

The Path of Recollectedness

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WHAT IS IT TO LIVE THE SPIRITUAL LIFE?

PART I

H. P. Blavatsky says: 'Real life is in the spiritual consciousness of that life, in a conscious existence in spirit, not matter' (*The Secret Doctrine*, V. p. 488).

It is a conscious existence in our inner being and not the physical or intellectual part of our being.

The following paper is an attempt to assess what it means to live in our inner being; an attempt to probe the meaning of the spiritual life at least in one or two of its aspects.

There is first the question of our working out in our daily life the truths of the teachings received in our theosophical literature. Here is scope for discernment; on the one hand, we have doctrines about the cosmos, chains, rounds and races, the esoteric history of our solar system; on the other hand, those doctrines specifically concerned with the human soul.

The first group belongs to a category of thought that we cannot verify in our daily life. We cannot put to the test theories of rounds and races; they have to remain working hypotheses, possibly

satisfying to the mind. However stupendous their cosmic vision and however intellectually stimulating, these doctrines are not vital to our personal, daily, spiritual struggle and unfoldment.

The second group directly involves us here and now. Remembering the age-old and well-tried precept, 'Man, know thyself and thou shalt know the universe', and the injunction of the Masters of the Wisdom, 'Live the life and you will know the truth', we can start now on ourselves and prove the truth of man's inner Higher Self; that our conscious self is but the tip of an iceberg, the depths of which belong to us as much as, or even more than, its top. Only thus shall we find a secure grounding for our knowledge—not someone else's, not derived from some book or theory. A real inner experience changes our lives completely; a concept, however attractive, remains at the conceptual level which is quite removed from our inner dimensions. Preliminary step

So we may say that a preliminary step to the spiritual life is to direct our mind wholly towards finding out for our-

selves the meaning of those doctrines that concern the human soul, i.e. to ground ourselves, not in theory, as a superficial assessment of the teachings has led us to believe in the past, but in actual fact, in experience, in the truth of the spirit. We must now take these doctrines to heart and, acting accordingly, purify the psycho-intellectual, emotional part of our being—that part that we are at the present moment at this level of existence. We must face our darker or pigmy self, understand it, trace it to its subconscious roots, raise our vibrations, and attune the lower to the higher.

Let us examine what this involves, first theoretically, then practically.

We know theoretically the sevenfold analysis of the human constitution as outlined by H.P.B. in the esoteric doctrine, and the origin and the goal of every human being. Let us follow one aspect of this—the fundamental one—namely consciousness, and see if we can discover the truth regarding it in the esoteric doctrine.

We are told by H. P. B. in *The Secret Doctrine*:

'The Lower Manas is an

emanation from the Higher Manas, and is of the same nature as the Higher. This nature can make no impression on this plane, nor receive any; .. So the Lower Manas clothes itself with the essence of the Astral Light; this astral envelope shuts it out from its Parent, except through the Antahkara [bridge] which is its only salvation. Break this and you become an animal' (V. p. 551). 'That portion of Manas which follows the two higher principles [Atma-Buddhi] is the ancestral soul, indeed, the bright, immortal thread of the higher Ego, to which clings the spiritual aroma of all the lives or births' (IV. p. 203). 'Manas is dual—Lunar in the lower, Solar in its upper portion. That is to say, it is attracted in its higher aspect towards Buddhi, and its lower descends into, and listens to the voice of, its *animal* Soul full of selfish and sensual desires . . .' (IV. p. 64).

So, in incarnation, our consciousness, which has its origin in realms quite beyond our brain awareness, becomes dual. One part, which is clothed in the astral light and imprisoned in the brain, manifests as our waking consciousness. The other, or higher manas, is, according to *The Secret*

Doctrine, 'a Ray from the World Soul' (V. p. 558). It is a divine entity, a *deva*, through which *buddhi* can manifest at a lower level.

Conscious union with the higher manas is obviously the first step in our quest of the truth, in our enquiry about the higher realms of consciousness and how to contact them.

We know from daily experience at the physical and intellectual levels that to achieve anything in life we need training, practice, discipline, concentration. The same applies to the spiritual realms.

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The transcending of the lower vehicles can be achieved first through their purification, for they must be made into fit containers — transparent vessels through which the divine essence can manifest. For ages we have grown outwards, in order to achieve a secure foothold in this world of matter. Then comes the time when we have to make this foothold into a basis or receptacle that the spirit may fully impregnate and use as an anchorage: the spiritual essence pervades everything but does not rule

over everything here below. The divine will is not done in human society as it is done in heaven, but it is man's task to achieve this by making himself the dynamic link between heaven and earth. This is the whole purpose of human incarnation, self-discipline and integration—to bring matter under the dominion of spirit. The soil of the personality has to be tilled before the divine seed sown in us at the beginning of our evolution can grow to its full stature. The tilling of the personality, the making of the mind into a pliable instrument of higher consciousness, is accomplished through the disciplines that have always been emphasized in all religions.

Discipline is training; in religion or esotericism it is the training of the vehicles according to certain well-tried methods, in order to make us whole, i.e. to integrate us into the cosmic order of which we are an integral part.

The question of disciplines concerns the practical aspects of the interior path and is a preliminary to the path of recollectedness; it represents aspects that everyone must think about and work upon. The validity of the disciplines lies only in their practical application to one's personal life. They must be considered from the interior angle, rather

than from the external one on which most people usually concentrate their attention, e.g. bathing, abstention from alcohol, smoking, drugs, meat, sex, etc. Because of their outwardly focussed minds, many have taken these disciplines as of paramount importance in themselves, forgetting that the roots of a human being go deeper and reach into his very core to that innermost level of which the surface or concrete mind has no inkling, but there abides the light and life of our consciousness. To train only the outer being of many is a very lopsided exercise that achieves little as far as the interior path is concerned. It may, indeed, make a man a fanatic and sap the foundation of his true spiritual life.

The inner being of man—the emotional-intellectual and soul-being, which lies between the physical body and the spirit—needs training, organization and discipline; it needs not only spiritual feeding but must be able to assimilate that food. Hence the disciplines are above all internal, gradually leading to that most subtle of all disciplines—meditation, which opens the inner window of the soul and gives us the key to the highest method of gaining an understanding of the divine secrets of our inner being. Hence the emphasis on meditation, con-

templation, absorption—all preliminaries to the mystical experience—for only in the silence of the purified soul will the divine revelation come upon us. When outer disciplines have become second nature, performed as instinctively and as automatically as our physical gestures of dressing when we get up in the morning, our whole attention is brought to bear on the inner disciplines.

First step

Inner discipline is the first step in the spiritual life, the fundamental preparation for the opening of the inner eye. It will include keeping our minds free from the rubbish that passes for thought; purity of thought from which stems purity of word and deed; strict adherence to what we consider truth so as to live in harmony with our Inner Self; and a constant attempt to commune with that Inner Self, hence a steady disregard for the thousands of distractions that would draw us away from our aim.

The disciplines imply a constant awareness of every moment; they imply an alert mind and a dynamism of living. If we contrast this with our present state of living, we realize how asleep we generally are, how much a prey to *tamas* (inertia, lethargy). On the interior path *tamas*

must be conquered and so must *rajas* (overactivity), for the path to the *dtman* is that of *sattva* (harmony).

H. P. B. writes: '... the practice of moral and physical purity, and of certain austerities, develops the vital soul-power of self illumination' (*Tsis Unveiled* as quoted in *S.D. V.* p. 306). 'Purity of mind is of greater importance than purity of body. If the Upadhi be not perfectly pure, it cannot preserve recollections coming from a higher state' (*S.D. V.* p. 543).

The recollection of higher states comes as a result of the widening of the channel of communication between the higher and the lower, the splendour and its shadow. To widen this channel in order to become cognizant of *mams* and to penetrate further into our own inner, divine, realms, we must, by means of inner purification, raise our vibrations to the required level; hence the disciplines.

Now, certain obstructions in our path have to be considered for they are inherent in our human nature. Here, it might be useful to examine, if only cursorily, the causes of our inadequacies, of our lack of achievement and their remedy, as explained in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and Dr. Taimni's analysis of these

in *The Science of Yoga*.

According to Patanjali, the causes of afflictions are:

Ignorance or lack of awareness of Reality (*avidya*); the sense of I-am-ness, or egoism (*asmita*) whose greatest distortion manifests as selfishness; attractions and repulsions towards various objects; a strong desire for life (*Y.S.* II. 3).

These are the so-called *klesas* or root-causes of all the evil that mankind suffers; they form a series, a causal process, one leading to the other. Hence to remove them, says Dr. Taimni, one 'must reverse the process whereby each effect is absorbed in its immediate cause...' (*Y.S.* II. 10; *The Science of Yoga*, p. 154).

Thus, desire for life should be traced back to likes and dislikes, the former to I-am-ness or egoism, and the latter to ignorance, or the wrong identification of our consciousness with the object of sentient experience.

The root of the problem is said to be ignorance which leads to wrong identification, hence to attachment to life, to what we know as our immediate field of experience as if it were the one and only field. But observe that this attachment is inherent in our very being; the very process of evolution derives from it,

and without it there would be no evolution or manifestation. In Dr. Taimni's words, it 'is rooted in the very origin of things and it comes into play the moment consciousness comes into contact with matter...' (*S. Y.* p. 151).

The will to worship

Every human being, as well as every animal, is born with the will to live in the phenomenal world. But with the human being, together with the will to live is the will to worship: this will to worship is just as inherent in our nature, though more subtle and therefore less conspicuous, as the will to live; *but in this will to worship lies our shortcut to salvation.*

Dr. Taimni goes on: '... mere knowledge of the intellect... is in itself inadequate for freeing a man from this attachment to life. Unless and until the tree of *klesas* is destroyed, root and branch, by a systematic course of *yogic* discipline the attachment to life in smaller or greater degree will continue in spite of all the philosophies we may know or preach' (*S. Y.* p. 151). Dr. Taimni advocates the reduction of all our active dislikes, for these latter, if strong enough, breed such unwanted vices as anger, hatred and jealousy.

'This tracing backward', he writes (and, I would add, 'this constant practice'),

'is not merely an intellectual recognition but a realization which nullifies the power of *klesas*... This realization ... is attained in its fullness on the higher planes when the Yogi can rise in *samdhi* to those planes. It will, therefore, be seen ... that there is no shortcut to the attenuation and final destruction of the *klesas*. It involves the whole technique of *yogic* discipline' (p. 154). He further admits that 'the subtle forms of *klesas* remain in their "seed" form even after they have been attenuated to the extreme limit... It means that the *sadhaka* is not free from danger until he has crossed the threshold of *kaivalya* [liberation]' (p. 154). Notice two important points here: the removal of the obstructions is a laborious process and even then, when fully attenuated, they are never completely eliminated but remain in a latent state, still capable of flaring up; we are only safe from them when we have reached liberation. As long as the cause exists it will bear fruit—likes and dislikes, action and reaction.

Such a cold doctrine! advocating such a laborious process

leaves one aspect of human nature completely out of view. How and why remove the will to live when it is inherent in the whole of nature, and since within it is hidden the way of transmuting it into its very root: the dynamo at the basis of the universe, the very law of cohesion from which derive attractions and repulsions. At this level of manifestation this law manifests as the two polar opposites, attraction and repulsion—in human terms, likes and dislikes, love and hatred, happiness and suffering. But just as beyond the polar opposites of happiness and suffering lies their synthesis called bliss which is the very nature of the *atman*, so beyond love and hatred (as we know them) lies also their synthesis, for which we have no other word but Love which is one with bliss and is of the nature of the *atman*, the very root of the universe. If, after many years

of painful labours, as the destruction of the *klesas* involves, the student cannot remove them completely, and is still in danger of falling under their sway, why not turn to the other method, which does not concentrate at all on the destruction of the *klesas* as such, but concentrates on the Remover himself, on the Power that can remove—that Power at the root of our being, which is the very basis of our will to worship hidden behind the will to be. This method results in the painless and unconscious reduction of the *klesas* to a state of latency far more speedily, and finally nullifies their very ability to flare up. Dr. Taimni himself gives us a clue, but does not seem to recognize in it a challenge to an alternative and to a *shortcut*, the existence of which, as seen, he elsewhere denies. Thus he writes: 'Since *avidya* can be overcome only by the awareness

of Reality, the cultivation of the latter obviously is the only means whereby release from bondage can be achieved' (p. 201).

What is this Reality? Here we must first accept theoretically the reality of the *atman*, our primary Mover, the only Reality in us. For the moment it is but an idea, but as we concentrate our thought upon it more and more it acquires a livingness, it is quickened from without, i.e. through our thought, and from within, i.e. from what lies behind it. It is this cultivation of the awareness of the inner reality—this point of ultimate identity—that brings me to the central point of this paper, namely, *recollectedness*. The whole problem for us hinges around what Dr. Taimni calls 'the uninterrupted practice of the awareness of the Real' (r. s. n. p. 26).

(To be concluded- August 1980)