference which initiates out Chaos (SPACE), the expression of logoiic number and sound at the heart of all. “With Pythagoras, the MONAD returns into silence and Darkness as soon as it has evolved the *triad*, from which emanate the remaining seven numbers of the 10 (ten) numbers which are at the base of the manifested universe.”⁴³

This is a brief introduction to Pythagorean cosmogony underlying the “Immortal Gods” of the opening verse of *Hieros Logos*. The sacred correlation of ideas, levels of being, matter, energy and consciousness represented by the ten points of the Pythagorean triangle is elaborated in *The Secret Doctrine*. It may be thought of as an outline of the mysteries contained therein and correlations to the Trans-Himalayan vs. the Kabalistic conception of the 10-fold cosmos are given graphic representation in the page 200 diagram of vol. one.

2. Reverence the Oath.

3. In the next place revere the Heroes who are full of goodness and light.

4. Honour likewise the Terrestrial Daimons by rendering them the worship lawfully due to them.

Cosmically, the first effect of the “Divine Oath”, wrote Hierocles, is “that all created Beings continue as they were disposed and set in order by the Law . . . which is above all and always observed by those whose thoughts are continually bent on God”.⁴⁴ In human terms the “Oath” would thus be akin to the Bodhisattvic vow of altruistic service to the whole, the right angle in relation to all other angles. It is the aspiration to reflect celestial harmonies, and eternity in time. It is to become as reliable as the dawn, to uphold that which is sacred, true, and beneficent in a world of dissolution, flux, and suffering. Without the capacity to always remain true to solemn promises and vows, to others as to one’s Self, the temple of the mysteries could not be found. As verse 47 later explains, the Pythagoreans took their most sacred vows “. . . **by Him who has transmitted into our souls the Sacred Tetraktys, the Source of Nature, whose course is eternal**”. If “transmitted” here also means “awakened”, then we see the suggested confluence of *guru* and *deva* as found in the symbolism of many ancient rights of initiation. Pythagoras awakened the Tetraktys, the logos, in his disciples.

In the first four verses the words revere, reverence, honor, and worship are mentioned and reechoed. All these terms are related to the classical Greek concept of *eusebeia*, meaning piety, devoutness

and devotion, religious awe, and a sense of the sacred. Since man is divinely immortal, wrote Hierocles, death lies in ignorance of the fact and in impiety. Mystics have compared true piety and devotion to the planets themselves circling round the central sun. The Pythagoreans and other ancient mystery traditions, HPB affirmed, knew the heliocentric nature of our solar system.

According to Hierocles, the three levels of divine beings mentioned in the first four verses, namely of “Gods”, “Heroes”, and “Terrestrial Daimones”, constitute the descending order by and through which the cosmos and humanity are manifested, nourished, and instructed. True reverence in right proportion can only arise through knowledge of “the nature and rank of each Being”.⁴⁵ It follows that among the “Heroes full of goodness and light” would be the hierarchy represented by the myth of Prometheus, the “Fire Fathers” or *Agnishwāta Pitris* of Hindu mythology, who sacrificially light up the fifth principle of *manas*. Whereas the “Terrestrial Daimones” of verse four, would be that same principle of heroic enlightened consciousness which deliberately takes birth in human form, that is, avatars such as Rama, Krishna, and Buddha, as well as adepts, seers, and initiates of various grades. Such beings have always taken birth in every culture and clime, some known to human history as great sages, philosophers, spiritual forerunners, or moral reformers, others entirely unknown except to a few.⁴⁶ In another aspect, “Terrestrial Daimons” could also refer to historically transformative forward

thinkers, mystics, and moral leaders of human history such as G. W. Russell, M. K. Gandhi, or Thomas Paine.

The daimon of Socratic teaching is also akin to the “monadic star” or spiritual genius over-brooding each person which manifests in daily experience as the voice of conscience, noetic thought, and intuitive depth perception. Humanity is blind to its divine heritage, but the vision of the soul can be regained. Once fully awakened, it becomes what HPB called a *Chitkala*, the immortal guardian *Dhyani* of each human being and of the race. The *Hieros Logos* makes it clear that without a posture of inner reverence and gratitude for sacrificial lineages and hierarchies, which means “becoming like them . . . obeying the precepts they have left us . . . to walk in the paths they walked . . . touched by the love of God”, true self-knowledge cannot emerge.

Repentance is the beginning of Philosophy, the avoiding of all foolish words and actions, and the first step of a life that will no more be subject to repentance. . . . He alone knows how to revere who never confounds the dignity of those he honors, who offers himself first as a pure sacrifice, who renders his soul the image of Deity and who prepares his mind as a temple worthy to receive the divine light.⁴⁷

In the Pythagorean tradition, love, devotion, reverence, and friendship were “sacred Law” to be cultivated as isotopically as a polygon, not only towards the gods, hierarchies, heroes, and great teachers, but towards one’s parents, peers and juniors, the wicked as the just. Even

the elements and creatures of the lower kingdoms were to be regarded with a genuine sense of similitude and benevolence. In the perennial teaching, all the kingdoms of Nature are on the same divine journey humanity is on, only at different stages. Moreover, love of the good and honoring the wise, especially “those who preserve in themselves the perfection of human nature”,⁴⁸ provided the right basis for eternal friendship; (6.) . . . **make him thy friend who distinguishes himself by his virtue.** At the same time, there was no allowance for condemning others perceived as unvirtuous or (8.) . . . **spurning thy friend for a slight fault.** Instead, the strike of the sword was reserved for self-discipline.

10. Accustom thyself to surmount and vanquish these passions: First gluttony, sloth, lust, and anger.

There is no accident that verse ten (decade) lists the four (tetrad) central afflictions that poison human life. The necessity of conquering personal desires and passions is a central theme of many spiritual traditions. But why is gluttony mentioned first? If we are unwilling to control the palate, control of other gates of action on the basis of thought, reason, and moral principle will hardly be possible. If our intake of nourishment — a daily necessity to sustain a body in incarnation — is governed by what is pleasurable to the taste buds only, we will be led astray. As M. K. Gandhi taught, a diet governed by non-violence is also the most healthy one.⁴⁹ Food choice is an expression of moral sensitivity and a vegetarian diet was recognized in anti-

quity as a Pythagorean one. Among the many tragedies of modern culture is the extent to which the commodification and industrialization of animal products dominates food production systems. Dubiously labeled “animal husbandry”, it has been identified by scientists and researchers as the greatest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, the overuse and pollution of water systems, driver of rainforest decimation, and a whole slew of diseases of affluence surpassing epidemic proportions decades ago. All of this is tangent to the moral horror of the way animals are commonly treated in the production of food. Among the earliest stories told of Pythagoras, are those in which he understood or communicated with animals, expressed our affinities with them, and the reality of their suffering. In addition, Hierocles points out that improper excesses in food consumption of any kind will fog the mind, fatten or enflame the ego, and further distort or dull the reasoning faculty.

Sloth is second in line. It must be addressed because without conquering laziness, one’s divine mission or Oath cannot be fulfilled. The fourth *pāramitā* in *The Voice of the Silence* is that of *Virya*, the “dauntless energy” or spiritual will that alone can sustain the path of service to divine truth. In part, this noetic energy unfolds through restraint, progressive self-training, self-discipline, and self-testing, as well as the purification of motive. If we are slothful, lust (the third passion) will remain unconquered. Lust is more than mere sexual desire. Theosophically, it is the untamed animal in

man and may be defined as the inversion and dissipation of divine energy in the service of worldly or sensual gratification. It has a blinding karmic effect, cementing us to the chains of ignorance and unconscious rebirth. Anger (the fourth affliction mentioned in verse ten), shatters the coherency and continuity of the subtle vestures cultivated through “living the life”. Even a few minutes of uncontrolled anger, as Shantideva points out, can decimate decades of practice, of ardent aspiration, meditation, and spiritual self-transformation. In the first ten verses then, we are reminded of the indissoluble link between devotion, mysticism, knowledge, and self-reformation. But no mere outward semblance or priestly robes will do. The degree to which the destructive passions have truly been replaced by constructive excellences of soul wisdom and virtue is known to the wise with mathematical precision and certainty. Temperance and moderation, self-control and prudence, uprightness of conduct, and “soundness” of mind, all of these are aspects of what the ancient Greeks called *sophrosyne*.

As Hierocles states, the practice of *arete* (“excellence” or “full realization of inherent potential”) will lead us to friendship and converse with the gods. We have seen how the immortal Tetraktys within every human being, derived from the cosmic origin of all spiritual and creative hierarchies of Nature, is inherently fohatic and sacrificial. It is what makes us potentially transformative and healing agents of divine harmony, capable of giving without thought of return

and of endlessly striving without hope for purely personal benefit. An ever-deepening process of discovery, it is a power or force to be guided by “the understanding which comes from above”, the inner daimon, the *Pitar Guru*, and the Pythagorean review. This daily meditation enjoined in the verses develops the willingness to see and admit error, to identify the root demons within and to self-correct, to acknowledge failure, and to start again undaunted. It also includes the capacity to hold and retain wisdom, to gather in the good harvest of each day, even as the bee gathers honey.

40. Never suffer sleep to close thy eyelids, after thy going to bed, till thou hast thrice examined all thy actions of the day.

41. Wherein have I done amiss?

42. What have I done?

43. What have I omitted that I ought to have done?

44. If in this examination thou find that thou hast done amiss, reprimand thyself severely for it and if thou hast done any good, rejoice.

45. Practise thoroughly all these things; meditate on them well; thou oughtest to love them with all thy heart. 'Tis they that will put thee in the way of Divine Virtue.

It is here in the verses that we transition from the practical virtues to divine virtues. Iamblichus speaks of the Pythagorean excellences as being of seven grades: *natural*, *ethical*, *civic*, *purificatory*, *theoretical*, *paradigmatic*, and *hieratic*. The first four involve the application of the reasoning faculty “as

directed towards realms which are inferior to it”, that is, disciplining and aligning the lower mind and all the activities of incarnation. While avoiding the sham and merely conventional expectations of social life, the secular monastic is required to conscientiously fulfill every known duty — familial or civic — while also being deeply engaged in the awakening of higher faculties, the complete “turning around of the soul”, through “such disciplines, theories, and scientific investigations, as truly invigorate the eye of the soul”.⁵⁰ As the Path becomes the keynote of life, the higher initiations cultivate contemplative virtues “of the soul which has already abandoned itself”. The separative personality having been discarded as the locus of identity and purpose, purified consciousness is more continuously centered in the divine, the Agathon, the one God, or good of all. Action is increasingly from above below.

48. Never set thy hand to the work, till thou hast first prayed the Gods to accomplish what thou art going to begin. When thou hast made this habit familiar to thee, thou wilt know the constitution of the Immortal Gods and of men; even how far the different Beings extend, and what contains and binds them together.

To think first, then act, is Promethean common sense. But what is the prescribed nature of that forethought? The word prayer in verse 49 might be properly understood as a wakeful *samadhi*, a form of Buddhi-yoga by which all actions are imbued with divine love as well as an ever-active spiritual wakefulness of

the eternal within the time-bound — the divine archetypes (*tattvas*) whose spiritual, alchemical vibrancy manifests behind the veil of visible nature under current karmic limitations. For one conversant with this reality all thought is akin to prayer, not of supplication but of creative, logicic intonation. Theosophically, this would entail the progressive wedding of *manas* to *buddhi*, manifesting what Plato called *anamnesis*, or soul memory. This ever self-renewing harmonic plenum of divine wisdom eventually includes an overarching, continuously maintained direct cognition of non-duality *in multiplicity*. The individual ceases to be or to see only the part, but includes the whole, “the Number of Numbers”.⁵¹

52. Thou shalt likewise know, in accord with Cosmic Order, that the nature of this Universe is in all things alike, so that thou shalt not hope what thou oughtest not to hope and nothing in this world shall be hid from thee.

It is said that Pythagoras not only knew or could recall all of his past lives, but that he could read the past lives of others. Nature had opened her doors and imparted her secrets. The heavenly chorus was not only seen and heard, but joined. Because of this capacity of instantaneous depth perception and melodic soul mathematics which he had brought to a level of perfection in his own nature, Pythagoras was known as the wisest of physicians. He could not only determine when one was ready to accept the burdens and trials of initiation, but he could heal and nurture souls at each step of the way, offering exactly what was needed to disarm the impetuous and the volatile while drawing

forth the noblest and best. Addressing those souls immediately under his care, the adept of Croton was also speaking to those intuitive ones of races and ages to come by exemplifying the highest form of service and resounding the keynote of hope, of human perfectibility and immortality which the Path offers to every man, woman, and child.

64. But take courage, the race of men is divine.

65. Sacred Nature reveals to them the most hidden Mysteries.

66. If she impart to thee her secrets, thou wilt easily perform all the things which I have ordained thee, and healing thy soul, thou wilt deliver it from all these evils, from all these afflictions . . .

70. And when, after having divested thyself of thy mortal body, thou arrives in the most pure Aether, thou shalt be a God, immortal, incorruptible, and death shall have no more dominion over thee.

(To be continued)

Endnotes

38. *The Origin and Goal of History*, Karl Jaspers.

39. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. i, p. xliv.

40. *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, with the commentary of Hierocles (Concord Grove Press, 1983).

41. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. i, p. 336 fn.

42. *The Theology of Arithmetic*, attributed to Iamblichus, translated by Robin Waterfield, 1988, pp. 35–39.

43. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. i, p. 427.

44. *The Theology of Arithmetic*, p. 27.

45. *Ibid*, p. 30.

46. *See Teachers of the Eternal Doctrine*, Vol. I (2006) & II (2018), by Elton Hall.

47. *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, CGP, 1983, p. 56.

48. *Ibid*, p. 38.

49. *The Key to Health*, by M. K. Gandhi, 1948. Written while in prison and translated into multiple languages, this was the most popular of all of Gandhi's writings during his lifetime.

50. *The Life of Pythagoras*, translated by Thomas Taylor, p. 15.

51. *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, CGP, 1983, p. 70.

The “Elixir of Life”: From a Chela’s Diary — I

GODOLPHIN MITFORD, F.T.S.

And Enoch walked with the Elohim, and the Elohim took him. — Genesis

Introduction

The curious information contained in this article merits a few words of introduction. The details given in it on the subject of what has always been considered as one of the darkest and most strictly guarded of the mysteries of the initiation into occultism — from the days of the Rishis until those of the Theosophical Society — came to my knowledge in a way that would seem strange and supernatural. I, however, am a most thorough disbeliever in the Super-natural, though I have learned too much to limit the capabilities of the natural as some do. I am, or rather was, for a few years a humble Chela. As regards the higher stages of the mystery I have no personal experience, but speak of it only as a close observer. During my stay with some adepts, I have by actual experiment and observation verified some of the less transcendental or incipient parts of the “Course”. Though it will be impossible for me to give positive testimony as to what lies beyond, I may

yet mention that all my own course of study, training and experience, long, severe and dangerous as it has often been, leads me to the conviction that everything is really as stated, save some details purposely veiled. I myself may be unable or unwilling to use the secret I have gained access to. Still, I am permitted by my last Guru to divulge for the benefit of Science and Man, and specially for the good of those who are courageous enough to personally make the experiment, the following astounding particulars of the occult methods for prolonging life to a period far beyond the common.

Probably one of the first considerations which move the worldly-minded at present to solicit initiation into Theosophy is the belief or hope that, immediately on joining, some extraordinary advantage over the rest of mankind will be conferred upon the candidate. Some even think that the ultimate result of their initiation will perhaps be exemption from that dissolution which is called the com-

Godolphin Mitford (1844–1884) became a member of the TS in India and a probationary chela (disciple) of Master KH in 1882, but eventually failed, having dabbled in black magic during his wild youth.

mon lot of mankind. The tradition of the “Elixir of Life”, said to be in the possession of Kabalists and Alchemists, are still cherished by students of Medieval Occultism in Europe. The allegory of the Aab-è-Hayat or Water of Life, is still credited as a fact by the degraded remnants of the Asiatic esoteric sects ignorant of the real Great Secret. The “pungent and fiery Essence”, by which Zanoni renewed his existence, still fires the imagination of modern visionaries as a possible scientific discovery of the future.

Theosophically, though the fact is distinctly declared to be true, the above-named conceptions of the mode or procedure leading to the realization of the fact, are *known* to be false. The reader may or may not believe it; but as a matter of fact, Theosophical Occultists claim to have communication with (living) Intelligences possessing an infinitely wider range of observation than is contemplated even by the loftiest aspirations of modern science, all the present “Adepts” of Europe and America — dabblers in the Kabala — notwithstanding. But far even as those superior Intelligences have investigated, and remotely as they may have searched by the help of inference and analogy, even They have failed to discover in the Infinity anything permanent — but Space. All is subject to Change. Reflection, therefore, will easily suggest to the reader the further logical inference that in a Universe which is essentially impermanent in its conditions, nothing can confer permanency. Therefore, no possible substance, even if drawn from the depths of Infinity; no

imaginable combination of drugs, whether of our earth or any other, though compounded by even the Highest Intelligence; no system of life or discipline though directed by the sternest determination and skill, could possibly produce Immutability. For in the universe of solar systems, wherever and however investigated, Immutability necessitates “Non-Being” in the physical sense given by the Theists — Non-Being which is *nothing* in the narrow conception of Western Religionists — a *reducto ad absurdum*. This is a gratuitous insult even when applied to the pseudo-Christian or ecclesiastical Jehovite idea of God.

Consequently, it will be seen that the common ideal conception of “Immortality” is not only essentially wrong, but a physical and metaphysical impossibility. The idea, whether cherished by Theosophists or non-Theosophists, by Christians or Spiritualists, by Materialists or Idealists, is a chimerical illusion. But the actual prolongation of human life is possible for a time so long as to appear miraculous and incredible to those who regard our span of existence as necessarily limited to at most a couple of hundred years. We may break, as it were, the shock of Death, and instead of dying, change a sudden plunge into darkness to a transition into a bright light. And this may be made so gradual that the passage from one state of existence to another shall have its friction minimized, so as to be practically imperceptible. This is a very different matter, and quite within the reach of Occult Science. In this, as in all other cases, means

properly directed will gain their ends, and causes produce effects. Of course, the only question is, what are these causes, and how, in their turn, are they to be produced. To lift, as far as may be allowed, the veil from this aspect of Occultism, is the object of the present paper.

Sevenfold

We must premise by reminding the reader of two Theosophic doctrines, viz., (a) that ultimately the Kosmos is One — one under infinite variations and manifestations, and (b) that the so-called man is a “compound being” — composite not only in the exoteric scientific sense of being a congeries of living so-called material Units, but also in the esoteric sense of being a succession of seven forms or parts of itself, interblended with each other. To put it more clearly, we might say that the more ethereal forms are but duplicates of the same aspect, each finer one lying within the interatomic spaces of the next grosser. We would have the reader understand that these are no subtleties, no “spiritualities” at all in the Christo-Spiritualistic sense. In the actual man reflected in your mirror are really several men, or several parts of one composite man; each the exact counterpart of the other, but the “atomic conditions” (for want of a better word) of each of which are so arranged that its atoms interpenetrate those of the next “grosser” form. It does not, for our present purpose, matter how the Theosophists, Spiritualists, Buddhists, Kabalists, or Vedantists, count, separate, classify, arrange or name these, as that war of terms may be post-

poned to another occasion. Neither does it matter what relation each of these men has to various “elements” of the Kosmos of which he forms a part. This knowledge, though of vital importance in other respects, need not be explained or discussed now. Nor does it much more concern us that the scientists deny the existence of such an arrangement, because their instruments are inadequate to make their senses perceive it. We will simply reply — “Get better instruments and keener senses, and eventually you will.”

All we have to say is that if you are anxious to drink of the “Elixir of Life”, and live a thousand years or so, you must take our word for the matter at present, and proceed on the assumption. For, esoteric science does not give the faintest possible hope that the desired end will ever be attained by any other way; while modern, or so-called exact science laughs at it.

Choice

So, then, we have arrived at the point where we have determined — literally, *not* metaphorically — to crack the outer shell known as the mortal coil or body, and hatch out of it, clothed in our next. This “next” is not spiritual, but only a more ethereal form. Having by a long training and preparation adapted it for a life in this atmosphere, during which time we have gradually made the outward shell to die off through a certain process (hints of which will be found further on) we have to prepare for this physiological transformation.

How are we to do it? In the first place we have the actual, visible, material body — man, so called, though, in fact,

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but his outer shell — to deal with. Let us bear in mind that science teaches us that in about every seven years we “change skin” as effectually as any serpent; and this so gradually and imperceptibly that, had not science after years of unremitting study and observation assured us of it, no one would have had the slightest suspicion of the fact.

We see, moreover, that in process of time any cut or lesion upon the body, however deep, has a tendency to repair the loss and reunite; a piece of lost skin is very soon replaced by another. Hence, if a man, partially flayed alive, may sometimes survive and be covered with a new skin, so our astral, vital body — the fourth of the seven (having attracted and assimilated to itself the second) and which is so much more ethereal than the physical one — may be made to harden its particles to the atmospheric changes. The whole secret is to succeed in evolving it out, and separating it from the visible; and while its generally invisible atoms proceed to concrete themselves into a compact mass, to gradually get rid of the old particles of our visible frame so as to make them die and disappear before the new set has had time to evolve and replace them.

We can say no more. The Magdalene is not the only one who could be accused of having “seven spirits” in her, though men who have a lesser number of spirits (what a misnomer that word!) in them, are not few or exceptional; they are the frequent failures of Nature — the incomplete men and women.¹ Each of these has in turn to survive the preceding and

more dense one, and then “die”. The exception is the sixth when absorbed into and blended with the seventh. The “Dhatu”² of the old Hindu physiologist had a dual meaning, the esoteric side of which corresponds with the Tibetan “Zung” (seven principles of the body).

We Asiatics, have a proverb, probably handed down to us, and by the Hindus repeated ignorantly as to its esoteric meaning. It has been known ever since the old Rishis mingled familiarly with the simple and noble people they taught and led on. The Devas had whispered into every man’s ear: *Thou only* — if thou wilt — art “immortal”. Combine with this the saying of a Western author that if any man could just realize for an instant, that he had to die some day, he would die that instant. The “Illuminated” will perceive that between these two sayings, rightly understood, stands revealed the whole secret of longevity. We only die when our will ceases to be strong enough to make us live. In the majority of cases, death comes when the torture and vital exhaustion accompanying a rapid change in our physical condition becomes so intense as to weaken, for one single instant, our “clutch on life”, or the tenacity of the will to exist. Till then, however severe may be the disease, however sharp the pang, we are only sick or wounded, as the case may be. This explains the cases of sudden deaths from joy, fright, pain, grief, or such other causes. The sense of a life-task consummated, of the worthlessness of one’s existence, *if strongly realized*, produced death as surely as poison or a rifle-bullet. On the other

hand, a stern determination to continue to live, has, in fact, carried many through the crises of the most severe diseases, in perfect safety.

First, then, must be the determination — the Will — the conviction of certainty, to survive and continue.³ Without that, all else is useless. And to be efficient for the purpose, it must be, not only a passing resolution of the moment, a single fierce desire of short duration, but “a settled and continued strain, as nearly as can be continued and concentrated without one single moment’s relaxation”. In a word, the would-be “Immortal” must be on his watch night and day, guarding self against — himself. “To live — to live — to live” must be his unswerving resolve. He must as little as possible allow himself to be turned aside from it. It may be said that this is the most concentrated form of selfishness, — that it is utterly opposed to our Theosophic professions of benevolence, and disinterestedness, and regard for the good of humanity. Well, viewed in a short-sighted way, it is so. But to do good, as in everything else, a man *must have* time and materials to work with, and this is a necessary means to the acquirement of powers by which infinitely more good can be done than without them. When these are once mastered, the opportunities to use them will arrive, for there comes a moment when further watch and exertion are no longer needed: the moment when the turning-point is safely passed. For the present as we deal with aspirants and not with advanced chelas, in the first stage a determined, dogged

resolution, and an enlightened concentration of self on self, are all that is absolutely necessary. It must not, however, be considered that the candidate is required to be unhuman or brutal in his negligence of others. Such a recklessly selfish course would be as injurious to him as the contrary one of expending his vital energy on the gratification of his physical desires. All that is required from him is a purely negative attitude. Until the turning-point is reached, he must not “lay out” his energy in lavish or fiery devotion to any cause, however noble, however “good”, however elevated.⁴ Such, we can solemnly assure the reader, would bring its reward in many ways — perhaps in another life, perhaps in this world, but it would tend to shorten the existence it is desired to preserve, as surely as self-indulgence and profligacy. That is why very few of the truly great men of the world (of course, the unprincipled adventurers who have applied great powers to bad uses are out of the question) — the martyrs, the heroes, the founders of religions, the liberators of nations, the leaders of reforms — ever became members of the long-lived “Brotherhood of Adepts” who were by some and for long years accused of “selfishness”. (And that is also why the Yogis, and the Fakirs of modern India, most of whom are acting now but on the “dead-letter” tradition, are required if they would be considered living up to the principles of their profession to appear “entirely dead” to every inward feeling or emotion.) Notwithstanding the purity of their hearts, the greatness of their aspirations, the

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disinterestedness of their self-sacrifice, they “could not live for they had missed the hour”. They may at times have exercised powers which the world called miraculous; they may have electrified man and subdued Nature by fiery and self-devoted Will; they may have been possessed of a so-called superhuman intelligence; they may have even had knowledge of, and communication with, members of our own occult Brotherhood; but, having deliberately resolved to devote their vital energy to the welfare of others, rather than to themselves, they have surrendered life; and, when perishing on the cross or the scaffold, or falling, sword in hand, upon the battlefield, or sinking exhausted after a successful consummation of the life-object, on death-beds in their chambers, they have all alike had to cry out at last: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani! [My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!]”

So far so good. But, given the will to live, however powerful, we have seen that, in the ordinary course of mundane life, the throes of dissolution cannot be checked. The desperate, and again and again renewed, struggle of the Kosmic elements to proceed with a career of change despite the will that is checking them, like a pair of runaway horses struggling against the determined driver holding them in, are so cumulatively powerful, that the utmost efforts of the “untrained” human will acting within an “unprepared” body become ultimately useless. The highest intrepidity of the bravest soldier; the most intense desire of the yearning lover; the hungry greed

of the unsatisfied miser; the most undoubting faith of the sternest fanatic; the practiced insensibility to pain of the hardiest red Indian brave or half-trained Hindu Yogi; the most deliberate philosophy of the calmest thinker — all alike fail at last. Indeed, skeptics will allege in opposition to the verities of this article that, as a matter of experience, it is often observed that the mildest and most irresolute of minds and the weakest of physical frames are often seen to resist “Death” longer than the powerful will of the high-spirited and obstinately egotistic man, and the iron frame of the labourer, the warrior, and the athlete. In reality, however, the key to the secret of these apparently contradictory phenomena is the true conception of the very thing we have already said. If the physical development of the gross “outer shell” proceeds on parallel lines and at an equal rate with that of the will, it stands to reason that no advantage, “for the purpose of overcoming it”, is attained by the latter. The acquisition of improved breechloaders by one modern army confers no absolute superiority if the enemy also becomes possessed of them. Consequently, it will be at once apparent, to those who think on the subject, that much of the training by which what is known as “a powerful and determined nature”, perfects itself for its own purpose on the stage of the visible world, necessitating and “being useless” without a parallel development of the “gross” and so-called animal frame, is, in short, neutralized, for the purpose at present treated of, by the fact that its own action has armed the

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enemy with weapons equal to its own. The “force” of the impulse to dissolution is rendered equal to the will to oppose it; and being cumulative, subdues the will-power and triumphs at last. On the other hand, it may happen that an apparently weak and vacillating will-power residing in a weak and undeveloped physical frame, may be so “reinforced” by some

unsatisfied desire — the *ichchha* (wish) — as it is called by the Indian Occultists (for instance, a mother’s heart-yearning to remain and support her fatherless children) — as to keep down and vanquish, for a short time, the physical throes of a body to which it has become temporarily superior.

(To be continued)

Endnotes

1. This is not to be taken as meaning that such persons are thoroughly destitute of some one or several of the seven principles: a man born without an arm has still its ethereal counterpart; but that they are so latent that they cannot be developed, and consequently are to be considered as non-existing. — Ed.

2. Dhatu — the seven principal substances of the human body — chyle, flesh, blood, fat, bones, marrow, semen.

3. Col. Olcott has epigrammatically explained the creative or rather the recreative power of the Will, in his “Buddhist Catechism.” He there shows — of course, speaking on behalf of the Southern Buddhists — that this Will to live, if not extinguished in the present life, leaps over the chasm of bodily death, and recombines the *Skandhas*, or groups of qualities that made up the individual into a new personality. Man is, therefore, reborn as the result of his own unsatisfied yearning for objective existence. Col. Olcott puts it in this way:

Q. 123. . . . What is that, in man, which gives him the impression of having a permanent individuality?

A. *Tanha*, or the unsatisfied desire for existence. The being having done that for which he must be rewarded or punished in future, and having *Tanha*, will have a rebirth through the influence of *Karma*.

Q. 124. What is it that is reborn?

A. A new aggregation of *Skandhas*, or individuality, caused by the last yearning of the dying person.

Q. 128. To what cause must we attribute the difference in the combination of the Five *Skandhas* which makes every individual differ from every other individual?

A. To the *Karma* of the individual in the next preceding birth.

Q. 129. What is the force or energy that is at work, under the guidance of *Karma*, to produce the new being?

A. *Tanha* - the “Will to Live.”

4. On page 151 of Mr Sinnett’s “Occult World”, the author’s much abused, and still more doubted correspondent assures him that none yet of his “degree are like the stern hero of Bulwer’s” Zanoni . . . “the heartless morally dried up mummies some would fancy us to be” . . . And adds that few of them “would care to play the part in life of a desiccated pansy between the leaves of a volume of solemn poetry.” But our adept omits saying that one or two degrees higher, and he will have to submit for a period of years to such a mummifying process unless, indeed, he would voluntarily give up a life-long labour and, Die. — Ed.

The Intuition Knows

MARJA ARTAMAA

WHEN someone joins the Theosophical Society (TS), they are not requested to accept the existence of the perfected individuals — the Masters of the Wisdom behind the founding of the TS in 1875. The only requirement is that they accept universal brotherhood. There is however a deeper realization, not only of the value of unity, but also the principle of harmlessness and the possibility of practising it to the maximum extent. This reflects in the way we live — being harmless to animals, Nature as a whole, and people, including their physical, astral, and mental natures.

There is much more than simply adopting a pure way of life, but that is not enough. Practising a good life is only a direction of the path behind which is a world of intuition and higher consciousness — the spiritual nature of the Masters of the Wisdom. We may have a belief about the Masters and we may understand that evolution does not stop at humanity's present state. These are fine beliefs, but in a deeper approach we are trying to develop an intuition about the Truth; we try to intuitively respond to the spiritual nature which is embodied in the Elder Brethren. We try to go beyond mere belief.

Although in one's mundane mind, there may be doubts at times they do not belong to the intuitive effort. Mere belief is just an assumption without consideration or reflection. Instead we can develop our intuition and inner realization of deeper aspects of life. We are on this Earth to learn in a variety of ways. The spiritual nature must come alive. The thing is not just to believe in the spiritual nature which is embodied in the Elder Brethren, but to realize and live its principles.

While attempting to ascend Mount Everest or other peaks, there are innumerable obstacles and difficulties, but when some have done it, the ways become known, so that it becomes so much easier, and makes it more possible for the next ones trying to do the same. It is said that J. Krishnamurti, by going through a painful process of elevating the consciousness in his body and mind, opened a higher level of consciousness, making it a bit more possible for others to be free from restrictions. A sphere of being became more open. It depends on one's approach and intuitive development if one can grasp the nature of that level. It is possible for anyone in the absolute silence of being.

Ms Marja Artamaa has been the international Secretary of the TS in Adyar, India for almost 10 years.

The Intuition Knows

One Master wrote: “We belong to quite a different world from the one you move in; not geographically, but psychologically. . . . Come out of your world into ours”. They do not ask us to travel to find them, but to move out of our present psychological and psychic condition into a purer, less self-occupied, more universal and altruistic state of being. It is evident that we need the mind to recognize things, surroundings, features, families, friends, and so on. If we are to function in the world, we cannot do away with thought. We function in the world of forms. However, as Krishnaji said: “You must put thought in its right place.”

To me it means to use thinking and the mind in the activities of the world. Besides it is the whole sphere of intuition and wider consciousness that need to be recognized at times to uplift the work. Thought has its place, but thought is not everything. There is more: through observation, being aware, the spiritual world opens. We need to recognize the existence of that other world, and make it part of our daily living. This sounds like high theory, but through our studies, deeper thinking, and understanding, we can prepare to realize that such existence, an intuitive sphere without thought, is real.

When the Master says, “come out of your world into ours”, it is a matter of having a higher consciousness, not having the Master communicating individually to us as a perfected being. Individual communication did happen in the late 1800s and early 1900s with a few devoted individuals who conveyed higher principles

to humanity in the name of Theosophy.

In evolution there are culmination points in which a necessity for change is so pressing that a new action must take place. At that time, it was to bring to the world an awareness of the wisdom of the Masters and ancient philosophies. Since then, the Masters have not disappeared, but continue to function at the level into which humanity has the opportunity to rise by its own effort. Ancient wisdom cannot be poured into people by making it a belief. Humanity must uplift itself to become receptive to higher knowledge and ultimately to Truth. The Masters are there and trust people to take their own steps and have realizations.

If something ultimately goes wrong in the current phase of evolution, a strong push for change is evident by natural law. It can be called a turning point. The scientist and philosopher Fritjof Capra wrote a book, *The Turning Point*. It may be that in today’s world we are approaching a new turning point which we do not yet know and cannot guess what it might bring about, something completely new — unknown to our current consciousness and awareness. Some may perhaps get a hint intuitively, but action arises from the pressure of necessity for a quantum or profound change. It is like an inevitable jump.

Many new things are developing in the world of intellect and communication, which affect human consciousness. It becomes essential that new ways arise on a larger scale. This highlights the importance of making intuition part of our

The Intuition Knows

observation, such that one can rely upon and continue on the path of spiritual realization. The spiritual world is open. It is just that we need to develop our intuition and understanding of life so that, with the effort from our small part, these two can blend in our beings to urgently improve the state of our world. We must bring our attention, not to beliefs, but ways to open a path to the wider consciousness. Human consciousness can meet the higher consciousness and make of them a unity. On the Spiritual Path each one is unique, but all have something in common, just as each rose is different and yet similar. Within us, somewhere invisible or still hidden, in the very essence of ourselves,

something is one with those Great Ones, so that we can reflect their will.

How? By living everyday life without demanding anything for ourselves. It is not too difficult — to demand nothing. With such an attitude our mind can open up to the quality (essence) of the Great Ones whose perfection pours out as compassion, wisdom, and blessing into the world — asking for nothing in return. It can be the same with us — instead of demanding, give selflessly. Not to demand is to be satisfied with simple necessities. To live in a state of inner peace.

The intuition knows the next best steps for intuitive responses to the truth and the spiritual nature of everything. ✧

Early in the 19th century, the visionary Shawnee chief Tecumseh tried to rally a number of tribes against the white men's incursions. In 1811 he declared: "The sun is my father, and the Earth is my mother; on her bosom I will rest." Tecumseh saw himself as an Indian first, and a Shawnee second, and when he spoke of the Earth as his kin, he was speaking on behalf of every Native American. . . .

Many stories about the Earth's creation explain how this came to be so, in similar tribal traditions. In 1900, almost 100 years after Tecumseh's testimony, Big Thunder of the northeastern Wabanakis nation declared: "The Great Spirit is our Father, but the earth is our Mother. . . . If we are wounded we go to our mother to lay the wounded part against her to be healed." History rode roughshod over the landscape of Native America, but in the myths and ritual that continue to tell of its sacred past, the Earth lives on as the ultimate cosmic gift.

Tom Lowenstein and Piers Vitebsky
From *Mother Earth, Father Sky*
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