On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

The Middle Way

In manifestation, there is disharmony. This is the situation almost all the time between people, between a person and the circumstances in which he happens to find himself, and so on. But harmony is one of the duties we have to learn in order to live rightly. This means that we do not come to any hard and fast judgement, something we must practise to understand. We normally come to a judgement in regard to various things, but we must learn not to arrive at one at all. We may hold a certain view, but at the same time realize that that view may be wrong, or in many cases very limited, and therefore it is only of temporary value. Everyone can find out for himself whether his judgement is right or not, whether it is to be held more lightly, or given up.

The Voice of the Silence says: 'Having become indifferent to objects of perception, the pupil must seek out the Rājā of the senses, the thought-producer; he who awakens illusion.' What happens to us at this lowest level of manifestation, the physical level, is that we do not realize that our view of things may be right only up to a point; one may say 'no' to something or partially 'no' to something, and 'yes' to something else, but that view may be wrong. Can we hold the mind in a state in which we do not hold that view as the final judgement? We make hard the experiences we undergo by holding fast to them, and feeling that this is right. To act according to what is right, or seems right at the moment, but not to hold on very hard, is difficult.

Let us think about this a little bit. It is very difficult to act without a motive because of the feeling of 'self'. But, if there is no 'self', or if the 'self' is not strong, the motive becomes less strong. So we may do what we think is right, but we do think that it is a final answer. This is the same as asking: Are we free of attraction and repulsion, of likes and dislikes? There are some people whose actions seem wrong, and we dislike them; we think they are not well intentioned, but who are we to judge! We need not attribute the actions to the person concerned, but look at it differently. This is one of the lessons we learn from the New Testament. Jesus Christ regarded even the most depraved of people, the ones who did not know what to do, as his friends. That attitude is something which we have to cultivate.

Can we have that attitude of benevolence to anyone who needs it? The feeling of compassion, of caring, of

wanting to help a person: these things mark the person who is free of motivation, of attraction and repulsion. He knows that there is an element of the divine everywhere. Objects exist, senses are alive, the mind perceives, but without movement, without travelling or moving anywhere; this is all part of yoga.

Yoga does not indicate that one has become indifferent to objects. They continue to exist, the senses are alive, the mind perceives, but it is without movement. Travelling without movement is an important part of learning, because movement comes from the self. You can put yourself in the position of anybody without moving from one place to another. Perhaps we need to meditate over this, and learn to know the nature of the motion. The middle way leads to a higher order which makes it possible to live differently. It is also called the razor-edged path, for the edge is sharp until we learn to tread it; then it becomes easy.

In the Christian scriptures it is said 'strait is the gate, and narrow the way'. That is the way that we have to tread. It appears difficult when looked at by the personality, but austerity comes by itself when one begins to tread the path. It comes naturally, not as something which was learned and practised. Many of us suffer from self-indulgence; we see something very nice and we feel like acquiring it. Can we live a life in which there is neither austerity nor self-indulgence? We like to eat something or we like to have it when it is not good for us. Undoubtedly we have to give attention to the body to keep it clean and useful, but if we give it too much attention, as some people do, that is not good.

It is by watching that we come to the state which is equilibrium. Memory can do a lot of harm to human beings. Can the mind remain undisturbed? To see that the mind works only when necessary, is to become aware and to know. In a letter, the Master wrote to Sinnett: 'Remember that anxious expectation is not only serious, but dangerous. Each movement and throbbing of the heart awakes the passions. The affections are not to be indulged in by him who seeks to know.'

Sometimes people say I want to reach such and such a stage in the spiritual life, but wanting has nothing to do with it. It is better not to want too passionately, too earnestly the objects we want to reach. The very wish could prevent the possibility of reaching it. Let us consider for ourselves what is the middle way, not from a sectarian or Buddhist point of view, but clearly according to our present judgement. One of the things that makes it difficult is the pressure that is put on us by society, by our families and our friends. They feel that we must behave in the same way as they do. Can we remain inwardly free, not tied to a religion or the social circumstances in which we find ourselves?

Triumph for Truth

We are informed through the Press that scientific experiments in the European Union on the great apes, such as gorillas, orangutans and chimpanzees should be limited throughout the European Union.

This has been declared by the European Commission and has been formally proposed. This plan is, according to newspaper reports, that the control of such research on these living creatures should be part of a measure to control animal research as a whole. This would of course be a triumph for the animal rights groups and many other people who cannot join them for various reasons. The plan is to control animal research by a suitable authority, and to make various restrictions to prevent further damage to rare animals.

This action of course is completely opposed by people who are of the view, or say they are of the view, that animals have no feelings and thoughts and are unlike human beings, so there is no need to worry about what happens to them. There are others who believe that they do have some feelings, but it is important to sacrifice them for the benefit of human beings whose welfare is looked after by those who experiment, as well as by those who benefit from them as do doctors. The pharmaceutical industry as a whole (and naturally those who are working in them benefit a great deal from these so-called improvements) and would support any kind of experiment that they do on animals.

Contrary evidence is emanating from various sources, indicating that animals, in various degrees depending on their situation, feel and enjoy the benefits of awareness. *The Times of India* (dated 2.10.2008) has a beautiful account of a drama that occurred near the Bannerghatta National Park, which is said to have all the elements of a human experience: courage, imagination and other qualities, and proves that animals behave not very differently from human beings. Therefore we can appreciate what happened near a forest in this area.

A herd of elephants was raiding a millet farm on the fringe of the forest. A few villagers who had seen what was happening were surprised when a baby elephant ran ahead, as babies do at times, and fell into a dry well. This well was too deep for the baby to get out of by itself. The other elephants came to know about it because the cries of the baby were heard by them. It is reported that the older ones formed a line and held each other's tails by linking them through their trunks and eventually the baby was pulled out. This was not so easy as the well was about twenty feet deep, and there was slush in the field. Again and again the baby fell back, but finally the herd of elephants was able to rescue the baby. They rested for some time after the effort, and then returned to the forest.

Another case was reported about an elephant calf which had died, but the mother would not leave her baby even when the forest guides tried to drive her away. She visited her dead calf for several days and eventually, only when she could do no more, went back to her herd. This shows that the feelings of a mother can be strong, and that the ingenuity of animals extends beyond routine thinking. Various other qualities like courage are apparently used when there is a need.

The imprisonment treatment given to animals, supposedly needed for

research, is incredible, and the European Commission's proposals, if adopted by the European Union, will save many millions of animals kept in captivity solely for the purpose of experimentation. Even though one cannot expect to save all the animals, these steps may free some of the endangered species from being used, and make man aware of how much he is ill-treating them.

One of the leaders of the animal-protection groups says that to make this law fit for a morally and scientifically progressive twenty-first century, the ultimate goal of replacing animals with alternatives must be right at the heart of legislation. This is 'a once in a lifetime' opportunity for Europe to lead the world in ending animal experiments and replacing them with the most technically advanced non-animal techniques.

Science can promise those who are aware either intellectually or through higher levels of contact with life that our entire relationship with animals and lesser kingdoms will change when it becomes different. There is really no need to experiment on animals but we imagine it to be absolutely necessary. When we become harmless and learn to be friends with all parts of the universe there must be changes for the good. *Ahimsā* will be the rule as it has been for ages, for the very few who have gone ahead have illustrated it in what appears to be mere fiction to most people. ✧

. . . Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.

William Wordsworth

What Causes Attachment

R. C. TAMPI

Who Are You?

Man is claimed to be the crown of creation. The ancient teachers of India considered men as the 'nurselings of immortality' and embodiments of *ānanda* or bliss. Paradoxically human life is generally seen as a sea of struggle (*bhava sāgara*). Happiness in life has come to be only a short interlude in the long drama of pain. The reason for this human predicament is that man is in effect an amphibian. The Greek word *amphibios* means living a double life. On the one hand, man is an embodied spirit having the potential for exploring the whole 'spaceless and timeless world of the universal Mind'; on the other hand, he is also a highly self-conscious and self-centred being. Thus man can choose either centrifugal expansion to the transcendental divine consciousness or centripetal contraction, converging to an artificial centre produced by his egocentric thoughts and experiences. No wonder, Kahlil Gibran confessed: 'Only once have I been mute. It was when a man asked me: "Who are you?".'

The Paradise Lost

According to the story in the Genesis, man once enjoyed immortality and unalloyed bliss in the Garden of Eden. When he ate the forbidden fruit of knowledge, he was punished by God. As a consequence, the first man and the first woman for the first time became conscious of their separate selves and were banished from the bliss of oneness to a life of duality and suffering ending in dusty death. Thus, with the beginning of self-consciousness, i.e. self-centredness, began the struggles and sufferings of man. His fall from heaven symbolizes his descent into distress and death through the sense of separateness and self-centredness.

Man, however, is truly a ray of the one Universal Spirit like a ray emanated from the sun. Human life splits and scatters that unity.

> The one remains, the many
> change and pass;
> Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's
> shadows fly;
> Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
> Stains the white radiance of eternity.
>
> (Shelley, *Adonais*)

The real man remains ever pure, ever awake and ever free, the supreme Self.

***Avidyā* (Illusion)**

What man thinks as being himself, or calls 'myself' is a gross illusion. The 'I-ness'

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that has created the duality is only the product of the mind. This illusion is the result of ignorance or *avidyā*. Man's sense of a separate 'I' tenaciously becomes himself and produces a strong but false identity. He has become so entrenched in a narrow egoistic self that he is incapable of envisaging the existence of a real Self different from it. It is said that an Irishman asked his parish priest innocently: 'When I die, my body will be in the grave, and my soul in heaven; but where will "I" be?'

Walt Whitman says this about the personal self or personality:

> That shadow, my likeness
> that goes to and fro seeking
> a livelihood, chattering, chaffering:
> How often I find myself standing
> and looking at it, where it flits;
> How often I question and doubt
> whether that is really me.

The self stains and veils the pure consciousness and reduces itself to a state of worldliness and materiality. So a great teacher urged: 'All of us have to get rid of our own ego, the illusory apparent self, to recognize our true Self in a transcendental divine life' (*The Mahachohan's Letter*, *ML*, chron. edition, 1998, p. 478).

When there is the realization of one non-dual Self beyond phenomenal existence, there cannot exist side by side with it a consciousness of separateness. None can think of chillness in fire or immortality and freedom from old age in regard to the (perishable) body (Śankara, *Upadeśa Sahasri*).

Endless afflictions and misery caused by the sense of separateness make life a sea of harrowing troubles in which man flounders.

> Life which ye prize is long-drawn agony:
> Only its pains abide . . .
> (Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*, VIII)

Avidyā (illusion) is the underlying cause of all this. Blinded by illusion man treats the non-eternal as eternal, impure as pure, evil as good, non-Ātman (the separate self) as Ātman (the Universal Self). *Avidyā* leads to *asmitā* or 'I-ness' or self-centredness or egoism, from which spring attraction and repulsion. *Abhiniveśa* or craving for life follows. The root cause of all afflictions is *abhiniveśa*, i.e., clinging to life, desire for continuity or the insatiable longing to become something. It is referred to by the Buddha as *tanhā* or *tṛshna* or craving. The spark of passion flares up as *tṛshna* or 'lust and thirst of things', when 'senses and sense-objects mingle'.

Attachment or fondness for sensuous experiences comes from the illusion of a separate self. The attachment vanishes when one denies the existence of a separate personal self or 'I'.

The Divine Self and the Personal self

Ānanda or bliss is the condition of the real Self. This supreme Self is all-inclusive, impersonal, unegotistic and divine. Ignorant of the truth that he is himself the Divine, Universal Self, man identifies himself with the narrow, separate, personal self. The more serious battles of life do not take place in any geographical location at any historical moment. The battleground is the narrow self itself.

On the impermanent and illusory nature of self a great teacher pointed out: 'What is self? Only a passing guest, whose concerns are like a mirage of the great desert' (*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*). If we probe into ourselves, we will discover that our lower self is mainly an amalgam of egoism and common tendencies of the mind. Even modern scientists speak of this. Julian Huxley, H. G. Wells and G. P. Wells conclude their book, *The Science of Life*, thus: 'The western mystic and eastern sage find the strong effect of endorsement in modern science and the everyday teaching of practical morality: both teach that self is a method, not an end.'

Attachment

Attachment is an adjunct of the illusory self. The Sanskrit equivalent of 'attachment' is *mamathva*, meaning 'mine-ness', *mama* meaning mine. So it shows that attachment springs from the 'self'. It may play havoc in our life, as it sets off a series of deleterious consequences. Śri Kṛshna explains them to Arjuna (*The Bhagavadgitā*, II.62, 63): Thinking of sense-objects produces attachment or fondness for them. From attachment arises desire to possess them, and from desire or longing anger arises. From anger comes delusion or bewilderment. From delusion follows confused memory. From confused memory results the ruin of discriminative power or *buddhi*. With the loss of the discriminative faculty the person perishes. This sequence of events beginning with attachment culminates in self-destruction. This is like a series of explosions of increasing devastation resulting in nothing but the annihilation of human virtues. This, however, is most common in life. Attachment and aversion (two sides of the coin) of the senses for their respective sense objects are inherent in human behaviour. So let none come under their sway. They are highway robbers (*BG*, III.34).

From attachment come grief, desire, thirst, violence and fear. So *Dharmapada* states that freedom from attachment is the noblest among *dharma-s* (religious teachings). It adds: 'Fields have weeds as their ruin: this mankind has attachment as its ruin' (XXIV.23).

One may be attached to different things. There may be attachment to persons, objects, ideas, beliefs, opinions, positions, possessions, etc. Attachment always implies an inescapable dependence. It means: 'I cannot do without it. . . .' Cravings, clinging, fear of losing, anxiety to possess, unyielding self-interest, envy, etc. are some of its manifestations.

There is another important aspect to attachment. As attachment is always linked to the personal self, it is productive of Karma. Mahavira taught: 'Attachments and aversions are the root causes of Karma and Karma originates from delusion. . . . Even the most insulated, powerful enemy does not cause so much harm as uncontrolled attachment and aversion do. It is on account of attachment that a person commits theft, indulges in sex and yearns for unlimited hoardings. Absence of

attachment, etc. is *ahimsā*, while its presence is *himsā*.'

Freedom from attachment to mental possessions is the most difficult to deal with. Attachment to knowledge, especially conceptual knowledge, is bondage. In the practice of Zen one constantly renounces the natural desire for conceptual knowledge. St John of the Cross also urges detachment from thoughts, ideas and feelings of God. Non-conceptual knowledge is a whole new mode of knowing.

Attachment, whether strong or not, is the most serious hindrance to spiritual progress. St John of the Cross points out:

> Whether it be a strong wire rope or a slender and delicate thread that holds the bird, it matters not, if it really holds it fast; for until the cord be broken, the bird cannot fly. So the soul held by the bonds of human affection, however slight it may be, cannot, while these last, make its way to freedom.

The man, handicapped by attachment, labours in vain for spiritual progress. The story of the boatman who rowed the boat the whole night is an illustration of this truth. In the morning the boatman found that the boat was just where it was when he began rowing the previous night. Then only did he realize that the rope which had tied the boat to a peg had not been cut. As long as one remains attached, he will not make any spiritual progress.

Kabir says: 'The devout seeker is he, who mingles in his heart the double currents of love and detachment, like the mingling of the streams of the Ganges and the Jumna.' Until we put an end to particular attachments, there can be no love of God with the whole heart, mind and strength, and no universal charity towards all creatures for God's sake.

Desire

Just as attachment springs from the illusion of a separate personal self, desire springs from attachment. Both are inextricably interconnected. Every experience leaves in the mind memory of the past and anticipation of the future. These have no existence except in the mind and so these are unreal. Still we long for them, with the inevitable frustration. Shelley paints such a picture of man:

> . . . We look before and after,
> And pine for what is not.
>
> (*Ode to a Skylark*)

Desire is an insistent impulse to possess a thing or an experience. Goethe describes it thus:

> . . . from desire I stumble to possession,
> And in possession languish from desire.
>
> (*Faust*)

Man's condition is often compared to that of a frog trapped in the mouth of a snake. The body of the frog has already been swallowed by the snake; only the head remains outside the snake's mouth. Even in that condition the frog struggles to catch hold of a fly. Thus forgetful of imminent death, man struggles for possession.

All residual impressions of the mind concern transient things and the longing resulting from them evidently ends in

inescapable disappointment. Realization of this truth may liberate one from suffering. Just as a tree when cut, really grows again if the root is not removed, suffering returns again and again when the residue of thirst is not removed (*Dharmapada*, XXIV.5). Pursuing objects of desire, we always run as the thirsty deer chases the mirage on the desert mistaking it for water. So *At the Feet of the Master* warns us: 'Remember that all selfish desires bind, however high may be its object, and until you have got rid of it you are not wholly free to devote yourself to the work of the Master'. 'To have conquered desire is to have learned how to use and control the self' (*Light on the Path*).

There is no grief in life which is not caused by desire:

> . . . What grief
> Springs of itself and springs not of Desire?
> Senses and things perceived mingle and light
> Passion's quick spark of fire;
> So flameth *Trishna*, lust and thirst of things.
>
> (*Light of Asia*, VIII)

Thus the Buddha shows how the contact of the senses with the objects of sense perception lights the spark of passion and flares up lust and thirst for things. Krishnaji also pointed out the sequence of sensation, thought and images leading to desire.

Depending on the vehenmence of the passion inflamed by it, desire assumes different grades of devastative forms like wish, aspiration, appetite, ambition, greed, lust, thirst, passion, craze, craving and mania.

The tendency to grab all that comes our way is the source of our misery. Though everything is impermanent, we desperately grasp at them. We struggle to hold on to sensuous pleasures without realizing their evanescence.

> These sense-delights of earth and even heaven,
> They weigh not e'en as much as one-sixteenth
> Of the deep joy of ceasing of Desire
>
> (*Yoga-Bhāshya*, 11.42)

Epicurus hence advised: 'If thou wilt make a man happy, add not to his riches, but take away from his desires.' Desire is never quenched by satisfying it. Then it only gets inflamed like fire to which ghee is poured to put it out (*Bhāgavata*, IX.19).

Detachment (Let Go)

The only antidote to attachment is detachment. Detachment is being in the world, but not of the world. The lotus is a fine illustration. It is always in water, but water never sticks to it. To be free from the bondage of any pleasure-giving object, we should drop it as a deadweight. To the disciple who approached him with offerings in both hands the Buddha said: 'Drop it'. The disciple dropped the offerings in one hand. The Buddha repeated 'Drop it'. The disciple dropped the offerings in the other hand too. The Buddha insisted: 'Drop it'. The disciple realized the purport of the message and let it go from his mind

too. He attained freedom.

When one believes that he has a precious stone with him, he jealously protects it and holds on to it. The moment he knows that it is a worthless piece of stone, he spontaneously throws it away. It is all a matter of discernment or discrimination or *viveka*.

As *Dharmapada* advises, one has to pluck out fondness from the self as effortlessly as a waterlily in autumn. The way to enjoy everything is to stick to nothing. Learning to live happily is learning to let go.

Our efforts to be the foremost in possession, power and fame make life miserable. Lao Tzu says:

> Here are my three treasures. Guard and keep them!
>
> The first is pity, the second frugality, and the third, refusal to be foremost of all things under heaven.

A learned traveller happened to find a packet on his way. When he opened it, he found that it contained a few precious stones. He kept it with him. One day a poor man approached him for help. The learned man gave him the precious stones. The poor man was very happy at first. Soon he was worried that the precious stones might be stolen at any time. After some time, he wanted to grow richer by acquiring more wealth. All these cost him his peace of mind. He was so distressed that he took the precious stones back to the learned man, requesting him to take the treasure back and give him instead that quality of his mind which prompted him to part with or let go of his precious possession.

It is a question of Self-mastery. As Edmund Burke observed: 'If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free; if our wealth commands us we are poor indeed' (*Letter on a Regicide*).

Aiming at spiritual progress, while holding fast to worldly powers and fame, is an exercise in futility. As Rumi illustrates, it is ridiculous too.

Once the noble Ibrahim,
as he sat on his throne,
Heard a clamour and noise
and cries on the roof,
Also heavy footsteps on
the roof of his palace.
He said to himself, 'Whose
heavy feet are these?'
He shouted from the window,
'Who goes there?'
The guards filled with confusion,
bowed their heads saying,
'It is we, going the round in search',
He said, 'What seek ye?' They
said, 'Our camels.'
He said, 'Whoever searched
for camels on a housetop?'
They said, 'We follow thy example,
Who seeks union with God,
while sitting on a throne.'

Jalal-uddin Rumi

Deny self, for the Self's Sake

Unfortunately, the modern principle of happiness is instant realization of every desire. Man has won his freedom from religious and secular subjugation. However, he is yet to achieve the greater freedom to be himself and to be fully awake.

Attachment is the antithesis of a

theosophical life. Theosophy is the great renunciation of the self, unconditionally and absolutely in thought and action. A theosophist lives not for himself, but for the world. One must be stripped of everything personal.

'Self-interest is the door that shuts the other out', said Krishnaji. In the last but one talk in Madras on 1 January 1986, Krishnaji reminded us: 'If there is attachment of any kind, the other cannot exist — the other being love.' ✧

Live unconcerned in this World. This Divine Lesson is taught us from Heaven by the Holy Ghost upon this Ground (I *Cor*., 7:29, 30, 31). *But this I say Brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be, as though they had none; And they, that wept as though they wept not; and they, that rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not; and they, that buy, as though they bought not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: For the fashion of this world passeth away.* The *Apostle* here divideth all this World into 4 *Heads*: 1. Relations; 2. Passions; 3. Possessions; 4. Employments, and Entertainments. *Solomon* saith in one place: *Why shouldst thou set thine heart upon that, which is not*. There is no real Difference between having a Husband, Wife, or Children, and having none; between being in Grief, or Joy, and being without Grief, or Joy; between having an Estate, and having none; between being in the height of all Employments, or Entertainments, and being out of all. This world hath nothing real. It is all a Shadow. Seeing then the various States of things on Earth have no real Difference, pass thou through all estates with a perfect indifference of Spirit, in a constant calm.

Peter Sterry

A True Olympic Spirit

LINDA OLIVEIRA

AS WE witnessed during the past year, the Olympic Games bring together a large number of the finest athletes in the world to compete against one another, urged on by huge crowds of spectators from all walks of life. One may wonder, therefore, why an Olympic Spirit might be the subject of a talk to a theosophical gathering. Such a spirit — in its deepest and most universal sense — may not be so very far removed from the theme of our work.

The ancient Olympic Games were actually part of a religious festival in honour of Zeus, who was the father of the Greek gods and goddesses. The Games were held in Olympia, a rural sanctuary site. In contrast to today's Games, those who came to the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia shared the same religious beliefs and spoke the same language. The sanctuary was named in antiquity after Mt Olympos, the highest mountain in mainland Greece. In Greek mythology, Mt Olympos was the home of the greatest of the Greek gods and goddesses.

Although the ancient Games were staged in Olympia for about one thousand years until 393CE, it took a further fifteen hundred years for the Olympics to be re-established. The first modern Olympics were held in Athens, Greece, in 1896, with an Olympic torch relay being introduced a little later at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. A further development, the Olympic Oath, was introduced in 1920 at the Antwerp Games. This reads as follows:

The Olympic Oath

> In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honour of our teams.

On the one hand the Olympic Games are an opportunity to promote human excellence and bring together many people from the corners of the Earth, but on the other, the Olympic Oath includes the words 'competitors' and 'teams', with the inherent division that they imply. There is a strong emphasis on achievement of goals motivating Olympic athletes. In fact, attachment is a useful starting point to begin an exploration of the meaning of a true Olympic spirit, for by and large we tend to be very attached to our attachments!

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Attachment and Consciousness

Let us begin by considering a short passage from an ancient text, the *Viveka-Chudāmani* or Crest-Jewel of Wisdom. In the following quotation *rajas*, of course, is one of the three *guna-s* or characteristics of matter often associated with passion, activity and longing. We read:

> The power of *rajas* is extension (*viksepa*), which is the essence of action . . . attachment and other qualities productive of sorrow are always produced by it.

Attachment is therefore essentially a result of a movement of our consciousness outwards into the world. Attachment can give a temporary feeling of security or happiness. We may grow to like something and therefore want to hold on to a material object, or else our mind may want to relive a particular experience many times. Mentally replaying an experience may reinforce the desire to have that experience again. For example, remembering the taste of a delicious ice cream could well lead us to want a great deal more ice cream! Desire can beget greed.

In this connection, there is a Zen story about a famous teacher who took his pupils into a clearing in the forest that was known as a home for wild monkeys. There he took a hollow gourd with a small hole and inserted sweetened rice (a favourite of monkeys). Then he chained the gourd to a stake and waited with his class. Soon a large monkey approached, sniffed the rice, inserted his paw, and screeched in frustration when he was unable to withdraw his paw (which had now become a fist) through the narrow opening. Just then a leopard approached and, hearing the monkey screeching, decided to have monkey for his dinner. 'Let go of the rice. Run!' screamed the pupils, but to no avail because the monkey in his hunger for the rice, refused to let go and was caught and eaten by the leopard. 'What was the trap that killed the monkey?' asked the master. 'Rice', said one student. 'The gourd', said another. 'No', replied the wise teacher. 'The trap was greed.' Perhaps the leopard represents our personal self, which deadens our ability to let go.

An attachment may be incredibly strong one moment, resulting in greed, yet when desire is thwarted the same attachment may suddenly be reversed, resulting in a strong aversion to that same thing. In fact, greed on the one hand, and aversion on the other, are given as two of the 'terrible properties' of *rajas* in the *Viveka-Chudāmani*.

Attachment can create knots in our consciousness and stifle the actual *experience* of experience. Lama Govinda wrote:

> Life means giving and taking: exchange, transformation. It is breathing in and breathing out. It is not the taking possession of anything, but a taking part in everything that comes in touch with us. It is neither a state of possession nor of being possessed, neither a clinging to the objects of our experience nor a state of indifference, but the middle way, the way of transformation.

According to this, if we want to really

live we need to become 'dispossessed', to consciously 'dispossess' ourselves, presumably of all our attachments. This is a radical thought! It is one thing to hold an *idea* that we do not really own anything, that we are *custodians* — whether custodians of our belongings, our homes, our planet, an organization such as the Theosophical Society, our views, or anything else. Yet it is quite another to assimilate this ideal through some kind of osmosis, so that a noble attitude of stewardship colours our everyday actions.

Lama Govinda mentions what life *is*: 'a taking part in everything that comes in touch with us'. If we are caught up in a world of attachments then we tend to focus on discrete, disconnected aspects of life and ignore the large picture — the grand process of living which is continuous and never twice the same. When our attachments possess us, we are prevented from fully engaging with life. Those things which are static and fixed take precedence over that which is fluid and ever changing.

There is another Zen story which illustrates this principle. In a series of catastrophic events a rich and aged merchant lost, in succession, his beautiful (but troublesome) wife, his mansion (to fire), his fortune (to theft), and ultimately his freedom (for insulting the local lord). A jailer, whose mother had worked for the merchant, noticed a curious change in the man, who had been noted for his thrift and fear of being cheated. In prison he seemed quite happy. 'Are you in your right mind?', asked the jailer. 'Why do you smile and laugh and pass each day so pleasantly?' 'Absolutely nothing left to lose', giggled the merchant.

Transcending Personal Attachment

How do we actually begin to transcend attachment? One member of the Theosophical Society some time ago sold her house, gave away nearly all her possessions and declared herself much happier as a result. However, transcending attachments is probably more a question of a profound attitude shift, than literally disposing of our possessions. Some hints on transcending personal attachment appear in *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis.

> The man who has true and perfect love does not seek his own advantage in anything, but desires only that God may be glorified in all things. He feels no envy towards anyone, because he has no desire for any pleasure that is not shared; nor does he want any joy that springs from self, because he desires to find his happiness above all good gifts in God. . . .
>
> Anyone who had a spark of the true love would surely know that everything on earth was deceptive and unreal.

The quotation from Thomas à Kempis reinforces the fact that such themes are by no means the exclusive province of Eastern traditions. 'The man who has true and perfect love does not seek his own advantage in anything . . .' Pure love is therefore anathema to the desire for personal advantage. In fact, such love renders one in a condition of desiring that

the *Deity*, rather than the personal self, be celebrated and honoured in all things. A sense of the sacred cannot be manufactured artificially, nor can it be instilled by some outside agency. This innate sense reveals itself as one of Nature's processes, just as a new plant emerges above the soil when the various conditions required are just right. Sacredness flowers naturally, in the silence of one's being, and in its own time.

The statement also resonates with one of the teachings in *Light on the Path*. The passage concerned encourages the serious aspirant to 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'. Both passages contrast starkly with the competitive screen of today's world. One with a pure heart does not hunger for personal possessions. Such an individual may have personal possessions but is not driven by them, preferring instead those possessions which benefit the whole. These universal possessions may actually consist of qualities such as compassion, generosity of spirit and wisdom, rather than material objects as such.

The Source of Stability

The question now arises, *how* can we understand this process of human transformation? Change, motion, is a given in life. To change, to move with this stream, requires a constant process of letting go. As author Shirley Nicholson has pointed out:

> Such letting go does not mean being uncaring and impassive, without warmth or enthusiasm. It means rather not becoming overly identified with anything — our body, our convictions and opinions, our reactions, our feelings, even our loved ones, and most especially our self-image, that semi-conscious picture we hold of what we are. In short, it means letting go of our tight hold on the ego. (p. 177)

Change and transformation logically go hand in hand, but change and stability as two aspects of transformation may seem a slightly odd coupling. So let us consider what constitutes stability. At a superficial level, attachments may give a feeling of permanence and stability. Humans continue to try and locate stability within the outer world, which is never the same from moment to moment. Therefore such stability does not last and is not authentic. Hence a further statement by Lama Govinda: 'If we want to have stability, we can find it only within ourselves, namely, as the stability of our inner direction .'

And what is our 'inner direction' to which he refers? It is a way of life which leads us Godward, towards the sacred. It is that compass which will ultimately liberate us from the round of birth and death. But there is also another way of understanding inner stability and that is, to consider it as living in a 'state of dharma'. Such a state may indeed be transformative, even from one moment to the next.

Dharma

The more steady our inner compass, the more we are able to live within our dharma. But what is dharma? Dharma is derived from the root *dhṛ* which means 'to establish', 'to hold', 'to support', 'to sustain', 'to bear'. It also means 'that which is established or firm' (Monier-Williams). Dharma also has a secondary meaning: 'an essential or characteristic quality or peculiarity'. So we might describe living within our dharma as actively participating in that inward journey which helps reveal our unique, innermost quality.

Dharma can be thought of as our internal power to decide how we will deal with situations. Annie Besant described it as where we are now, as well as the next stage of our unfoldment. Dharma is therefore concerned with evolution, with the art of the possible, with our deepest inner potentials. And this does not have to be left for another place and time!

Dharma may be thought of as breaking through our limitations by expressing ourselves from within — from our essential nature. For example, life may present us with a difficult challenge, yet somehow we may be strong enough to step up to that challenge to the best of our ability and stretch beyond the confines of our 'normal' abilities. This process might be described as the art of embracing the possible, of becoming more of who we truly are. Furthermore, dharma also has a moral dimension to it because anything which reflects our essential nature as a human being, deep within, necessarily involves ethics.

Our inward journey, which commences with an examination of ourselves, eventually helps establish ourselves in our dharma, in the Truth of who we are.

Truth — Neither Fixed nor Finite

Truth forms the heart of the motto of the Theosophical Society: 'There is no religion higher than Truth'. In fact, an orientation towards Truth may be life-changing and may lead us not to a goal, but to a new way of looking at the world, which constantly allows new insights to be revealed and which is not focused on outcomes.

Sometimes one hears a comment that a certain person does not know his or her own mind. Central to aligning ourselves towards Truth is the importance of actually *knowing* our own mind and the many influences which impinge upon it — not just superficially, but as thoroughly as possible.

J. J. van der Leeuw, a prominent member of the Theosophical Society wrote with penetrating insight:

> Our very consciousness is *terra incognita*; we know not the working of our own mind. . . . It is as if we were prisoners in the vast palace of our consciousness, living confined to a small and bare room beyond which stretch the many apartments of our inner world, into which we never penetrate, but out of which mysterious visitors — feelings, thoughts, ideas and suggestions, desires and passions — come and pass through our prison, without our knowing whence they come or whither they go. In our consciousness we knew

> but results, we saw but that which rose to the surface and became visible; now we begin to realize a vast and unexplored world of mystery . . . We are discovering the wonder of life. (pp. 8–9)

There are certain physical challenges inevitably associated with living in the world — for example, being employed, maintaining a home, meeting family obligations, getting from place to place, and so forth. These naturally need to be addressed. But inventing new problems can become almost like an addiction, so that the limited world in which we live becomes unduly magnified into a constellation of problems (largely self-created) and we do not take time to 'stop and smell the roses'. Can we imagine what it would be like to engage far more in the processes of our lives and far less in outcomes, far more in the mystery of this moment and far less in imagining how our self-image might be affected if a particular outcome does not accord with our original expectation?

In relation to Truth, J. J. van der Leeuw commented that 'when, in blindness of materialism, he wants to *have* truth, to grasp and hold her, to lock her between the pages of a book . . . then the nobility of his aspiration is lost and the hero of yesterday becomes an object of pity, at whom the great gods smile in compassion'.

As he wrote further, 'Though ever again men may claim to have found truth and to possess her, truth herself remains untouched; truth is the mystery of life which the hand of man can never reach. . . . The mystery of life is not a problem to be solved, it is a reality to be experienced.'

Postmodernism and Reenchantment

Charles Birch, an eminent Australian biologist and leading world geneticist, in his book entitled *On Purpose*, included, among other things, five axioms which he developed for a postmodern world view.

The first of the axioms was that Nature is organic and ecological. Charles Birch observed that in the postmodern world we think less of stuff (perhaps we could substitute the word 'matter' here) and more of relations. Or we could say that interconnections have been more prominent in the postmodern world. The author pointed to key words in postmechanistic thinking as 'event' rather than substance; 'organism' rather than machine; 'responsiveness' rather than inertness; 'internal relations' rather than external relations; and 'purpose' as a causal influence for all individual entities in the universe from protons to people. This postmodern world view brings into prominence relationship, interconnections, event or process, the *life* processes inherent in an organism compared with the mechanical operation of a machine, internal relations, and purpose.

Another contemporary thinker, Ervin Laszlo, in his book, *Science and the Reenchantment of the Cosmos*, observes that current scientific findings of connection and coherence (p.24) ground an important insight. This insight is that various networks of connection, which make for a coherently evolving cosmos,

suggest that there is more to the universe than matter and energy, space and time. Is he perhaps hinting at life's mystery and grandeur beyond our measurable world? When we focus too much on outcomes, then we may be overly analytical about life, give undue importance to our selves, and be bound more than really necessary by time. Worry about past or future events dissipates energy.

As a universal process, what actually connects and correlates the cosmos? Ervin Laszlo identifies this source as a field, which is made explicit in Hindu cosmology — the field of *ākāśa*. He describes it as 'the womb from which everything has emerged and into which everything will ultimately re-descend'.

Ākāśa, a Sanskrit term, is an aspect of space which means 'brilliant, shining, luminous'. In *The Secret Doctrine* we read that Ākāśa is the 'first-born of the ONE, having but one quality, SOUND (which is septenary in its nature)'. Space here refers not just to physical space as we know it with our three dimensional physical senses, but to that which contains, defines, and is the basis or matrix of the universe, the macrocosm. It is the sounding board of nature. Imagine that we are within a multidimensional, infinite, luminous field. Everything contained within that field, including us, makes an impression, writes on the cosmic pages, as it were. It is a precious thing to become conscious of the vibrations or footprints we are imprinting for posterity upon the universal matrix.

A Contemporary Example

J. Krishnamurti commented wisely that 'there is no arriving, there is only the movement of learning — and that is the beauty of life. If you have arrived, there is nothing more'. He observed that we have arrived, or want to arrive, in our business and in everything we do. As a result we are dissatisfied, frustrated, miserable. However, he goes on, 'A mind that listens with complete attention will never look for a result because it is constantly unfolding; like a river, it is always in movement. Such a mind is totally unconscious of its own activity, in the sense that there is no perpetuation of self, of a "me", which is seeking to achieve an end.'

A true, universal, Olympic spirit may be present in our deepest response to all of life's experiences, both objective and subjective. Such a spirit is felt as the following processes work increasingly within our nature:

* transcending personal attachment, which is a question of attitude
* living in our dharma, with our various levels of consciousness functioning in unison
* locating the source of stability within us
* focusing more on relationship, interconnections, internal relations and purpose, concepts which are brought out in postmodernism
* emphasizing ethical considerations, being mindful of the needs of the greater whole

* re-enchanting ourselves with the process of life and focusing less on outcomes

* grounding our lives in harmony, whether in our domestic surroundings, in relationships, or the various processes of our day-to-day actions

* instead of grasping at Truth, making ourselves open to Truth, allowing the process due freedom so that Truth may reveal itself in our lives

* and last, but not least, being comfortable with the mystery of life, for there are things about the cosmos which the finite mind cannot know!

The Inner Sanctuary, the Inner Flame and the Glory of Life

The sanctuary named in antiquity after Mount Olympos, the highest mountain in mainland Greece, is the home of the greatest of the Greek gods and goddesses in mythology. Within the deepest recesses of our consciousness there is an inner sanctuary which we can enter in order to commune with our true human nobility, and which can bring a fresh, untainted energy to our life.

A certain symbology is evident in the Olympic torch carried through many countries by a succession of athletes from different nations — the ultimate equality of humans from different races, disciplines and continents, and the large flame which burns for all. As humanity's myriad relationships in all walks of life become more robust and less fragmented, the energy of our collective human flame will become stronger, inspiring us to still greater heights.

The Olympic Oath runs: 'In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honour of our teams.' If a few words are substituted here and there, with due deference to those who wrote this oath, then its application may be modified and broadened to apply to life in a larger sense — something like: 'In the name of all humanity I will engage with life, respecting and abiding by the ultimate Law of the cosmos, in the true spirit of humanity, for the glory of all existence, and as an acknowledgement of the sacredness of all beings.' ✧

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For him who is sincerely devoted to the religious life, it is the same whether he refrain from worldly activities or not. . . .

For him who is freed from attachment to worldly luxuries, it is the same whether he practise asceticism or not. . . .

For him who hath attained the mastery of his mind, it is the same whether he partake of the pleasures of the world or not. . . .

For him whose humility and faith (with respect to his *guru*) are unshakable, it is the same whether he dwell with his *guru* or not. . . .

For him who hath attained the Sublime Wisdom, it is the same whether he be able to exercise miraculous powers or not.

Gampopa

A Memorable Meeting with J. Krishnamurti

JAAKKO KARI-KOSKINEN

ABOUT sixty Young Theosophists attended the memorable YT camp, the majority from Holland and Sweden.

The theme of the camp was Education. Various topics were discussed in groups of 5–10 such as: Education and Individuality, Education and Sex Roles, The Individual and the Group, and so forth. We noticed that our lopsided schooling emphasizes instruction, completely forgetting the education of the deeper self. This is much better observed and realized in the so-called alternative schools. Is it due to such an education that we are so complicated, closed and cannot search for nor express more positive thoughts and feelings? The prevailing curricula stick more to effective instruction instead of a living contact to one's inner self or the expressions of life everywhere around us. We should better observe both Nature and man as parts of a living whole. Any knowledge of the super-physical realities would broaden our view of life. There are no supernatural things for a human being who deepens his vision of Nature — in such a case, all becomes natural.

According to the basic occult ideas we are affected by our environment since the very beginnings of pregnancy and children have but a fine protection against evil, violent feelings and thoughts — unfortunately so common in modern society. Many ideas years ago may have been too preponderate for the times — or we really should have made more progress.

Some youngsters, in a somewhat unkind manner, attacked Krishnamurti. His greatness showed then, partly because he did not take these silly remarks personally, and because he took the trouble to lead the discussion into a more serious direction. Why do you go on talking around the world? was a provocative question, to which he replied, 'Because the world is burning!'

Another youngster asked: Why do you condemn all the academic, religious and political institutions; after all you have your Foundation? We strive through various ways to freedom and independence, but for many people the organizations are still necessary. He replied: I don't condemn

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nor approve anything, but if you feel that you have to go through communism or Roman Catholicism, nothing prevents you from doing so. But don't fancy yourself to be better, if you belong to an ideal organization.

It is not easy to gather from any book Krishnaji's spontaneity, sense of humour or the instant impact of inner consciousness, which was nonverbally present. That was far more significant than the best words available. The situation just cannot be reproduced; you can convey only an outline of what happened. In the middle of the meeting, a group of Swiss girl scouts was passing by, and singing very loudly. He laughed, asking: Shall we invite them in here to sing? Another regular nuisance was the local train passing by the gathering site every now and then: There comes our train again! Another time he asked much more seriously: Can you be fully aware of the noise caused by the train, to give in without resistance, only listening to the noise of the train?

On another occasion his speech was interrupted again by loud barking. Krishnaji then of course stopped. A lady instantly saw her opportunity, stood up suddenly and talked very animatedly; but nobody heard nor understood clearly what she was saying. Krishnamurti sighed and said: Sorry, madam, the dog is winning! Once again there was a loud barking from outside, so he had to ask: I am sorry, but whose dog is that?

Commenting on the need for stillness of being, Krishnamurti said that our endless quest to gain faster, deeper and stronger experiences in itself prevents us from grasping the delicate shades of life. In depth and stillness ends the hunger for experience. Observing the phenomena of life must happen wholly, totally. Here Krishnaji applied the word 'wholly' explaining that originally in Greek it also meant roughly the same as holy. A total or complete human being means the same as saintly.

The issue of violence came up once, which as an idea is not easy to define. Perhaps it is both vain destruction and a purposeless use of energy in nature. Krishnamurti asked whether violence is ever justified and is there a way out of it. At once a hot-tempered man stood up and exclaimed: I totally disagree. Violence is a part of the natural order of things and is necessary both in personal relations and in defending one's home and country.

Krishnamurti tried to explain how, much pain, corruption and misery is brought about by violence. The man stated that he was trying to moralize against war: Oh no! I don't say what is good or bad, acceptable or condemned — I simply observe the world, where I see much insanity. I want to find out the answer to the question of inner and outer violence; I want a solution, because I have a problem: how do we end this senseless and pointless destruction? No idea of peace nor any applied attitude helps you. You have to see the insanity of violence.

A very interesting issue came about, when a lady asked whether remembering our past lives can help us in solving the

present problems. Many listeners may have smiled, thinking that Krishnamurti would not take such a question seriously. On the contrary, he began stating that our ideas about reincarnation are not correct and thus he approached the question from a different level. Almost the whole of Asia believes in reincarnation. Therefore important decisions are sometimes postponed to the next life when, as believed we would be wiser, those problems could more easily be solved. People believing in reincarnation create an ideal image of what they think they would become after many lives and this hinders them from acting freely. You have never observed what reincarnates — you live stuck in yesterday's memories, everything that needs time. You are chained by the past. Reincarnation means really the continuation of the past. It does not exist in eternity.

Can our action ever be free or always be bound by the past and memory? You are living in the world of tigers, the tigers of your own creation. Every path which you choose, raises snakes. I ask of you and myself: Can I find means to kill all the tigers and snakes instantaneously? If I cannot do so, I pretend. Then I hide them and want to be something other than I am. I am born in the midst of the same chaos. And my mind still feeds the tigers, snakes and monkeys of the past. You cannot chase any animal a little bit one day, and then return to your chase the next day — so you are never going to catch the animal. Hold up the tiger or the monkey at once when you see it. Tomorrow the tiger may have grown bigger or has the company of a bigger tiger, who suggests catching only smaller, harmless animals in order to retain its own freedom.

Finally he told a short Zen story of a teacher and a pupil. One morning as usual the pupil came to the master's ashram in order to listen to his teaching. Just as the master was about to begin, a small bird flew up and sat at the window seat, starting to sing aloud to its heart's delight: Shall I shut the window? the pupil asked, who was greatly annoyed by the bird song at such an unpleasant moment. Let it be, replied the master. When the bird finally ended and flew away, the master stood up and said: This was today's lesson.

On one occasion a man sitting right in front of Krishnamurti suddenly interrupted his speech and began to explain something in a confused and passionate manner, when he remarked smiling at him: Dear sir, breathe in. And when you have taken a deep breath you have, maybe, found out for yourself the answer to your question. After a while he went on more earnestly: The beauty of a question lies therein, that when a person is able to ask something, he himself can also find out the answer.

Once, the discussion was stuck by an unessential and simple fact. When it had turned and tossed more than enough, Krishnamurti abruptly said: For heaven's sake! Do you understand this or do I go home? He could surprise his listeners by talking of the right manner of living in quite a 'non-krishnamurtian' spirit. He stated that right and clean food is necessary for a spiritual life. 'Also the

practices of yoga, which I do a couple of hours a day, are useful and healthy; they provide oxygen for blood and cleanse the body. But you should not make a religion of yoga practices or food. Even Hitler and Mussolini were vegetarians.'

A wonderful feature in Krishnaji was that he did not take himself nor his audience too seriously. However, he carried an extra load in the form of some supporters. A group of wealthy people, knowing his reputation, followed him around the world, recording his talks and occupying the best places 'at the feet of the master', often not really listening and observing what to do, but rather disturbing and trying to come towards a more personal contact. Therefore he said many times in different words: Don't follow me! You destroy yourselves and me. Sometimes on hearing quotations of his thoughts, he said impatiently: Don't repeat my words. The world is full of quotations — and quotations of quotations! Do you become any wiser by imitating someone else's words?

The writer of this article seems to have fallen just for that! ✧

The man of enlightened mind who is active in the world and the illumined sage who sits in his hermitage, are both alike in their spiritual calm, and have undoubtedly reached the state of blessedness.

It is the activity or the inactivity of the mind which is the sole cause of the restlessness or tranquillity of men. Thickly-gathering desires serve to fill the mind with the vanity of their nature, which is the cause of all its woes: therefore try to weaken your worldly senses at all times. . . .

The homes of householders who have well-governed minds and have banished their sense of egoism are as good as solitary forests, cool caves or peaceful woods, O Rama-ji.

Men of pacified mind view the bright and beautiful buildings of cities in the same dispassionate light as they behold the trees of a forest. He who, in his inmost Spirit, sees the world in God, is verily the Lord of mankind!

Yoga-Vasishtha

Studies in *The Voice of the Silence*, 15

JOHN ALGEO

THE keys to the seven portals having been enumerated in the last group of verses, the next group (verses 215–222) begin an introduction to a more detailed description of the seven portals. The introduction continues through verse 229, which is followed by the start of the detailed treatment in verse 230.

VERSES [215–222]:

[215] Before thou canst approach the last [Portal], O weaver of thy freedom, thou hast to master the Pāramitā-s of perfection — the virtues transcendental six and ten in number — along the weary Path.

[216] For, O disciple! Before thou wert made fit to meet thy Teacher face to face, thy Master light to light, what wert thou told?

[217] Before thou canst approach the foremost gate thou hast to learn to part the body from thy mind, to dissipate the shadow, and to live in the eternal. For this, thou hast to live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee; to feel thyself abiding in all things, all things in Self.

[218] Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind.

[219] Thou shalt not separate thy being from Being, and the rest, but merge the ocean in the drop, the drop within the ocean.

[220] So shalt thou be in full accord with all that lives; bear love to men as though they were thy brother-pupils, disciples of one Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.

[221] Of teachers there are many; the MASTER-SOUL is one,[8] Ālaya, the Universal Soul. Live in that MASTER as ITS ray in thee. Live in thy fellows as they live in IT.

[222] Before thou standest on the threshold of the Path, before thou crossest the foremost gate, thou hast to merge the two into the One and sacrifice the personal to Self impersonal, and thus destroy the 'path' between the two — *antahkarana*.[9]

COMMENT. Verse 215 addresses the aspirant as 'weaver of thy freedom', a metaphor with several implications. First, freedom, liberation, or enlightenment (as

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the goal of human life is variously called) is often represented as a 'robe', or rather a choice among three 'robes' or 'vestures': *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya* and *nirmānakāya*. The metaphor of the three robes was introduced in verses of the second fragment and is treated in more detail towards the end of this third fragment. But the important implication is that the robe is not something tailored by some other worker and given to us to put on. Rather we ourselves weave our own 'robe'. Or as the third of the three Truths of the White Lotus has it: we are each our own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to ourselves, the decreer of our life, our reward, our punishment. Whether we put on the glorious white robes of the Book of Revelations (6:11, 7:13) or the poisonous robe of Nessus, which was the undoing of Hercules — we ourselves have woven that robe.

As mentioned earlier, the number of the *pāramitā-s* or transcendental virtues is variable. The most common numbers are six (for everyone) and ten (for monks).

In verse 216, the expression 'meet thy Teacher face to face, thy Master light to light' is an interesting one. Meeting someone 'face to face' is a conventional way of talking about a direct and immediate personal encounter. But meeting someone 'light to light' is not a conventional way of talking, so we may wonder what it refers to. 'Light' is often associated with the *buddhic* plane; we are 'enlightened' when we are able to function consciously on that plane. To meet our 'Master light to light' would then be in the intuitive light of *buddhi*. And the capitalization of 'Master' suggests that we are not talking about a human being, however advanced in spiritual evolution, that is, not about one of the Mahatmas, but rather about our own Higher Self. In fact, the terms 'master' and 'teacher' (which are synonyms) in the *Voice* often — perhaps usually — refer to the Inner or Higher Self rather than to some external individual. That, of course, goes along with the concept that we weave our own freedom. We cannot look to others to do for us what only we can do for ourselves. That is a core message in the *Voice* (as well as of Krishnamurti, whose teachings can thus be seen as a restatement of certain ideas in the Theosophical tradition).

Verse 217 is one of the most important in the whole book, because it states a central truth. To 'part' the body from the mind is a metaphor for drawing a clear distinction between these two aspects of our nature and recognizing that our real self is not our body or the personality associated with it, but rather the individuality, of which the higher mind is the vehicle. The 'shadow' is another metaphor for the personality, which is, as it were, only a shadow cast by the light of the Higher Self. This metaphor also echoes Plato's parable of the Cave, which says that most people live in a cave, where they never see the light of the sun, but only shadows cast upon the cave's walls. To 'dissipate the shadow' is to transfer our self-identification from the shadowy personality to the sun of the individuality.

To make this transference is 'to live in the eternal', that is, in the aspect of ourselves that abides and endures, rather than in the personality, which is of time and thus temporary. That is, the first sentence of the verse gives us the Delphic admonition to know ourselves — to realize who and what we really are. That is the essence of the whole quest or pilgrimage on which we are engaged. It is the goal of the Path.

The second sentence tells us what we must do to achieve that transference or self-discovery. Ironically, we do not achieve it by concentrating on ourselves. On the contrary, we discover our essential selves by realizing our unity with all life. We must 'live and breathe in all', just as all else breathes in us. We must feel ourselves 'abiding in all things, all things in Self'. This is the same message as that delivered to the third annual convention of the Theosophical Society in America by H. P. Blavatsky, quoting a Master of the Wisdom (*Collected Writings*, XI.169): 'Feel yourselves the vehicles of the whole humanity, mankind as part of yourselves, and act accordingly.'

The language of the first sentence of verse 217 suggests death imagery: parting the body from the mind, dissipating the shadow of the personality, living instead in the Eternal. Physical death has long been a metaphor for spiritual birth. In ancient Egypt, the pyramid texts, which we call 'The Egyptian Book of the Dead' ostensibly describe post-mortem existence, but have long been regarded as a manual of initiation into a higher state of consciousness.

In fact, the after-death stages are parallel to the stages of progress on the Path. The death of the physical body and its associated personality at the end of an incarnation follows the same pattern as the transference of self-identification from the personality to the individuality, which is one phase of enlightenment, and it is for this reason that the metaphor of death is appropriate for the experience of spiritual birth.

The stages of bodily death and the corresponding stages of transferring one's self-identification from the personality to the individuality, as represented in verse 217, are as follows:

1. The death of the body, when the three lower principles associated with it (subtle body or double, life energy, and desires) separate from the higher ones (emotional mind, intellectual mind, and monadic core), accompanied by a review of the past life. This is 'to part thy body from thy mind'.

2. The division of the contents of the psyche between what is individual and abiding, attached to the higher intellectual mind, and what is personal and transitory, attached to the lower empirical and emotional mind, which is cast off as a 'shell'. This is to 'dissipate the shadow'.

3. The period of 'gestation', which is an integration into the intellectual mind of what is worth preserving from the past incarnation. This is 'to live in the eternal'.

4. The entry of consciousness into the state of devachan, the period of reward and recuperation. This is like crossing to nirvāna, the other shore, 'to live and

breathe in all . . . abiding in all things'.

Verses 218–221 elaborate some of the ideas already considered: distinguishing between the bodily senses and the mind (verse 218) and 'abiding in all things' with the metaphor of the ocean and the drop (verse 219).

The latter verse uses an interesting and important variation on an old metaphor, which compares freedom from the limitations of separateness (that is, nirvāna) to a drop of water merging into the ocean, from which it ultimately came. All metaphors, if interpreted literally or pushed too far, yield unwarranted implications. If we think of the individual's entering nirvāna as like a drop of water's merging into the ocean, then the implication is that the individual ceases to exist as an individual, just as the drop ceases to be a distinct drop when it enters the ocean.

That, however, is not the traditional Theosophical view, and this verse of the *Voice* avoids such an implication by using a double metaphor, one half of which is paradoxical. The nirvānic experience of the oneness of all life is said to be both like a drop merging into the ocean and like the ocean merging into the drop. From the standpoint of relativity, when a drop and the ocean get together, we can look at the process in either way. Usually we say that the drop has merged into the ocean because the ocean is clearly the bigger body and we think of big things as absorbing little ones. However, if we look at the event from the viewpoint of the drop, we could just as well say that the ocean has merged into it.

The latter is the way the Theosophical tradition looks at it. When we realize our unity with all life, we do not cease to exist as a realizer — that is, as a separate consciousness. What we realize is that our separate consciousness is a particular expression of the general consciousness pervading the cosmos. The universal consciousness has merged into us.

Verse 221 makes quite clear the point alluded to earlier, namely that the Master is not some external authority or teacher, but the Higher Self, which is a conscious expression of the Universal Soul. HPB's gloss makes this explicit:

> Gloss 8. The Master-Soul is Ālaya, the universal soul or Ātman, each man having a ray of it in him and being supposed to be able to identify himself with and to merge himself into it.

The literal meaning of *ālaya* is 'house, dwelling'. The word consists of a prepositional prefix *ā-* meaning 'near to' and a form of the root *li* meaning 'to settle down'. The word is familiar as part of the place name Himālaya for the mountains to the north of India, a name that means literally 'abode of snow' (from *hima* a general term for 'cold, frost, snow' and *ālaya*). *Ālaya* is a domestic word, with warm associations, so its use for the universal soul or the general Ātman implies that the One Self is our true home, our natural dwelling place. The literal meaning is echoed in the repeated expression 'live in . . .'

Verse 222 continues to treat the

transfer of consciousness from the personal to the individual. Here they are said to merge, just as the individual merges into the universal life of Ālaya. The path between the personal and the individual is 'destroyed' because they are no longer separate.

That path, the *antahkarana*, is the connecting link between the personality and the individuality. It is sometimes said to be a link between the higher and lower minds, but that is only a manner of speaking, as HPB makes clear. We call the mind 'higher' when it is energized by and responding to *buddhi* or intellect and 'lower' when energized by and responding to *kāma* or desire. HPB says in her gloss that this path or connecting link is mind energized by desire. That is what links our abiding individuality with the temporary personality of the body:

> Gloss 9. *Antahkarana* is the lower *manas*, the path of communication or communion between the personality and the higher *manas* or human Soul. At death it is destroyed as a path or medium of communication, and its remains survive in a form as the *kāmarupa* — the shell.

Notice that in this gloss a correspondence is again drawn between the post-mortem state and the process of enlightenment.

MEDITATION:

Envision the process of a drop merging into the ocean as the ocean's receiving the drop. Then change your focus so that it is on the drop, receiving the whole ocean into it, without losing its sense of identity. Imagine yourself as that drop, which has become and thus contains the fullness of the ocean.

Verses 223–229 conclude the introductory matter before a more detailed consideration of the seven portals and their keys, which the following verses present.

VERSES [223–229]:

> [223] Thou hast to be prepared to answer Dharma, the stern law, whose voice will ask thee at thy first, at thy initial, step:
>
> [224] 'Hast thou complied with all the rules, O thou of lofty hopes?'
>
> [225] 'Hast thou attuned thy heart and mind to the great mind and heart of all mankind? For as the sacred river's roaring voice whereby all Nature-sounds are echoed back,[10] so must the heart of him "who in the stream would enter", thrill in response to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes.'
>
> [226] Disciples may be likened to the strings of the soul-echoing *vinā*; mankind, unto its sounding board; the hand that sweeps it to the tuneful breath of the great WORLD-SOUL. The string that fails to answer 'neath the Master's touch in dulcet harmony with all the others, breaks — and is cast away. So the collective minds of *lanoo-śrāvaka-s*. They have to be attuned to the Upādhyāya's mind — one with the Over-Soul — or break away.
>
> [227] Thus do the 'Brothers of the

> Shadow' — the murderers of their souls, the dread Dad-Dugpa clan.[11]
>
> [228] Hast thou attuned thy being to humanity's great pain, O candidate for light?
>
> [229] Thou hast? . . . Thou mayest enter. Yet, ere thou settest foot upon the dreary Path of sorrow, 'tis well thou shouldst first learn the pitfalls on thy way.
>
> . . . . . .

COMMENT. Verse 225 speaks of the 'merger' of verse 222 as an attuning of the individual's heart and mind with those of all humanity. HPB's gloss further develops the musical metaphor:

> Gloss 10. The Northern Buddhists, and all Chinamen, in fact, find in the deep roar of some of the great and sacred rivers the keynote of Nature. Hence the simile. It is a well-known fact in physical science, as well as in occultism, that the aggregate sound of Nature — such as heard in the roar of great rivers, the noise produced by the waving tops of trees in large forests, or that of a city heard at a distance — is a definite single tone of quite an appreciable pitch. This is shown by physicists and musicians. Thus Prof. Rice (*Chinese Music*) shows that the Chinese recognized the fact thousands of years ago by saying that 'the waters of the Hoang-ho rushing by, intoned the *kung*', called 'the great tone' in Chinese music; and he shows this tone corresponding with the F, 'considered by modern physicists to be the actual tonic of Nature'. Professor B. Silliman mentions it, too, in his *Principles of Physics*, saying that 'this tone is held to be the middle F of the piano; which may, therefore, be considered the keynote of Nature'.

The idea that there is a particular 'keynote' of Nature is part of the concept of the 'music of the spheres'. The latter imagery comes down from ancient times, when it was believed that each of the seven sacred planets (Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) moved in a sphere around the earth and, in doing so, produced a characteristic musical tone. The combination of all those tones was a perfect harmony, the music of the spheres. A natural extension of that concept is that the Earth also has a keynote. This symbolism is the basis for some sacred music and for the theory of the power of mantric sound.

The metaphor of musical harmony is continued in verses 226 and 227. The *vinā* is a stringed instrument from India typically with a gourd resonator or sounding board, a long bamboo finger-board, and four strings. A *lanoo* is a disciple, also called a 'chela'; a *śrāvaka* is a 'listener'. The first stage in spiritual training is to learn the elements of the tradition; before the widespread availability of books, this was done by listening to the discourses of those learned in the tradition. Hence the beginning student was called a 'listener' (in the Pythagorean school, an *akoustikos*, with the same meaning). In Freemasonry, an entered apprentice of the First Degree is supposed to listen and not talk in meetings.

Silence is the norm for learners. An *Upādhyāya*, on the other hand, is a teacher or instructor, here the Over-Soul, whose speech is the Voice of the Silence.

In verse 227, a contrast is drawn between good disciples, who harmonize with the Over-Soul, and the 'Brothers of the Shadow', those who seek learning and its power for what they think is their own separate and selfish benefit. 'Dad-Dugpa' is a Tibetan term for a school of lamas with the reputation (deserved or otherwise) of engaging in such disreputable practices. HPB glosses the term:

> Gloss 11. The Bhöns or Dugpas, the sect of the 'Red Caps', are regarded as the most versed in sorcery. They inhabit Western and Little Tibet and Bhutan. They are all Tāntrika-s. It is quite ridiculous to find Orientalists who have visited the borderlands of Tibet, such as Schlagintweit and others, confusing the rites and disgusting practices of these with the religious beliefs of the Eastern Lamas, the 'Yellow Caps', and their *Naljors* or holy men. The following [gloss 12, below] is an instance.

Bhöns are followers of a shamanistic, pre-Buddhist tradition of Tibet that assimilated to Buddhism when it was introduced into their land. They are called 'Red Caps' from the colour of the hood-like hat they wear. A Tāntrika is a follower of one of the traditions of Tantra, a Hindu or Buddhist school of mystical, magical and ritual practice. Tantra includes a large variety of practices that can be loosely classified as 'white' or 'black' magic. HPB's critical appraisal of Tantra is directed towards the latter, which includes the deliberate, ritual violation of moral and ethical principles and of accepted forms of behaviour, rather like the Black Mass tradition of the Western Occult revival. A *Naljor* is a Tibetan saintly person.

'Humanity's great pain' of verse 228 is the *duhkha*, or frustration and disharmony, which the first Noble Truth of the Buddha says is humanity's condition. It is caused by ignorance, craving, and anger. Although disciples must be free from those causes — being instead knowledgeable, content and peaceful — they need to understand the human condition, or they cannot help humanity. So without sharing that pain, the disciple must be attuned to it. The 'dreary Path of sorrow' of verse 229 is the path of those who choose to remain in the world as servers of humanity rather than to escape from it into their individual salvation. That Path is, to be sure, ultimately one of inexpressible joy. As HPB's statement 'There Is a Road' puts it, at the end of that Path, 'there is reward past all telling — the power to bless and save humanity'. Yet the treading of that Path does involve the experience of 'dreary sorrow', for that is the condition of humanity, to which the disciple must be attuned. And that experience consists of the 'pitfalls on thy way' which the disciple must learn about.

Verse 229 is followed by a line of leaders (or dots), suggesting a break in the text at this point. The whole work is described on its title page as 'chosen

fragments', so this is presumably a point of fragmentation.

MEDITATION:

Think about a series of musical notes that combine into a harmonious whole. A dictionary definition of *harmony* includes such terms as *progression*, *pleasing*, *congruent*, *correspondence*, *accord*, *tranquillity*, *interweaving*, *systematic*, *agreement*. How do such terms throw light on the meaning of *harmony*? How is harmony a good metaphor for order in the cosmos and in our own lives?

Think of the sounds of Nature. Hear them with your inner ear. Think of those sounds as blending together in a great and harmonious symphony in which each sound has its place and combines with all the others to make a total pattern.

Think of your own life as a sound, a note or chord, and hear it blended with all the other sounds of Nature, as part of that total symphony. ✧

The child whispered, 'God, speak to me'
And a meadow lark sang.
The child did not hear.

So the child yelled, 'God, speak to me!'
And the thunder rolled across the sky
But the child did not listen.

The child looked around and said,
'God, let me see you' and a star shone brightly
But the child did not notice.

And the child shouted,
'God show me a new miracle!'
And a life was born but the child did not know.

So the child cried out in despair,
'Touch me God, and let me know you are here!'
Whereupon God reached down
And touched the child.
But the child brushed the butterfly away
And walked away unknowingly.

Ravindra Kumar Karnani

H. S. Olcott as an Organizer

THERE is no greater testimony to the capacities of Colonel Olcott as an organizer than the Theosophical Society as it exists today. There are 47 National Societies today; there were only 13 when he passed away in 1907. But it was his wise planning that has made possible such a natural growth. It was he who laid down the broad platform of the Society's Constitution as it is now. The Society's organization is naturally the result of a series of experiments. First, there were 'Boards of Control', as for the United States, such a Board acting on behalf of the President. Colonel Olcott later developed the idea of 'Sections', called 'National Societies' during the Presidency of Dr Annie Besant.

A remarkable characteristic of the Society today is that it is a worldwide organization of autonomous National Societies, which are yet held together by deep sentiments of loyalty to a Central Headquarters. The Centre does not dictate what the Sections shall do; yet some of their *official* actions — the issuing of Charters and Diplomas — are done in the name of the Centre represented by the President of the Society. Yet the President is only the Executive Officer of the General Council of the Society, acting on behalf of all the autonomous National Societies as composing one indivisible Whole. Colonel Olcott thus describes this relation of the parts to the whole in the two following extracts.

I

Old Diary Leaves, vol. IV

An important thing done by the Convention of 1888 was the adoption of the policy of reorganizing the Society's work on the line of autonomous Sections: this having been the motive prompting me originally to grant, in 1886, a Charter to the American Section, and, later, one to the new Section at London. The plan had proved an entire success in America, and after two years of testing it in practice it seemed but fair to extend it to all our fields of activity. It was an admirable plan in every respect; local autonomy imposed local responsibility and local propaganda, and involved much personal exertion; the creation of Sections minimized the burden of dull details which had previously so hampered my command of time; and the

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Society changed from a quasi-autocracy to a constitutional Federation, each part independent as to its internal affairs, but responsible to every other part for its loyal support of the Movement and its ideals, and of the Federal Centre, which bound the whole together, like the fasces of the lictor, into an unbreakable bundle. Under this plan the formation of a new Section adds but little to the work of the Adyar staff, but increases to a marked degree the collective strength of the Society, as the house's foundation becomes stronger and stronger with each squared stone that is built into its mass.

II

Address at the Annual Convention, 1893

Results yearly prove the wisdom of the plan of dividing the Society into Sections, and I hope in time to be able to extend it over the whole world. . . . My endeavour has been from the first to build up a federal league on the basis of our Three Declared Objects which, while giving all members and branches the greatest latitude of opinion and choice of work, should yet be a compact working entity, with the welding together of its units by the bond of a strong common tie of mutual interest and clearly defined corporate policy. The chief Executive has already become in great part, and must ultimately be entirely, the mere official pivot of the wheel, the central unit of its life, the representative of its federative charter, the umpire in all intersectional disputes, the wielder of the Council's authority. As I gave autonomy to each Section as it came into being, so I mean to treat each future one, believing that our common interests will best be guarded by local administrators. I abhor the very semblance of autocratic interference, but I equally detest that principle of nullification which drives people to try to subvert constitutions under which they have prospered and which have proved in practice well fitted to promote the general well-being. This feeling has made me resent at times what seemed attempts to make the Society responsible for special authorities, ideas and dogmas which, however good in themselves, were foreign to the views of some of our members, and hence an invasion of their personal rights of conscience under our Constitution. As the official guardian of that instrument, my duty requires this of me, and I hope never to fail in it. . . .

I cannot see how a world-covering Movement like ours could possibly be kept advancing without some official thread to string the beads of Sections and Branches upon, and without one general and various local central offices, from which official

circulars and other documents should issue, a propaganda be directed, the results of Sectional and general conferences be communicated, and information of general interest be disseminated; one at which disputes might be decided and archives kept. . . .

I am now satisfied that the Society will incur the risk of being divided up into fragmentary societies equal to the number of Sections that may exist at the time of my death, if the present excellent and very practical scheme of administration should be abandoned. I cannot see for one moment how it could be dispensed with, and to my mind, the only real problem is to find a person for President who will administer his office with strict impartiality as between nations, sects and political systems. He must live at Adyar, develop the Library, keep up THE THEOSOPHIST, push on the educational work, now so prosperous, in Ceylon and Southern India, and be ready to visit all parts of the world as occasion shall require, to weave the outlying Sections into the great golden web of brotherhood whose centre and nucleus is at Adyar. ✧

It is because Adyar represents the world in miniature, that thousands of Theosophists all over the world say to themselves: 'If only I could visit Adyar!' For they feel that at Adyar they would gain that vision 'from the Centre' which would make every noble dream of theirs more real, and equip them with greater strength not only to dream but also to achieve. . .

Since 1882, when the visible Founders of the Society made Adyar the home of The Theosophical Society, a great brooding Thought has from afar permeated Adyar. This is the Thought of those Elder Brothers who are the true Founders of the Society, those great ones who have come to the threshold of liberation but renounced that splendour, in order that they may toil to bring our sad earth a little nearer heaven. Adyar is their cup through which a blessing is being poured upon the world night and day. Every tiny plant, every tree large and small, every flower, feels something of this blessing at Adyar. That is why Adyar has an atmosphere of its own.

Adyar lives and works for the world. Thrice happy they, to whom karma gives the privilege of coming to Adyar, and blessed indeed among their generation if they receive from Adyar what Adyar has to give them.

C. Jinarājadāsa, 1934