

## WHAT IS IT TO LIVE THE SPIRITUAL LIFE?

## PART II

{Continued from July, 1980}

**Recollectedness in the heart**

The inner discipline which helps all the others and is a shortcut to the conquest of the *klesas* is that of recollectedness in the heart. To 'recollect' is not only to bring back to mind that which is already there in the background, but to collect one's thoughts, feelings and aspirations into a condition of composure or of one-pointedness, serenity, poise and an inner attunement which can only be an attunement to the Higher. In that state we bring ourselves back to a condition of pure remembrance, recalling, through a deeper and ever deepening awareness, who we essentially are, where we come from, whither we are really going, remembering the *atman*.

The opening up of the inner understanding, intuition or insight, as we have already seen, comes about through the constant attunement of our thought or lower mind to the higher, to the great current of love that throbs through us. This attunement starts with purification, aspiration to and gradual concentration on the

inner light. Keeping the thought more or less focussed upon the divine flame within is a vital means of quickening the vibrations of the lower by contact with the higher, however far away from the source of the higher consciousness the brain-consciousness may feel. For energy follows thought—such is the occult law.

For the conquest of mind-wandering, and as an antidote to our already far too externalized life, we have been given aids such as aphorisms of wisdom, Verses and prayers to turn to. The mechanical recitation of words, without putting our hearts, our whole concentrated energy, into it, will avail nothing. It will stir neither the higher mind nor the *buddhi*, for such mechanical repetition remains at the level of the brain and no amount of it can bridge the gap between the lower and the higher *manas*. Everything that we do in ordinary life, is in the spiritual, depends upon the spirit, the quality, the heart that we put into it. H.P.B. herself comments upon the all-importance of the heart:

'The consciousness which is merely the animal con-

sciousness is made up of the consciousness of all the cells in the body except those of the heart. The heart is the king, the most important organ in the body of man .... The spot in the heart which is the last of all to die is the seat of life, the centre of all, Brahma... This spot contains potentially mind, life, energy and will... The heart is the centre of spiritual consciousness, as the brain is the centre of intellectual... In the heart is the only manifested God... 'In reply to a question whether the consciousness might not be concentrated in the heart, and so the promptings of the Spirit caught, H.P.B. said that any one who could thus concentrate would be at one with Manas, would have united Kama-Manas to the Higher Manas. The Higher Manas could not directly guide man, it could only act through the Lower Manas' {*The Secret Doctrine* V. p. 555).

Dr. Taimni in his analysis of Patanjali's *Yoga Sātras* sums it up thus:

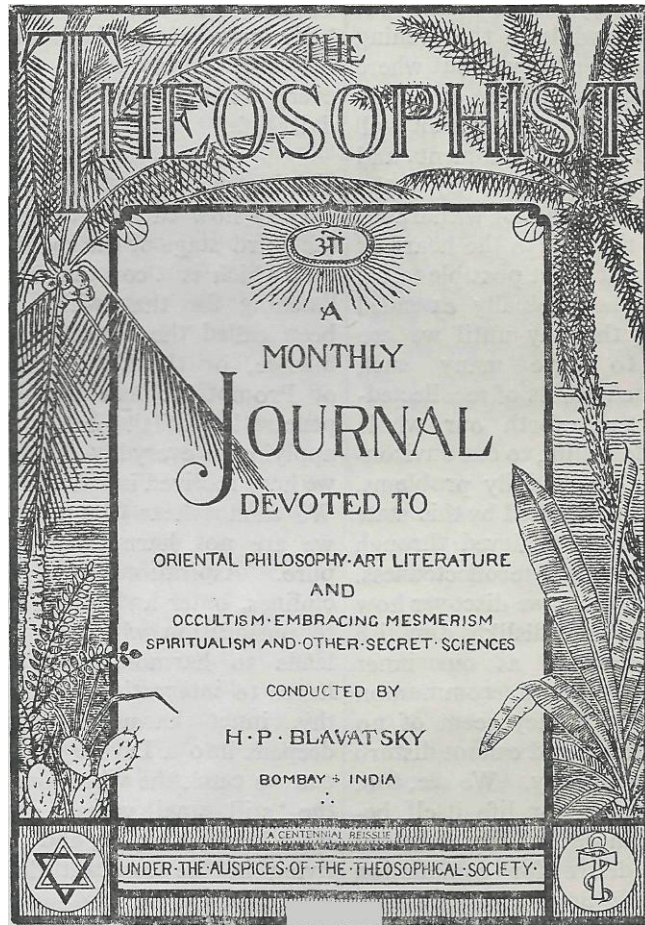
'This Reality in its essential nature is Love and Truth

and expresses itself through the great fundamental laws of Love and Truth which ultimately conquer everything' (*The Science of Yoga*, p. 212).

That power in the heart is directly linked to the will of the *atman*: in fact it is its manifested expression. In the spiritual life we are concerned with that power with its focus in the heart, and not with any exhibition of its distortions such as emotionalism. Anyone who calls upon this power which radiates from within his heart will have a more dynamic response and will be quickened far more speedily than through calling upon any other power or through attempting to destroy the very will that causes him to be; for this is the solar system of *love*.

### Second step

Such recollection in the heart may be considered the second step in the spiritual life, for it implies a still mind and a harmonious heart; it implies that the constant attunement of the lower to the higher mind is becoming a daily feature of our inner life and that the consciousness of the inner life is coming more to the foreground than hitherto. In other words, we are bringing back to mind—recollecting—some deeper states of consciousness. Remembering, focussing our thought upon the Divine Presence, automatically involves developing discernment, alertness of mind and intuition, charity, compassion, brotherhood—all very practical aspects.



On considering this subject, we immediately think that living in the twentieth century of noise, bustle, haste and brain-work, makes it well-nigh impossible to practise this inner discipline. During the day,

moments of physical or mental pause may be few and far between, while in the evening it is another story. But where there is a will there is a way and the earnest aspirant will always find such moments and prolong them little by little. Such moments of withdrawal of the thought to the heart or innermost point possible to us, should be gradually extended during the day until we are able to have many such sustained points of recollectedness; thenceforth our whole attitude to life, to our environment, to our daily problems, becomes coloured by this state of quietude achieved through our practice of recollectedness. It is then that we discover how our likes and dislikes diminish in proportion as our inner aspiration and communion grow, until they seem of no importance and cannot disturb our equanimity. We see, too, how desire for life itself becomes more and more centred upon desire for communion with the Source of that life, hence desire for that Source Itself, and how insight slowly unfolds without our making any conscious effort to open it up. Transmutation takes place without much effort on our part. All we do is practise recollectedness, the remembrance of the *atman*, that his light may flow into our mind through the heart, that we act

in accordance with it, that, in the words of Thoreau, 'We may place the impact of our immortality upon every passing incident in our daily life.'

### Third step

Only now can we come to the third stage of the spiritual life, which is a constant inner listening for that which has been called the Voice of the Silence, or the Divine Hint, or Prompting: listening with penetration of the heart and applying in everyday life what we have received in the silence. We cannot hear this voice if we are not harmonious and pure. Aspirations and disciplines, outer and inner, lead to purification which in turn leads to harmonization and hence to integration. Only in this inner harmony, which deepens into a Divine Silence, can we catch the vibrations of the 'still, small voice', grasp what it is hinting at, and start living in the constant doing of the Divine Will.

This again is a further stage in the practice of recollectedness; both the listening and the doing according to the Divine Hint mean a constant keeping in mind, a remembering where we come from, a deeper state of recollectedness.

There is a passage in *Light on the Path* which bears directly upon the subject:

'Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air. So must you press forward to open your soul to the Eternal. But it must be the Eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth.' It is very difficult for man, especially when he has fully developed the mind which is the seat of selfconsciousness, to grow unconsciously. All of us tend to wonder, to speculate about our so-called spiritual progress, and that is a great hindrance to real growth. Yet the practice of recollectedness can help us enormously on the path of un-selfconscious spiritual growth. We 'grow as the flower grows' by constantly focussing our thought upon the Inner Ruler Immortal, the Source of our Being, to whom we owe everything, without any thought for ourselves and our growth, but out of sheer love for that Source. For the mere remembrance proves our eagerness to open ourselves to the Giver of Life. In such recollection,

- (1) the channel of communication slowly opens more and more;
- (2) our thoughts are not uselessly scattered about but gather power that can be used for helping others;

- (3) hence the power of concentration is unconsciously developed and our inner hearing is sharpened;
- (4) we do away completely with the thought of self-growth; we do not even bother to think in such terms since we have come to the point when we realize that we ourselves do nothing, but it is 'He' or 'It'—the Dweller within our hearts—who acts; we are only the instrument and we let Him take over and direct our every action with a mere hint which we now easily recognize;
- (5) desire for life is transmuted into desire for Him alone, to do His bidding here on earth.

This is the sheer soul contact which is the essence of the spiritual life.

By constant practice we slowly reach an understanding deeper than we could ever achieve through book-knowledge. This practice may or may not mean that we shall soon pierce through the *antahkarana*; that depends upon the earnestness of our aspiration, the longing in our heart, and our karma. But it certainly means that we have taken the first step upon the path of the spiritual life and can already prove to ourselves the validity of the doctrine of the higher *manas*, for even at the first genuine steps the divine light manifests itself in one way or another. We understand better now what H. P. B. meant when she said that 'real life is in the spiritual consciousness of that life'. Only such consciousness can make it alive, dynamic, a burning fire that takes us ever onwards in spite of all obstacles.

#### Fourth step

The spiritual life—and this is the fourth stage—is a moment-to-moment consecration (a making sacred through dedication to a higher goal) of our inner being, our heart and mind. To live in constant remembrance of the Higher Self is to make sacred all that comes into contact with that Inner Flame. It is then that at last we come to the point when we can make, in the words of *Light on the Path*,

'... the profound obeisance of the soul to the dim star that burns within. Steadily, as you watch and worship, its light will grow stronger. Then you may know you have found the beginning of the way. And when you have found the end its light will suddenly become the infinite light.' □

*Commitment does not stop with contemplation. It seeks issue in work. For the God discovered thus is a God at work, reconciling the world in Himself. And those who worship in spirit and truth find themselves called to a ministry of reconciliation. A world unfinished and broken is to be made whole. Worship sends us out to work. But work in turn, through frustration or consummation, may continually tend again toward worship, wherein illumination and renewal are to be found. Such, in part, is man's way toward God.*

ROBERT LOWRY CALHOUN, (1896— )  
*God and the Common Life*