

LETTERS TO ASPIRANTS

By **Clara M. Codd**

PREFACE

Nothing in all the world matters so much as the growth in each one of us of a spiritual outlook upon life. Dr. Annie Besant has defined spirituality as “the intuitive perception of Unity”. It is the perception of the trust in the utter surrender to Life which is the Shadow of God on earth, and the glad acceptance of all the changing, never ceasing events of that Life which are God in action. For, always and ever, Life means only our eternal good. Underneath are the Everlasting Arms. And spirituality is born of little things done “in His Name and for the love of man”.

These little chapters have been extracted and put together from letters written to a large group of correspondents all over the world. They were letters, written at regular intervals to some of our members who desire to lead what is called the spiritual life, and, in any case, a life of dedication to our Masters and Their great work. It was believed that what has been written to a few might prove helpful also to others who may care to read them. Hence this book.

Clara M.Codd

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Note: Abbreviations used throughout: "H.P.B." For Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

CHAPTER -1-

OUR WORK

Our purpose in life is to work wisely for our Masters and steadily to do all we can to approach Their Blessed Feet. What is that work? Let us consider it a little. At the early stages of aspiration, whatever may come later, the Master does not ask any one of us to do otherwise than live ordinary life as beautifully and in as dedicated a spirit as we can.

Discipleship, in its beginning stages at least, is not a question of exterior circumstances or special privileges. It is simply and solely an attitude of soul, an orientation of the spirit. I long that each one of you shall slowly acquire the spirit of Discipleship. This is the spirit of utter dedication, of putting ourselves, as Bishop Leadbeater said, out of the center of our own circle and putting the Master and God there instead. Once we have truly given our hearts and lives to Him, we give Him the karmic right to rearrange our lives. He will do this, not that He can ever abrogate karma, but in such a way as brings each one of us nearer to the work we can do for Him.

Watch not for special signs or dreams but for daily circumstances. These will gradually indicate to each one of us the Master's will. And His work is all life, for He is a master of that great science of Life and Art of living which is true occultism. Put Him behind your employer, your husband and children; however much you love them, realize that he loves them still more, and that you are His little aspiring agent to bring something of His love and strength to all others; to those you love, and to those you meet in business or pleasure.

So, He wants us to set an example of beautiful living: to be lovely mothers, splendid business men, and so on, because we are to be His one day — nay, if we will it in our own hearts, now, this minute. He cannot and will not say nay if we purely offer our lives to Him. But we must offer purely, not with half a thought as to what advancement or benefit we shall obtain.

Never speculate on when you will "arrive", or whether anybody else has already done so. That betokens a quite natural but mean spirit of heavenly bargaining. We

must give the beautiful and adorable Master the best, nay, all of our lives, whatever they may be, and never, never allow ourselves to think how we in our silly little personalities will benefit thereby.

Help the Theosophical work all you can, because He founded it and meant it for the comforting and enlightening of this sad and blind world; but remember that just as important and as blessed in His eyes are the little daily duties and loving kindnesses and sacrifices of everyday living. There is our training ground. As the Master K.H. Himself said to Mr. Sinnett, "What better cause for reward, what better discipline, than the daily and hourly performance of duty? Believe me, my 'pupil', the man or woman who is placed by karma in the midst of small, plain duties and sacrifices and loving-kindness, will through these faithfully fulfilled, rise to the larger measure of Duty, Sacrifice and Charity to all Humanity — what better paths toward the enlightenment you are striving after than the daily conquest of self, the perseverance in spite of want of visible psychic progress, the bearing of ill-fortune with that serene fortitude which turns it to spiritual advantage — since good and evil are not to be measured by events on the lower or physical plane".

As we grow in the spirit of dedication, we shall also grow in a lovely dignity; not the dignity of pride but the dignity which always accompanies the gradual simplifying of our minds and the purifying of our hearts. Meanwhile, we all have many little failings and sillinesses. Disregard them in each other. They will go. So never let us criticize each other, only love and trust each other. We shall get everything in time; and God has given us time and power, to overcome.

CHAPTER -2-

OCCULTISM

"Occultism", said H.P.B., "Is not magic, though magic is one of its tools. Occultism is not the acquirement of powers, whether psychic or intellectual, though both are its servants. Neither is occultism the pursuit of happiness as man understands the word, for the first step is sacrifice; the second, renunciation. Occultism is the Science of Life, the Art of Living".

So often the acquirement of powers, psychic or intellectual, produces that deadly enemy to growth in spirituality in man: egotism. As the Master K.H. Puts it: "Often their possessor is misled by deceitful nature spirits, or becomes conceited and thinks he cannot make a mistake". Now I do not wish to decry psychic powers. They are very useful in helping and understanding our fellow men, if accompanied by a loving and humble spirit.

You notice H.P.B.'s words? She says the first step in occultism is sacrifice and the second, renunciation. Sacrifice means living for other people, not for ourselves. It is the faculty of Discrimination, the first of the great Qualifications for the Path, that gives us the right motive without which we should run the most awful risks. And renunciation, the second qualification, is the spirit of the second great qualification, Desirelessness, or Dispassion. This does not mean that we must possess nothing and give everything away. But we must learn and practice the habit of sitting loosely about everything.

When we have joy and power, let us realize that we are but the agents of the Divine Blessing and hold that joy and power in trust for the benefit of our fellow men. When we have sorrow and loss, let us still be joyful. We can do as the saints did, offer them to Life on behalf of other unfortunates.

Nothing teaches us so well as the sorrows and losses of life. To quote H.P.B. Again: "Harmony is the Law of Life, discord its shadow, whence springs suffering, the teacher, the awakener of consciousness. Through joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, the soul comes to a knowledge of itself; then begins the task of learning the Laws of Life, that the discords may be resolved and the harmony restored". If we are to be His one day, we must be adults and not children. We must be willing to meet and to learn from every event in life. I must finish H.P.B.'s words: "The eyes of Wisdom are like the ocean depths; there is neither joy nor sorrow in them. Therefore the soul of the occultist must be stronger than joy and greater than sorrow". We must not "hug" anything to ourselves. We must be willing to let all things go with our blessing.

CHAPTER -3-

"BE FAITHFUL IN LITTLE THINGS"

A profound occult truth is that it does not matter much what we do but how we do it. So often aspirants feel that they cannot engage in occult work because they are tied to a business or a home. Let us remember the words of the Master K.H. To Krishnaji: "The one thing you must set before you is to do the Master's work. Whatever else may come in your way to do, that at least you must never forget. Yet nothing else can come in your way, for all helpful, unselfish work is the Master's work and you must do it for His sake".

H.P. Blavatsky wrote something very helpful on this point. "What is this about the 'soldier not being free?' " (She was referring to the dilemma of a member who was a soldier.) "Of course no soldier can be free to move about in his physical body wherever he likes. But what has the esoteric teaching to do with the outward man? A soldier may be stuck in his sentry box like a barnacle to its hip, and the soldier's ego be free to go where it likes and think what it likes best. No man is required to carry a burden heavier than he can bear, nor to do more than it is possible for him to do. A man of means, independent and free from any duty, will have to move about and go missionary-like, to teach Theosophy. A man tied, by his duty, to one place has no right to desert it in order to fulfil another duty, let it be however much greater; for the first duty in occultism is to do one's duty unflinchingly by every duty".

H.P.B. Also wrote: "Chelaship has nothing whatever to do with means of subsistence or anything of the kind, for a man can isolate his mind entirely from his body and its surroundings. Chelaship is a state of mind, rather than a life according to hard and fast rules on the physical plane, especially in the earlier, probationary period".

So it does not matter what we do but how we do it. Let me quote the Master K.H. Again: "You must give all our attention to each piece as you do it so that it may be your very best. A great Teacher once wrote: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men". Those who know most will most know all that that verse

means". I think the Master meant perhaps this; that when we put our whole soul into anything worthy that we are doing, we call down the attention of our own divine ego. H.P.B. Said: "Students are required to practice the habit of careful and constant concentration of mind upon every duty and act in life they may have to do, and not to reserve their efforts in that direction for the consideration of these teachings only". The would-be occultist must try never to act in an unheeding, careless spirit.

Dr. Besant told all aspirants to offer all their daily doings to the Master and that nothing was too small to be thus offered. I remember such a lovely talk she once gave at Adyar. She talked about the subject so near to all our hearts, the drawing ever nearer to the Master's Feet. And she said we must not look for some big thing to do to achieve that goal. We must be faithful in little things, for he who is faithful in little things will be faithful in the great opportunity when it comes. And what are the seemingly little things of life? Being kind, patient, sympathetic, reliable! She told us that every time we were unkind or impatient or said a hard word about another, we must remember that at that moment we had put ourselves back a step from the Master's Feet.

It is true that, as if on a flood-tide, a man is often swept to His Master's Feet by some great act of sacrifice. Dr. Besant reached that point when, in spite of the agony of being forcibly parted from her child, she steadfastly upheld the doctrines which to her were then true. And Bishop Leadbeater really found his way when, at a moment's notice, he gave up home and career and all certainty and went out into the unknown with all his heart. But we must remember that the ability to do these great things is the karmic reward of having for so long done all the little things so well.

To find our Master means that we must obey this injunction. He said it, in His own words: "Come out of your world into Ours". We cannot bring Him down to our level. We must rise to His. And that is done by all true, pure, unselfish, lovely thoughts and deeds. We are bringing into play our own divinity. To do that we must prepare to meditate successfully, for the personal distractions and longings of our ordinary selves interfere with such higher purposes.

The Prince Arjuna asked his Lord, Shri Krishna, how he should meditate. It seemed to Arjuna that to control his mind was as difficult to perform as to curb the winds. The Lord replied that it was very difficult but that it could be done "by constant practice and by dispassion". Dispassion is getting loose as to our personal predilections. We must learn to think and act from a higher standpoint. "Not I but Christ in me", St. Paul said. Not this little "I" down here which does not matter, but that eternal "I" which is part of God, and the Master who shows us of what that diviner "I" is capable. Perhaps it is easier to think only of Him, the Master of Love and Life. For as we think of Him a replica of such beauty begins to stir in our own hearts. Take refuge in Him. Live Life for Him. Work for Him! — which means working for all humanity. So shall we begin to reflect that immortal loveliness which will make us a blessing to all the life that surrounds us.

CHAPTER -4-

MEDITATION

Some of you practice the art of meditation, and some of you have never tried. Do not be too formal and concrete about defining the process. It is not merely following a routine or mental plan. These are useful but in using them do not forget the goal in the means. The aim of meditation — quiet thought, the uplifting of the heart heavenwards; call it what you will — is to produce a constant attitude of heart; one that subconsciously looks all the time God-wards and Humanity-wards.

A long time ago the Master M. outlined for us what He called the “Golden Stairs” which lead to the Temple of Initiation. Each step is clear and wonderful, but the last is the most wonderful of all. It is “a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the secret science depicts”. That is the eternal sub-conscious attitude of heart at which we must aim. Let us learn to make it colour our outlook on life, and to let our little selves go. Does someone hurt or annoy us? We are not babies to mind being hurt or annoyed. Let us forgive and try to understand. Does someone seem to put a spoke in our work? Let us not be troubled. Right always comes uppermost. Another of the Master's “steps” was: “A courageous endurance of personal injustice”. When any one of you formally reaches the Great Path, you may be sure that you will have to suffer many an unmerited injustice!

Meditation is the food of our souls and an indispensable necessity for spiritual growth and progress. It is quite easy intellectually to see why. For many lives on the “outgoing path” we have been learning to give reality and value to the things around us. Now, on the “in-going” or return path we must turn our powers of observation and attention to inner things and learn to give them reality and value also. We are not making real something which is imaginary or, it might be thought, “unreal”. We are making real to ourselves something which is always there, something which eternally is.

The Ancient Wisdom has taught us that man is a three fold being. He has a body with which to gain experience, a subtler “soul” whose great powers are feeling and thought whereby these experiences are thought over and felt and in turn transmuted into mental and affectional concepts which guide and inspire his life. But more deeply hidden than either of these two is that eternal quality which shares the underlying Life of the universe, which can never pass away or die, and which shares, albeit as yet unconsciously with most of us the power and wisdom and love of God. Here lies the true source of all real wisdom and power. How shall we come into touch with it deep within ourselves?

The first thing is to realize by faith alone that the reality is there and does exist. Faith does not mean the ability to believe something beyond reason. H.P.B. called it “the soul's unlearned knowledge”. Eternity and Reality are always there, whether we understand and realize them or not. But by turning our attention in their direction we slowly begin to realize them.

How is that done? At first, in just the same way as we study and observe outer things. When we first turn our attention to it, that interior world seems vague and unknowable. But as time goes on, it begins to take on a clearer, richer appearance. Look around you. Your eyes see a wonderful world full of rich colours and forms, each of which has an eternal meaning and value. Shut your eyes and look within. What do your mental eyes see? Another world, full of thoughts, aspirations,

memories, ideals and hopes, which, when we know them, are even more beautiful and full of meaning. We must get acquainted with our Higher, better selves.

At the level of this “higher self” within us, we are one with the Master and also with the Divine Life. To realize him is to draw nearer to the Master and to God. We should not try to draw the Master down to our level but rise to His. In the scriptures, our Lord is said to have retired apart into a mountain to pray. I do not believe that He actually went up a physical mountain for that purpose. It is a symbol indicating how He rose in the interior worlds to higher and higher levels of consciousness. Whenever we try to think deeply and steadily upon higher things, we impose a quicker rate of vibration upon our inner vehicles of consciousness.

At present, man is more or less absorbed at his own level of life, though from a higher level comes all real love and power. Let us take time, however short, to turn our thoughts and emotions toward all that is lovely, unselfish and true. Into a world at first dim and uncertain we enter, but day after day that dimness clears and becomes a wondrous world of vision and beauty. As The Voice of the Silence puts it: “The light from the one Master (the divine life), 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”. Then it will begin to influence our daily lives, lending dignity, beauty and meaning to every separate action and event. We must use the creative power of the imagination. It does not matter what forms we create, for they are but stepping stones to greater and simpler realizations. A Moslem sage said: “We make the forms: Reality fills them”. So the ideas, mental concepts and forms we build are really little windows through which we peer into Eternity and through which Eternity looks back at us. But remember they are windows through which and beyond which we gaze.

Ponder on lovely and true statements from a scripture, a poet, or a sage. Picture to yourself the ideal you long to be and attain unto. Dr. Besant's advice to Indian students was: “Build for yourself a great Ideal — the Ideal of that which you wish to be. Think of it, dream of it, try to love it. One day you will wonder that you have become that fair thing that your thought threw on the clouds of the future”.

All spiritual values we must really discover for ourselves, and slowly increase the growth of realization. You will find out so much for yourselves, if you so will. The spiritual life is the most natural, lovely, serene, happy thing in the world. And when the time is ripe, there arises within one a spiritual will so undeviating that it is like a subconscious direction. Meditation is really the maintaining of that direction. It can exist within a man without his being consciously aware of it. Roman Catholic writers call it “dry meditation”. “Sensible” contemplation brings bliss and personal happiness; but this does not mean that the other state is not as much, or even more, blessed. The Spirit is above a sensible response, lovely as that may be. St. Therese spoke of an ardent love which she did not “feel”. Faith, will, spiritual direction, call it what you will, exists in the higher self, sometimes in spite of and against the ordinary self. H.P.B called it “the inexpressible yearning of the soul for the infinite”. And that yearning upward goes on night and day, in joy and in sorrow and finally leads the soul into union with the Source from which it came.

“Unveil, O Thou Who art the Source of the Universe; from Whom all came forth, to Whom all returns; that Face of the true Sun, now hidden by a veil of golden light, that we may know the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to Thy Sacred Feet”.

CHAPTER -5-

“THAT MY EYES MAY LOOK ON HIM”

Three main forms of meditation correspond to the familiar Three of the Holy Trinity. The Divine Life, the Master, and the Highest Self within are all one. These three aspects correspond to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit of Christendom. Perhaps the “Father” aspect, the universal Divine Life, is the most difficult to visualize. We have to think of it under some great symbol: Life, “In Him we live and move and have our being”; Light, “the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world”; Love, “underneath are the Everlasting Arms”. When we think of the Eternal, undying Life we are thinking of “God, the Father”. When we think of the Divine Spark within every one of us, the Inner Ruler Immortal, we are thinking of “God, the Holy Spirit”. the Divine Intelligence within us.

H.P.Blavatsky gave her pupils a helpful sketch of the Father aspect: to try and conceive of unity by imagining infinite expansion in space and time. No matter how many myriads of light years away from us the confines of the tremendous Universe may be, the same Spirit informs it, the same kind of matter fills it. And whatever infinitude of years lie behind or in front of us, the same Purpose, the same Life guides it. “One God, One Law, One Element, and One far-off Divine Event, to which the whole Creation moves”.

Let us now think of the Second Aspect, “God, the Son”, the Divine Eternal Life revealed in a perfected and purified human personality, God as Love. All through the ages man has visualized that supremely attractive form of the Godhead — the Man-God. And it is lovely to think that one day in the long future every one of us will develop into such a One, too. We may say, “What a long way off!” But it is not too far off to visualize, for we are all on the same long road of life, and it helps so much to envisage the Goal.

To so many the way is dark and long. They do not realize what the glorious Goal is, so they stumble and wander on the road. But we have the priceless happiness of being able to see the Goal and to know that we must very surely reach it one day, however, far off it may seem. For man is a God in the making, and the Master is, after all, the Man who is made. St. Paul, whom H.P.B. Told us was an initiate, clearly knew this, for he speaks of our Lord, the Christ, as “the first-born amongst many brethren”. He also says in unforgettable words, that “though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered”. That could not have been in that all perfect life when He came as a Saviour. Clearly it was in less perfect lives which lay behind.

In all the world there is nothing so attractive or so beautiful as the Man made God. We all feel that if we met such a One, how we could not help trusting Him completely, loving Him and wanting to become like Him. I particularly love that story of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus after the Resurrection. The newly risen

Lord walked with them by the way, and even came into the house to sup with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. It was only at the moment of the breaking of bread that they knew Who He was, and then He vanished out of their sight. In their hearts they really knew, for they said to each other: "Did not our hearts burn within us whilst He talked with us by the way?" Would not our hearts burn within us if so dear and lovely a Lord walked with us on our way?

As a matter of fact, He can walk with us by the way, if we will let Him. It is a matter of simple and sincere realization. How shall we attain that realization? So often people tell me that they have no powers of visualization; and besides, they do not know what the Master looks like, so how will they visualize Him? If you will believe me, it simply does not matter at all how you visualize the Master. Just think of him in the highest and loveliest form you know, for the picture you create on the mental plane is not Him, nor need it look like Him. It is a little window through which you glimpse something of the Reality it would portray, and through which again that Reality looks back at you. All our ideals, conceptions and visualizations are just that. They are all, every one, but little skylights through which we try to plumb it; that we look through our windows and not at them. Further, avoid the mistake of telling others that they should have windows of exactly the same shape and size of our own! Look through with the eyes of intuition. Look always beyond, beyond. We are glimpsing the dim star of our being, and says Light on The Path, "Steadily, as you watch and worship, its light will grow stronger. Then you may know that you have found the beginning of the way. And when you have found the end, its light will suddenly become the infinite light".

As we faithfully persevere and aspire, it will not be long before we shall become aware of an answering response. We cannot imagine that the Master would not respond! But all sorts of things may delay or prevent that response from reaching our physical consciousness. Tired nerves, a mind full of worries, a little self-indulgence — all such may conspire to lessen our knowledge of that blessedness. But never lose heart. Behind the clouds, however black and dense, the sun is always shining; one day the clouds will break and the sun give us its blessed warmth. As a flower opens to the sun's ray, so do our souls expand to the light and warmth of the Divine Love and Light. It needs only that we should trust; yes, even when such black clouds seem to overwhelm us. Then, most of all. Little St. Therese loved and trusted God with a most amazing selflessness and will, though only twice in her short life did the clouds of a dark night lift. She said it was so sweet to serve God for naught, and to ask nothing of Him, even consolation.

We do not want to be bargainers, saying that we will not serve the Master or try to love Him unless He is continually making us happy. Mrs Besant once said that a man could be a recognized chela, and very dear to the Master's heart and yet karma might build up a wall of separation here that could endure all life long!

It is wise to picture the Master always the same in the form that to us is lovely and dear, and in such surroundings as appeal to us; in His garden, in a wood, on a hillside, or in a shrine. And wait, keep still, try to feel what the Master is in His sublime character, not only what He might look like. Give Him all your life, minute by minute, as you live it. Give Him all your future. He will know best what to do with that. Try to be His messenger of love and goodwill to all men without exception. And in

your dealings with them, learn to know what men are like and how to be wise for their sake. You long to meet Him, to be near Him. Wait until the hour is ripe, and He will know that. Let me quote a stanza by Gilbert Chesterton, in his poem called "The Wild Knight":

My hair grows whiter than my thistle plume,
But, in my eyes,
A star of an unconquerable praise;
For in my soul one hope forever sings,
That at the next white corner of a road,
My eyes may look on Him.

CHAPTER -6-

TIME

Time is not really an artificial measurement, marked by the tocks of the clock. Time is a succession of states of consciousness, and everyone has his own rate of these successions. I remember being immensely struck by something Dr. Alex Carrel wrote in his book, *Man, The Unknown*. There he says that every doctor knows that every physical body has its own rate of growth and healing. We are our own timekeepers. That had never struck me before about our physical bodies, though I had known it true about our subtler ones. In the worlds after death, time is not measured by the revolutions of the globe or the ticks of the clock, but by the rate or rhythm of consciousness. Some people live faster than others and so exhaust their heaven life more quickly, from our standard of time. Generally the intellectual people live at a slower rate than do the more emotional, and so take longer to come back to earth.

Now, do not let us extend ourselves too greatly in time — except to realize that in the millennia of the past and the future man's nature remains fundamentally the same. So many people live too much in the past. There are events in that past that they never forget. Perhaps those events are mistakes and misfortunes which act like a canker in the consciousness and cause a leakage of vital force, rendering the sufferers less strong to meet present vicissitudes. The same is true when we dream too much of the future, particularly when such dreams are very personal to us.

Sometimes we are in a state of fear of some dreadful thing that may happen to us. Bishop Leadbeater once remarked how many people spend so much time and energy anticipating all sorts of misfortunes that may never happen to them. And even if those misfortunes occur we might as well wait until they happen before we begin to worry over them. Most of the ills people anticipate never do happen, so why worry? But then, Bishop Leadbeater was a person who never worried; and if any one had occasion to, surely he had! He was the most serene and happy man I have ever met. If any of us wanted to be unhappy or "grouse", he would tell us to go and do it by ourselves, not to infect other people with our unhappiness.

"Happiness", said a Master, "is based on confidence in the God within us, a just appreciation of time, and a forgetfulness of self. Take all glad things which may come, as trusts to be used to spread joy, and rebel not at happiness and pleasure in

service. Suffering comes as the lower self rebels. Eliminate desire all is joy. Have patience. Endurance is one of the characteristics of the ego. The ego persists, knowing itself immortal. The personality becomes discouraged, knowing that time is short. To the disciple naught occurs but what is in the plan, and where the active and sole aspiration of the heart is towards the carrying out of the Master's will and the serving of the race, that which eventuates has in it the seeds of the next enterprise, and embodies the environment of the next step forward”.

Let us take life as it comes, asking nothing of it but what life wills. I remember Krishnaji's once telling us how we all tried to paint what we wanted on Life instead of letting Life paint its pictures on us. When I was lecturing up in the wilds of Queensland in Australia, my hostess had been attending a mission given by a Roman Catholic monk and she took me to the last meeting. There the young monk, who had a most beautiful and spiritual face, told us that the best gift he could give us was one that he had found, himself, and that was to live no more than one minute at a time. The poet Goethe, said that every morning he began life anew, as if he were young once more. The Hymn To The Day from the Sanscrit, expresses it in these wonderful words:

Listen to the exhortation of the Dawn —
Look to the Day! For it is Life, the very life of life.
In its brief course lie all the Verities
And Realities of your existence:
The Bliss of Truth, the glory of Action, the splendor of Beauty.
For yesterday is but a dream, and tomorrow is only a vision,
But today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of Happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of Hope.
Look well, therefore, to the Day!
Such is the salutation of the Dawn.

CHAPTER -7-

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAY

Many people never take the first step toward the Path because they think that they are not good enough, or evolved enough, or something like that. Now, that is something which we cannot individually know. We must begin where we are. “To go far, we must begin near”. This pilgrimage of the soul, like all cycles, large or small, has two arcs. The Indian scriptures speak of the outgoing path, the Pravritti Marga, and the path of return, the Nivritti Marga. Upon the outgoing path man is rightfully self-centered, or even selfish. We can see it in the lives of children who epitomize the race. No little child is naturally unselfish. The regard of self forms round the spark of hardly-individualized Spirit a carapace of selfhood which acts as a protection, like the shell around a chicken. On this path we grow by taking.

When the cycle is nearing completion, the man's orientation begins to differ. The organization of the various sheaths of Spirit are almost completed, and now begins the time when the Christ-child within must be awakened to grow and shine forth through the gradually purifying sheaths of matter. On this path a man grows by giving. What he keeps, he loses. What he pours forth, he gains.

I think St. Paul was referring to these two paths when he spoke of the Law of Sin and Death — meaning that law which governs the first path, where, because personal aims and motives rule, personal effects ensue — if the motives are happy, bringing happiness to the individual concerned; if unhappy, bringing to him evil from the past.

In reality, there is no “evil” karma, for all reactions are framed to teach the man, to cure the original disease. Thus pain and sorrow cure the diseases of selfishness and insensitivity. It is during the last of a man's lives upon this road that the heaviest burden of sorrow and disaster generally fall upon him. “God does not suffer a man to be tempted (tested) beyond what he is able”. If the results of our misdeeds came to us all at once, we might be crushed by them. So the Lords of Karma hold them back until the soul, like gold tried in the furnace, is strong enough to learn their dark and wonderful lessons. This is why the good and the spiritual seem to have so much trouble, whilst the “wicked” seem to flourish like the green bay tree. Let us remember the words of the Master K.H.: “Take it as an honour that suffering comes to you, for it shows that the Lords of Karma think you worth helping”.

In one of Alcyone's lives, the Lord Maitreya says to two little girls, in prophecy of what will happen to them: “This is the first of the lives of expiation, that old karma may be outworn, old wrongs made right”. To turn our steps to the Path of Return is to challenge our karma. But we shall always be strong enough to face it if we trust our Master and Life.

There are so many who are upon the threshold of this Return Way, who would seek the Kingdom of Heaven, if only they knew how and where. The Buddha told His disciples that there were many young men in the world whose minds were only lightly covered with the dust of worldliness, and who would see their way did some enlightened and unselfish soul point it out to them.

How shall we know that we are near this Return Path? The very fact that we inquire or aspire is a clear indication. But we may still, even for lives, find ourselves unwilling to make the personal sacrifices which that austere and lovely road will ask of us. Still, the divine ego within us will have the patience of eternity. Only in these marvellous days, the Gates of Heaven are so far open! It is an appointed time, a spiritual flood-tide in the affairs of men.

The law is that everyone must find it, himself, must tread his own road; that no brother may make compensation for him or carry him one step. And the first step is to be taken from just where he is, and just as he is. Goodness does not come into the picture. It is true that on the Path is developed an utter purity of heart and life, but if we wait to be pure before we aspire to the Path, we shall never make a beginning.

God does not ask a man beyond what he is able. Has he a murky past, many faults, many blindnesses? It will be accounted to him for righteousness that he took one right step. “Even if the most sinful worship me with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he hath rightly resolved” (Bhagavid-Gita, IX.30). Eternal love cares more for what we shall be than for what we have been. The wonder of Life is the patience and love with which Life awaits our slow but inevitable unfolding.

So, without fear and in utter confidence, let us take the first step! “Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you”. And wise shall we be never to compare ourselves with others, to our own detriment and spiritual envying. In the eyes of Spirit, no differences matter. The Great Lover of all Life cares as much for the smallest, most blinded soul as for all His saints and perfected men. Just as we are, let us set out upon the road. The days of taking are over. As we grow in power more and more to give, so shall our destiny come to us.

How long will it take? Do not ask. When and where we must leave in the hands of the Master and of God. The way is sure, the end is certain, if we have the strength and the perseverance to tread the Path. “Have patience, candidate, as one who fears no failure, courts no success. Have perseverance, as one who doth forevermore endure”. Ah! Who has the patience and the perseverance? I think, truly, the ready of spirit.

CHAPTER -8-

SACRIFICE

We read a great deal about sacrifice, in books on the Inner Life. There is a lovely chapter in Dr. Besant's Ancient Wisdom. Taking may be the law of growth in the brute creation, but the law of sacrifice is the law of evolution for developing man, for therein he shares that great primeval act of sacrifice by which the worlds were formed by the Logos, and by which they are ever nourished and sustained.

Said the great Avatar, Sri Krishna: “I established this universe with a portion of myself; and I remain”. This is the dual aspect of God Transcendent and God Immanent. In the past the thought of God Transcendent has been paramount. Now the world is turning ever more and more to the idea of God immanent in His universe, suffering, evolving, acting with and through all life, and most of all in that which can know Him directly, being a spark of His Life, pure and undefiled: Man.

God sacrifices Himself unceasingly and eternally, and that sacrifice is not pain but eternal joy, the joy of creation: “When the morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy”. The East calls creation “Lila”, or the “sport” of God. When first we begin to tread the Return Path, we feel considerable pain at having to give up things to which our desire-nature clings. It is so natural to our ordinary human nature to cling, to grasp, to feel that we are lost without many things. Like children, we need surroundings, outside things which give us a feeling of security, a feeling of “counting” in the scheme of things. Our sheaths of consciousness have grown, like that. But now we must replace all supports from the outside by the Eternal Support within, the Christ in us, the inner God. He grows by giving, shining, pouring forth. As man gives, he grows. As he sacrifices, he shares the eternal sacrifice of the universe.

At first it is comparatively easy to renounce all clinging to material possessions and joys; for the things of the spirit are so infinitely more beautiful! But even there we must not cling. As the Master K.H. Says: “There are some who forsake the pursuit of earthly aims only in order to gain heaven; but remember that all selfish desire binds, however high may be its object”.

“Sometimes”, says [Light On The Path](#), “the pure artist who works for the love of his work is more firmly planted on the right road than is the occultist, who fancies he has removed his interest from self, but who has in reality only enlarged the limits of experiences and desire, and transferred his interest to the things which concern his larger span of life”. This surrender, this sacrifice is described in the Sermon on the Mount as being “poor in Spirit”. The occultist may be a wealthy man, yet having no sense of possession, holding all as a trust for the benefit of his fellowmen, may be truly “poor in spirit”. It is the same with all our beauties and happiness, inner and outer. They are for others too, not just for ourselves.

And there is a wonderful thing about the Law of Sacrifice which the saints discovered, and which is true also for us. They rejoiced in sacrifice, sorrow and suffering, because they offered every act of sacrifice as an offering on behalf of the world — thus to lesson, by their own voluntary giving and enduring, the pain and loss of others. Life will become so much more lovely and blessed when we no longer hold and grasp anything but joyfully surrender it to God and our fellowmen. Epictetus taught that in a very lovely way. When one of his dearest friends became grief-stricken, having lost a beloved daughter, Epithets said: “Ah! my friend, say to yourself, 'I have given her back to the beloved gods' ”.

Little Therese of Lisieux brought the faculty of sacrifice to such a wonderful sufficiency that she grew to say in her last days full of intense darkness and suffering: “Long since has suffering become my heaven here below”. She tells us that “from neither heaven nor earth did I receive any consolation; and yet in the midst of the waters of tribulation I was the happiest of beings”. During her last days, when every step she took caused her intense pain, a little novice found her painfully trying to follow the advice of the infirmarian to take a little walk in the garden. “Oh! You are too weak!” cried the novice, “surely you should not try to walk”. Little Therese gave her a very sweet smile. “You see”, she said, “every step which costs me so much pain I offer as a sacrifice, so that the pain and weariness of some poor missionary far away in wild parts may thus be a little lessened”.

Could we do something like that, too? Offer our shyness when we have to lecture, as a sacrifice to mitigate the shyness of others? Offer our sense of being or having so little, as joyful acceptance, that others having still less may feel more cheer and power to achieve? If others misunderstand us, speak sharply and unjustly to us, let us offer a sweet lack of resentment for the thousands of others who suffer much more. Do we lose that which we value most? We can offer that sacrifice, too, for all those, who in comparison with ourselves, have so little, perhaps nothing at all. Once the Master K.H. Said, in a letter to some young people, that if we can do things however high and lovely on behalf of ignorant and undeveloped man, the answer from heaven will go to them, not to ourselves, “The Appeal of the Initiate is made on behalf of humanity”.

If we really knew and saw how these votive offerings of ours went to our fellowmen, how we would love to offer, how we would seek to find such occasions of loving help, even to those unknown to ourselves! But we can do it all day long. Always we can make to suffering humanity these gifts of ourselves.

Says Light On The Path: "Try to lift a little the heavy karma of the world; give your aid to the few strong hands that hold back the powers of darkness from obtaining complete victory. Then do you enter into a partnership of joy, which brings indeed terrible toil and profound sadness but also a great and ever-increasing delight".

"Since I have renounced all self-seeking", wrote little Therese, "I lead the happiest life possible". If only we can understand the reality and beauty of self-surrender we shall enter into its joy and peace and its illimitable power to help others. Indeed, we may say that our power to help others is in direct ratio to our forgetfulness of, and lack of interest in, the personal self. Here is the Via Crucis, the Way of the Cross.

"The Cross is the symbol of Life Eternal, and the Way of the Cross is the path of the Spirit triumphant. It is the sign of the Sacrifice which is Joy, of the Surrender which is Peace, of the Service which is Freedom" (Annie Besant)

CHAPTER -9-

ON BEING A CHANNEL

We would each like to be a "channel" of the Master's force, if we could. There are two things I would like to make plain about that. When anyone is the accepted pupil of a Great One — in a way so subtle that it is almost impossible to describe clearly — the pupil's consciousness is included within the Master's greater one. Slowly, very slowly sometimes (because the Master never force the pace and has a very tender regard for what His pupil can sustain) the rapport between the two steadily increases. Of course, the pupil's little consciousness can never wholly understand or reply to the Master's so much greater and purer one.

The Master K.H. Uses the simile of two tanks, one empty and the other full, with a feed-pipe between. How long it takes, said He, for the knowledge and power of the Adept to flow into the Chela depends upon the size of the feed-pipe; that is to say, upon the power of the pupil to assimilate and respond to the beauty which now surrounds him. The exchange, He says, is scientifically regulated by the Master. But it means that while the pupil is in touch with inexhaustible strength and beauty, he (the pupil), being a separate evolution and individual, also imparts something to the Master's consciousness, too! Whenever the Master has time to look in the direction of His pupil, all that pupil's thoughts, desires and actions will arise in the Master's consciousness, and also all that has happened around him to a much more minute and spacious degree than the pupil himself can realize.

But we must not think, when we talk of the pupil's being a "channel" of the Master's power, that he just stays put, an automaton, waiting for power to be poured through him, like an empty pipe. That is not at all the idea. I remember Dr. Besant's explaining it to us. She said that the Master cannot put through his pupil anything that the pupil has not himself first initiated. The pupil himself must first be radiating peace, or sympathy or encouragement, to others; that will give the Master the opportunity, if He so wills, of enormously increasing the pupil's own radiation. He can heighten and increase it to a great degree, but He cannot do anything unless the pupil has already started radiating helpful thoughts, emotions and actions.

The Master used His disciples, who are very different often in temperament and capacity, for that which they excel in, not for what they lack. For example, the Master will use one disciple who is a tower of strong character, to encourage and strengthen work and workers all around him. The workers will feel how much they can do while he is with them. Another disciple, whose great characteristic is a deep and loving sympathy with others, the Master will use to bless, encourage and soothe many a weary and bewildered heart. He uses us for what we have and are, not for those things which as yet we do not wholly possess.

We would like to be, each of us, a channel of the Master's power; and through Him, of the Divine Power and Blessing. That is possible, even before a man is the officially recognized pupil of a Master. Any man can make it possible for the Master to use him by his own steady attitude of mind and heart, and by his complete surrender to the Divine Will as shown through the Master. The saints knew this; especially the most wonderful of all saints, little Therese of Lisieux. Let us take her as an example. It is the secret of being what a Medieval mystic meant when he exclaimed: "Oh! that I might be to the Almighty what a man's hand is to a man".

As time went on, St. Therese became aware that she was growing in her contact with novices (for she was made at twenty the Assistant Novice Mistress); that a heavenly wisdom flashed into her heart, and sometimes a most amazing insight into the thoughts and motives of her charges. When first she was appointed to her post she thought the task beyond her strength. But she took refuge in God. She says that "the knowledge that it was impossible to do anything of myself greatly simplified my task". Her impersonality was astounding. No personal predilection ever moved her on what she felt was God's will.

Pope Benedict XV called her "she who has become the mouthpiece of God." Even when her lot was misunderstanding, hurtful words (and she had many of them), she took it all as from the hand of God. Her first Superior was very severe with her, and she answered: "I thank you Mother, for not having spared me. Jesus knew that His flower was too weak to take root without the life-giving waters of humiliation". When one of the novices said extremely rude things to her, she was filled with joy, and quotes in her autobiography the words of King David: "Yea, it is the Lord Who hath bidden him to say all these things".

If we can see Divinity coming in every little happening in Life, even sad and unpleasant ones, it will not be long before Divinity begins to speak through us. But we must make a complete surrender, not a partial one, keeping perhaps one little thing back. And the surrender must be for always, not only for as long as it suits us.

We have no power just in ourselves to do much, yet when God and the Master are with us, we have all the power in the world to aid and to bless. The price we pay for that accomplishment is the glad and simple acceptance of all that comes. Two of the six Jewels of the Mind, which are the Third Qualification for Initiation, are "Uparati and Titiksha". Generally translated: "Tolerance" and "Endurance" (the Master K.H. calls this last, "Cheerfulness"). But we could translate them thus; Uparati, "letting people be what they are", and Titiksha, "letting events be what they are". A person must be what he is, just as a flower stands at a certain stage of unfoldment. We might like to reform that person, whereas the only persons each can reform is

himself. We would evade events, but he who is strong and unselfish enough to welcome all events gains a heavenly wisdom.

CHAPTER -10-

THE NATURE OF CHARITY

Much old wisdom is wrapped up in derivations, so let us look at the origin of the word, "charity". Webster's dictionary says the word is derived from two Latin words; caritas, dearest, love, and carus, dear, loved. It is clear that the spirit of charity does not mean giving to the needy — often that which we do not want, ourselves. It really means "to whom all things are dear". If all persons and all things were dear to us, what patience we would have, what willingness to learn to understand, what desire for the highest good of all. Sometimes I feel that there is only one lesson to learn in life down through the ages: how to love. We all think we know that art, but I very much doubt it. What passes for love is often only self-love, projected. Love has to be learned; and it takes many a life of sorrow, loss, and disappointment to learn it.

Sometimes people will be honest enough to admit that apparently they do not love anything. Being human, they must have the power to love; but, like many of us, they are too negative. They do not love but wait to be loved; so their own active, forth-going power remains atrophied for lack of use. Like a man who has stayed too long in bed, the power of action must be slowly brought back to full use once more.

St. Francis prayed that he might seek to love, not to be loved; to understand, not to be understood; to console, not to be consoled. St. Paul wrote: "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things".

A Tibetan Scripture describes seven forms of love, three of which belong to men, and four to the gods. The first and simplest of these forms is also shared by atoms and molecules and planets and suns. It is mere magnetic attraction and soon exhausts itself. The second we can call psychic. It is on a fifty-fifty basis: I will love you if you will love me; you owe me something because I love you. This carries the seeds of its own death. The love which is immortal and can never die is hardly natural to man and must be learned: it is so to love that we desire only our friends' highest good and in his own terms. Who is willing to love so well? How often instead we try to force people into the groove we have marked out for them.

Sometimes we lose a loved one by death or estrangement. Then comes our chance to purify and enlarge our power of loving. "Death and estrangement", says Light On The Path, "show a man at last that to work for self is to work for disappointment". When we can hardly bear to go on living because death has taken our loved ones, what makes us suffer most? Are we thinking of their great gain? — or are we mostly conscious of the loss to ourselves of their dear and attentive presence?

One thing we must always remember: a man can never lose that which he loves if he continues to love it! A work will return, a lover will return, if in his heart he continues to love and serve. That is the deathless power of the Universe because it is the fundamental aspect of God. Dr. Besant had a friend who, after having helped her in

a great work, suddenly turned for a while against her and tried to destroy the results of their effort. Dr. Besant still kept his photograph on her desk, and when an impulsive member asked her why, she replied: "Do you not know, my dear, that if you continue to love, in spite of everything, you win the right to help that person in another incarnation? A devoted wife asked the Lord Buddha how she might be sure that she would meet her beloved husband again in all future lives. The Blessed One told her that if she never ceased to love, and forgave him everything, she would forge bonds that could never be broken.

St. Therese of Lisieux meditated on the injunction of the Christ to His disciples to "love one another" as He had loved them. She found that "true charity consists in bearing all my neighbours' defects, in not being surprised at mistakes but in being edified by the smallest virtues". She knew, too, that she should show herself honoured by the request for service and if anything was taken away, she should appear glad to let it go. This, she said, was true of heavenly as well as earthly things.

If we love, we rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that do weep. In His great meditations for His monks, the Lord Buddha taught them to love so that they longed for the happiness and welfare of all beings, and to be so compassionate that the sorrows and disappointments of others moved their hearts profoundly and their joys filled them with joy, also. Such is Love which saves the world.

CHAPTER -11-

DUTIES, ANXIETIES AND REMORSE

So often people get confused as to what is their duty. Sometimes they ask me to tell them. Of course, the ultimate decision must come from within. Do not be afraid to make a decision even if it should turn out in the long run to be a mistaken one. We shall never evolve our powers of judgment unless we boldly decide, and are bravely willing to learn from the results. If we ask other people to decide for us, the power of judgment will never grow.

Is a member, called home to the aid of ailing parents, giving up the Master's work for personal service? What a terribly short-sighted, inhuman point of view! What is the Master's work? It is not merely addressing envelopes in a Lodge Room, or even giving fine addresses to the public. It is all kind, helpful, unselfish work for others, especially those to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. "Ingratitude". wrote a Master, "is not one of our vices". And He said: "He who breaks one single human tie to come to us cannot be our disciple".

The love, the understanding, the inspiration of human beings is our work, far, far more important than the mere mechanical business of carrying on the organized side of the work, valuable and important as that is.

A Master's advice is given thus: "Because you try to take up higher work, you must not forget your ordinary duties, for until they are done you are not free for other service. You should undertake no new worldly duties; but those which you have already taken upon you, you must perfectly fulfil — all clear and reasonable duties which you yourself recognise, that is, not imaginary duties which others try to impose

upon you. If you are to be His, you must do ordinary work better than others, not worse; because you must do that also for His sake”.

When decisions must be made, we may, of course, consult with those whom we deem wiser than ourselves, but do not follow blindly or shunt decisions onto their shoulders. Mrs. Besant once told us that when anyone came to her for advice she said, 'if he had been strong enough to take any other, he would never have asked me”.

Should anxiety or remorse follow a decision, be philosophic about it. We would not be upset if we were merely observing the same mistaken doing in another. Then why, when we see it in ourselves? How calm and compassionate we can be about the mistakes of others! What wisdom we would learn if we could be strong enough and pure-hearted enough to be willing to learn from the results, whether they brought us bliss or pain. We learn by our mistakes. Perhaps there is no other way by which we can learn. Always it is the personal loss which hurts. H.P.B. Said that vanity and remorse were both rooted in the personal life and could be cured by the realization of the One Life. Even a too morbid criticism of personal motives is unwise. A Master has written: “Cultivate happiness, knowing that depression and over-morbid investigation of motive and undue sensitiveness and over-morbid investigation of motive and undue sensitiveness to the criticism of others leads to a condition wherein a disciple is almost useless”.

An old Indian scripture says: “Regret nothing. Never be sorry. But cut all doubts with the sword of knowledge”.

CHAPTER -12-

SELF-SATISFACTION

Self-satisfaction is so natural and so common a feeling that we can hardly avoid it — even if, discreetly, we try not to show it. Do not let us be ashamed to own that we have this weakness, but let us try to understand it. We all like to be appreciated; we all like to feel that we have succeeded, that other people think well of us, and perhaps look up to us. You know why? It is because we all, from the spiritual standpoint, are yet children, not quite grown up. And like all little children, we seek security and reassurance. Self-respect and self-trust are necessary for happy and useful living.

Why, then, does the spiritual life demand of us that we seek no self-satisfaction? Because in that life we are seeking to die to our little selves in order that a Greater One may live in us. It would be cruel and unwise to seek to destroy this self-satisfaction in one who has not yet reached the point where he has glimpses that he must do this for himself, not in others. As the Lord Shri Krishna said in the Bhagavad Gita: “Let no wise man unsettle the minds of ignorant people attached to action: but acting in harmony with Me, let him render all action attractive”.

It is natural, it is right, that in the ordinary man, self-interest and self-satisfaction should rule. H.P.B. Told us that this personal motive formed, as the ages passed, a protective carapace round the as-yet-immature and undeveloped Diviner Self. It is

like the shell which encloses the unborn chick. And this operates and grows, all the time a man is upon the Pravritti or Outgoing Path of life. When, however, a person turns towards the Nivritti, or In-going Path, and seeks to find and become one with that Godhead which is at once the Source and the Goal of his being, his motives gradually change. Slowly he breaks the shell of his own ego-hood, and begins to live a life of continual radiation from Eternal Sources. He finally becomes, in H.P.B.'s words, "an imperishable centre without a periphery." The personal motive is replaced by the universal and impersonal motive. His little self has "died", that the Eternal may shine forth through him.

Hence, in all action the Yogi tries to act as for duty, not for personal aims. "Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits". Shri Krishna described how, being above all action, He yet mingled in it everywhere. "For it I mingle not ever in action unwearied, these worlds would fall into ruin." The business of the universe must be done for God and not for self. And a man's past, his karma, as well as his inborn evolutionary trend, his dharma, determines where his work lies.

This elimination of the "profit" motive cannot be brought about at once. It takes many years, sometimes lives, to achieve it perfectly. Yet there is a way, a lovely way to do this. It is the way of offering through love. Sometimes a true lover knows his way, for he cannot help doing all for his beloved, and finding it joy. As the Imitation of Christ says: "Love rendereth all burdens light".

This means that all that happens to us we take as from His hand; all that is given to us we offer to Him; all that we do, we realize is nothing without His aid. "Without Him", wrote Krishnaji, "I could have done nothing". Said the Master to Krishnaji: "Hold back your mind from pride, for pride comes only from ignorance. The man who does not know thinks that he is great, that he has done this or that great thing; the wise man knows that only God is great, that all good work is done by God alone.

When happiness comes to us, let us go out in thought to all whom we love and share it with them. If sorrow comes to us, let us keep it to ourselves and share it with God, or with those who have a similar burden to bear. And when praise and appreciation come our way, let us check any feeling of exultation, and pass it all on to the Master. It belongs to Him. I remember Mr. Jinarajadasa's saying, long years ago, that whenever people came to him with praise and thanks, he at once offered it all to the Master.

Who is he who can work just as loyally, just as unflaggingly, when he sees no results, receives no appreciation? Yet how lovely to be able to do so! There is only one reward for the spiritual man; to know that he is serving His Lord, and to give that Lord more and more. We can slowly transfer the little motive to the Divine one, by the habit of daily offering and dedication. As the Lord Shri Krishna said: "Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou doest of austerity, do thou that as an offering to Me".

At first, this renunciation of personal reward makes life look a little grey, but that greyness is soon replaced by an unshakable peace. "He attaineth peace, into whom all desires flow as rivers flow into the ocean, which is filled with water, but remaineth unmoved — not he who desireth desires". That, indeed, Annie Besant once told us,

is the Royal Road in occultism, if there is any royal road. "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me". wrote St. Paul.

But let us make this self-surrender not for duty's sake but for love's sake. "Happiness is a great love, and much serving".

CHAPTER -13-

CRITICISM

Most of us are rather critical, some of us very much so. The tendency of the world is all in that direction, so it is not surprising that it affects us, also. The world is supercritical for two reasons. One is that man is still developing the lower, concrete mind, the faculty that flourishes on perceiving differences. That lower mind loves to compare, to set one thing against another in comparison. And in doing this — the second reason becomes apparent — it wishes to compare to the detriment of others and to the aggrandisement of itself. This is because mankind is not yet very spiritually evolved; man acquires a certain sense of security and pleasure from feeling that in some way he is superior.

Mrs. Besant told us that we should be trying to evolve the higher mind which thrives on seeing likenesses: the "intuitional" mind, it is sometimes called — the mind which can discern great underlying principles and to whom surface differences seem not so much to matter. It will help us to think over the Greek root of the word "criticism". It comes from the word kritein, which means 'to appraise', "to judge". In old English to judge was sometimes rendered "to deem". And to this day the chief judge in the Isle of Man is called the "Deemster". That deeming does not necessarily connote blame. Yet in the vast majority of cases, criticism does so indicate. Continual meditation upon the One Life will enable us to see that there is no sin in the Universe, the lack of growth. Thereafter we can criticize without praise or blame.

Is not the habit of blaming a very prevalent one? Why? Because men wish to feel secure in superiority, to uphold their own insecure egos. It is natural, and easily to be understood, in the ordinary man. That is why it helps to praise generously and to appreciate. It is a little cruel to withhold such need from the average man. But surely none of us need to aid our own sense of well-being by looking down on our fellow-men! The habit of criticism in a blameworthy sense is so common in this world that it has become an everyday trick of speech. The Master K.H. Calls public opinion "the most flippant and cruel of all tribunals". Without knowing it, many of us have acquired a similar habit. It really comes from a bad inferiority complex. If this habit gains too great hold on us, we shall destroy not only our sense of judgment but also our happiness. Let us remember the words of the poet, Wordsworth:

We live by admiration, hope and love,
And even as these are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being, we ascend.

We all desire to be loved, but we must love. We all desire to be appreciated, but we must appreciate. Without hope, life would have lost its savour; therefore, do not let us destroy hope in the breast of another; appreciate instead. So many of us have

such a negative frame of mind. Many people tell me that they have no friends, that no one loves them. But that is because they wait to be loved, sought out, and appreciated. Now, if we went out boldly to learn to love truly and to appreciate, we should soon find a glorious return. For the world more or less gives back to us what we give it.

Now, the habit of continual criticism prohibits any glorious return. Is there anything in the world so wonderful as a friend? Yet how many beautiful friendships are lost because we have too quickly criticized, too easily taken offence. I remember a woman's telling me that she had never married because she had never found anyone to come up to her ideals. I felt like saying: "My dear woman, why ever should anyone come up to your ideals? It is enough if they try to reach their own".

Let us kill the spirit of blame in our hearts, or we shall lay up for ourselves much sorrow in the future. Always to be setting people straight will cause karmic problems with them. This does not mean that we must be blind to faults and failings but to be charitable to them, and not to talk about them. Even when someone has really injured us, to forgive such a one is to make him a friend. It effects a reversal of polarization in his emotional nature.

Especially do not let us criticize, even to ourselves, someone to whom we owe a spiritual debt, someone who has helped us. For thereby we cut ourselves off from him— it may be forever! — unless we strive to regain by service and contrite love the lost ground. Mrs Besant used to talk to us about this. She quoted the saying that no man is a hero to his valet. This is not the hero's fault, she said, but because the soul of the valet cannot see aught but petty things. And she warned us that if we had once seen the light through anyone, to hold fast to that, and not to fix our eyes upon other things, or we should lose our vision of heaven.

There is a very old manuscript. No one knows who wrote it. It is called Your Friend. Here are its words:

Remember that friendship is a privilege, not a right. Beware of saying to your friend, "where do you go and for how long? With whom and to what purpose? Beware of advising him as to the length of his apartment, or the adornment of his person. Seek not to engage the winged one within the confines of your judgement. Know the values that are his breath, and the freedom that is his orbit. Or you shall find in your heart but the long silence, and the bright plumage of a memory. But he, the splendid, will have flown.

CHAPTER -14-

THE PROBLEM OF OSCILLATIONS AND REACTION

So many of our people do not rightly understand the problem of oscillations and reactions. All things move under the rule of unceasing rhythm. There can be no "action" without corresponding "reaction". The ceaseless rhythmic "up and down" of life is everywhere apparent. This is very marked among those who strive to live a spiritual life.

In the case of a great saint, the reaction is so terrible that it sometimes lasts for years: St. John of the Cross, a great authority on this subject, calls it the “dark night of the soul”. This darkest night always precedes the gaining of the great path of Union with God. It may be looked upon as a tremendous purgation whereby the last lingering remnants of self in the aspirant are finally taken away. As I said, in the case of great saints, it sometimes lasts for years. It lasted five or six years with St. Catherine of Siena. St. Catherine had what are called “interior locutions”, where the mystic seems to speak with God. When finally she came through she said to God: “Where wert Thou, Lord, in the midst of all this foulness?” And God replied: “Daughter, I was in thy heart”.

What are the signs of these reactions? The saints tell us in very clear terms. That which before had attracted them in glowing colours of love and aspiration becomes dull and lifeless, even repulsive. St. Therese of Lisieux passed almost the whole of her short conventional life in such a dark night. She writes in her autobiography that there were times when she could neither pray nor meditate, that she read holy books but the words meant nothing to her. She was assailed by the most hideous doubts, almost as if some mocking voice were telling her that her faith and aspiration were selfish illusions on her part. She writes that if God wishes her to sit at the table of sinners she is more than willing to do so, and not even to wish to rise from it until He gives the sign. What strength and what selflessness belonged to the saints that they could endure this with such patience, and never ask or hope for “consolation”. Therese said to a novice who had prayed for consolation; “Oh! that I would never do, ask for consolation. It is so sweet to serve the good God in the dark night of the trial”.

Now, in the Theosophical Society, as in all forms of aspiration, dark nights continually occur. They come to all of us again and again in lesser or greater degree. With us the darkness generally takes the form of becoming what school boys call “fed up”. Theosophical truth and books no longer attract us. Our ancient aspiration and realization seem to completely disappear. We may even think our leaders are self-deceived or talking nonsense. Most people do not understand it; so we find that under a particularly violent attack members leave the Society and its work, and try to ease the pain of reaction by condemning that which originally they adored. What a vast pity!

Bishop Leadbeater talked to us about “avitchi”, the very worst form of dark night that exists in the universe. Avitchi means the “waveless”, feeling oneself absolutely outside the scheme of evolution, entirely alone. Can you imagine anything more truly horrible? Yet he told us that we must all experience that someday in order to know how to help a man who may be living in it. And on the way, said he, there are minor avitchis which come and go.

Mrs. Besant told us that when such an oscillation reaches anyone of us, we should just hold on, and remember that though the clouds may seem to have completely engulfed us, behind them the sun is always shining; presently the clouds will break and the sun shine again upon us if only we have the selflessness and strength to endure. She said to me one day when I had a minor attack in Adyar, “It sounds brutal, dear, but remember that it does not matter what we feel”.

Sometimes the darkness takes the form of over-scrupulousness, of being extremely dissatisfied with oneself. This is the reverse end of hidden conceit and pride. Why do we make up our minds about ourselves? Why not leave that to the wisdom and compassion of the Master? St. Therese said to her novices: "If you are willing to bear in peace the trial of not being pleased with yourself, you will be offering the Divine Master a home in your heart". There is a similar lovely saying in Hinduism: "They who never ask anything, but simply love, Thou in their heart abidest forever, for this is Thy very home".

The accepted pupils of a Master are tried by the Dark Powers, as God allowed Job to be tried by Satan. They must win the fight alone. The Master will sympathize, but He cannot fight the battle for the pupil. These experiences are tremendous "purgations". "The shell must break before the bird can fly". And the Lord Shri Krishna says, "When I have stripped a man of everything, then I give him Myself".

CHAPTER -15-

PURITY

I believe that the word "purity" is very much misunderstood. On the surface it often seems to mean some non-infracture of man-made moral law. But it means vastly more than that. Man-made moral law alters with passing centuries. It is moral in Moslem countries for a man to have more than one wife. In Thibet it is moral for a woman to have several husbands. I think purity means "wholeness". "completeness". A pure white handkerchief splashed with ink or other foreign matter is no longer "pure white". And what is true of a piece of white cloth is just as true of our minds and hearts. Love is pure when it has no other element but complete surrender and sacrifice, when all thought of self, either as gainer or giver, has one and only desire for the blessedness of the beloved remains the motivating force. First love is sometimes like this.

Our minds are pure when there is in them no thought beyond the will to mirror the divine, impersonal light. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light". So singleness of mind, wholeness of heart, constitutes purity. But one thing can strain the eternal light - the thought of self, the little self. To appropriate things to ourselves, even divine things, is to touch the Holy with soiled hands. The stain is of the essence of desire, desire for self, not desire for God, or for all. Personal desire stains the white radiance of purity, even desire for heavenly things.

Shall we not desire, then? Desire is the motive force of life. But we will all learn to desire rightly, and thus bring to every man one day his true heart's desire. Light On The Path tells us to "kill out" — that is, —transmute" — ambition, desire for comfort, prestige, feeling of superiority, hunger for sensation, hunger for growth; that is, to feel we are someone or getting somewhere. Then it tells us what to desire: God within us, God beyond us, power, peace, possessions. "But", it goes on to qualify, "those possessions must belong to the pure soul only (i.e.; the united spirit of life) and be possessed by all pure souls equally. Hunger for such possessions as can be held by the pure soul, that you may accumulate wealth for that united spirit of life which is your only true self". "A sacred peace which nothing can disturb" is a

prerequisite for the soul's true growth, and the power we shall covet "is that which makes the disciple appear as nothing in the eyes of men".

I have often quoted the words of the Master K.H. To Mr. Judge: "You must live for other men and with them, not for or with yourself". This is purity. And this purity wins the Divine vision. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". How do we see God? Not with fleshly eyes, or even with the mind or the emotions. Perhaps true, unselfish emotion comes near, for there is a secret stairway, a short road, to the Divine, described to us by Dr. Besant. It is by way of the atomic levels in each of our principles.

In the mind body H.P.B. , called it the Antahkarana, the "Bridge". She described it as "Manas purified of all egotism" — the mind, still and pure of all wave lengths of personal desire or scheming, so that as in a mirror lake it reflects the glory beyond. Having become "single", it shines with radiant light.

In the emotional body the same level is reached by pure, unselfish emotions, love shining forth not for what it can attract or even for what it can give but because like light, it must shine, that being its very nature. Dr. Besant once put this in an unforgettable little mantram:

There is only one Thinker; let Him think through me.
There is only one Lover; let Him love through me.
There is only one Actor; let Him act through me.

Out of whole-heartedness and single-mindedness grows that quality of the older soul, simplicity. All great souls are simple, unsophisticated. The simplicity of the child is not the simplicity of the sage. One is potential; the other is actual, the fruit of experience and the simplification of desires and concepts. It is in the midway stages we become complicated and sophisticated.

The single eye and the whole heart become tremendous channels for the Divine Will, for spiritual strength. "His strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure", was said of Sir Galahad in the tales of King Arthur and his Knights.

Well may we desire that purity which sets us free from the burden of ourselves, as pilgrim Christian's burden rolled from his shoulders at the foot of Christ's cross in John Bunyan's immortal allegory. The Saviours of men knew that so well, and so the Christ cried: "Come unto Me alone for shelter. Sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins".

CHAPTER -16-

FAILURE

Dr. Besant often quoted the saying: "There is no failure except in ceasing to strive". And she used to tell us that what a person longed for and idealized mattered far more than what he was. On the walls of the lovely Theosophical Hall in Auckland, New Zealand, are printed in gold her words: "No soul that aspires can ever fail to reach; no heart that loves can ever be abandoned". I wonder if we might interpret the

words of the Christ when he told us that we should forgive those who injured us until seventy times seven as also the injunction to forgive ourselves, too? Despair is listed in Roman Catholic teaching as a deadly sin. The Voice Of The Silence says: "Beware of fear that spreadeth, like the black and soundless wings of midnight bat, between the moonlight of the Soul and the great goal that loometh in the distance far away. Fear, O disciple, kills the will and stays all action". As Frederick Myers wrote: "God shall forgive thee all but thy despair".

Let us examine despair and self-depreciation a little. What lies at their roots? Extreme remorse, and also undue anxiety, are rooted in excessive self-interest. We will make mistakes again and again, that is certain, for we are not yet perfect in knowledge and experience. But our mistakes are our teachers. If we had not made them we would be that much short of wisdom.

A Master once told Mr. Judge that tears and remorse belong to the personal self and should not hinder the progress of the Immortal Self. "Do not be led into anxiety and remorse". He wrote: "have patience. Endurance is one of the characteristics of the Ego. The Ego persists, knowing itself immortal. The personality becomes discouraged, knowing that time is short". [The Voice of The Silence](#) states: "Have patience, candidate, as one who doth forevermore endure". I think it was the Master K.H. Who once said: "The only repentance which is worth while is the resolve not to do it again". But supposing we find ourselves still doing it again, and finally suffer contempt for the weak thing which is ourselves? What then? There is no way but to try once more. And perhaps it is best not to rely too much upon our own strength alone. Call upon the Divine Power. Rest in Him. Sweet and sane old Brother Lawrence told God that he could not do anything of himself. "Thou must help me, or I shall fail again and again".

Now I do not think that just to become more nearly perfect or a better character is an inspiring motive. But if we remember that in winning the battle we are saving humanity a little sorrow and pain, we then have the finest and most inspiring motive in the world. We will conquer ourselves that we may not betray others and that we may not betray the Master who deigns to ask our aid with men. Then we shall never despair. H.P.B. Has some very wise words on this thought in one of her articles. She says that over-anxiety and a too-excessive desire to grow produce in us excrescences which must be removed by pain. True growth is like that of a child, all over, imperceptibly. Tennyson wrote that "men may rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things". But in order to use a dead past as a stepping stone, we must let it be really dead! Looking ahead, what do we see? The Ideal, the Christ within, beckoning to us ever. Meanwhile, let us be patient with ourselves.

CHAPTER -17-

TRUST AND SELF-SURRENDER

I have lately been studying a little book by Father de Caussade on "Abandonment". He says in it some very lovely and true things. For long now I have felt that the Great Teacher of us all is Life, and Life never means us ill; only, and at every moment, under every conceivable circumstance, our eternal good. For what is life and that never-ceasing succession of events which we call Karma? There is only one Life,

one Consciousness in all the universe, and the succession of events which constitute our daily lives is that Divine Life or Will in action.

What is the Will of God? It is the purpose or direction of the universe. I remember Dr. Besant's telling us that on the Nirvanic plane it looks like a resistless, flowing tide of light. Nothing can resist it, for there is no other Will but His. And it means, in the end, as Emerson told us, absolute fulfilment and bliss for every living thing. For Ananda, Bliss, is the greatest attribute of that Life. That is why we want to be happy, which means to find our true selves. That cannot be done all at once, so, during our lives of probation here on earth, let us realize that enduring happiness is not to be found here and, as H.P.B. puts it, "wait with patience the hour of our true, our real birth".

That Will expresses itself in the great Laws of Nature, "with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning", for the Laws of Nature are the imprint of the Divine Mind upon matter. They are the true commandments of God. They act with magnificent impersonality and are the same, yesterday, today and forever. The Law is not only just but merciful. The Latin *Mercedis*, from which we derive the word "mercy" means "recompense". "To Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy and justice, for Thou renderest to every man according to his works". And the Prophet Jeremiah wrote: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee".

It is all summed up so beautifully in an ancient saying from an Upanishad: "The universe exists for the sake of the Self". We so often think to find God and His Purpose in some far away heaven or in some high state of meditation, whereas the truth is that He is as much here in this world as on the Nirvanic plane. "Nearer is He than breathing, closer than hands and feet". I heard Dr. Besant preach a sermon on the Love of God. She said the Love of God was all around us like electricity in the air and that it only needed that we open our hearts to it. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice"

Now where do we hear that Voice and touch that Life? The Divine Voice spoke of old to men through great teachers and prophets. But all the time He is speaking to you and to me. He speaks to mankind in general events, but to each one of us through the little events of daily life. For have we ever realized that life, Karma, is God in Action "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" The answer is that he asked of us nothing more than the duty of the moment. In fulfilling that as perfectly as we know how, we are doing His will, just as He would have us do. Exteriorly, nothing more is happening to us than happens to the rest of mankind; but interiorly, the eye of faith discovers and develops nothing less than God working great things. If we truly and wholly give our hearts to the Master and to God through Him, what He asks of us will be indicated by the events of daily life.

Father de Caussade says that "Sanctity consists in but one thing — fidelity to the order of God. The active part consist in fulfilling the duties imposed upon us; the passive part in lovingly accepting all that God sends us each moment". He calls these little daily events "the shadows which veil the Divine Action", says that it is all the more visible to the eye of faith when hidden under appearances most repugnant to the senses. The Divine Love, says he, is communicated to us through the veil of creatures and sometimes most so through those who are seemingly unjust and unkind. Is not one of the steps on the Way "a courageous endurance of personal

injustice?" Dr. Besant told us that we should be grateful to unpleasant people who step on our toes and jar our sensibilities for they are often our greatest teachers.

At all times, under all circumstances, Life is shaping us for divine and immortal ends; shaping us through the changing, fleeting events of Life. It is more difficult to see this in disappointment, sorrow and loss, but often these bring us the most wonderful illumination of all experiences. Krishnaji said that most of us flee from sorrow, but that if we opened our arms to it we would grow and learn so wonderfully.

Most of us have hidden fears, sometimes subconscious ones. Try to relax, not to fear "Rest in the Lord Who is Life itself", the Master K.H. wrote to Mr. Judge. He told him to desire nothing for his separated self, no results which give that sense of power, but only to try all the time to reach nearer to the Center of Life, the Divinity we all share. "Draw on the breath of the great throbbing in us all", wrote He, "and let faith carry you through your life as a bird flies in the air — undoubtingly.

Never mind what the events of life are, they are for the best. Never mind what other people are. There is no sin, only lack of growth. Never mind what we are but be willing to be what we are. We do not really know ourselves. God and the Master know us better. Leave all to Him and grow as a flower grows, through ceaseless aspiration and love of beauty and truth.

In peace shall we grow. "Attaineth peace into whom all desires flow as rivers into the ocean, not he who desireth desires. And Peace is the fruit of self-surrender".—