

Studies in “The Voice of the Silence”

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1. – THE WANDERING HEART

The downfall of every civilization is caused by the weak morals of those who live in and by it. False knowledge or misuse of knowledge generally accompanies weakened morals. An unbalanced relation between knowledge and ethics brings about a critical stage which, if not promptly attended to, results in death. Historical examples – the Roman Empire for one – will occur to any reader. War plays a part in the destruction and the reconstruction of civilizations. From the days of the *Mahabharata* down to our own times we come upon the phenomenon of unbalance between mental capacity and moral responsibility, competition leading to war and wars, then destruction. The destruction of the entire Kshatriya caste took place on Kurukshetra – an event which has a lesson for us all who are witnessing the sinking of European civilization.

Only a few in every century perceive the necessity of maintaining in their own lives the balance between knowledge and love, between head and heart. The great majority show an unbalance – feelings alone without the light of Wisdom predominate in one portion of the majority, while in the other head-learning without soul-wisdom, without compassion and philanthropy and sacrifice, works havoc. Religious feeling without knowledge is a curse which develops fanaticism, hatred and war; knowledge devoid of a spiritual basis soon develops into false knowledge which begets arrogance, enmity and war. Only a few, a small minority in any century, are Esotericists – not enquirers nominally interested in the Occult but real students learning to practise and to promulgate the grand doctrines of the Science of Life. Their task is to produce that balance between knowledge and ethics in their own constitution without which there can be neither the gaining of enlightenment nor the practice of altruism for the good of all.

For these few H.P.B. produced the book called *The Voice of the Silence*, dedicating it to them. In the Preface to that priceless little volume she writes that she offers three Fragments and that more could not be given "to a world too selfish and too much attached to objects of sense to be in any way prepared to receive such exalted ethics in the right spirit."
[*The Voice of the Silence*, p. iii ULT-edition]

Those only who are serious and sincere about moulding their own minds will make use of the book. As H.P.B. writes:

Unless a man perseveres seriously in the pursuit of self-knowledge, he will never lend a willing ear to advice of this nature. [*Voice* p. iii]

Esoteric Philosophy has always taught the art of all-round development – a healthy mind in a healthy body; but also, it has always taught that the course of unfoldment is from within without, and that therefore mind and not body should be the starting point, and that motive and not method should receive primary consideration. Not that body and method were neglected, but ever and always mind and motive were made the starting point. This is the burden of the *Gita*, of the doctrines of the Buddha, of the teachings of Jesus.

Those who have made friends with *The Voice of the Silence* have noted that it too gives primary importance to the training of the mind, with the right motive. In these four articles we shall consider the place of the motive and the activity of the mind as taught in the three Fragments, each of which should be considered as an independent unit. While there is, of course, an intimate interdependence between them, we should not consider the third Fragment to be in line of succession to the second, nor the latter as a continuation of the teaching of the first. Each emphasizes a particular aspect of the Truth, of the Way and the Path; each has its own message. One is not superior to the other any more that blue as a primary colour is superior to yellow or inferior to red.

Like all Occult treatises *The Voice of the Silence* is written in a cipher and yields more than one meaning, for there is more than one key to be used in deciphering a profound cipher. The neophyte at his stage, the adept at his, use

the teachings, for growth as for service – for growth through service. H.P.B. has made "a judicious selection" for "the few real mystics" of the era to which she came, who recognized her and its worth. For students of the modern generation the book has the same message and offers the same benefits; for them too the formulation of the motive and the training of the mind form the first step.

A phrase of H.P.B.'s might well be used as a touchstone to determine the nature of our motive for assaying the task of gaining self-knowledge and attempting self-improvement. In *The Key to Theosophy* [Original edition p. 261-62], commenting upon ascetic practices H.P.B. speaks of "what a man *thinks* and *feels*, what desires he encourages in his mind, and allows to take root and grow"; what we think greatly depends on what we feel, and we can determine the character of our feelings by noticing the desires which arise from roots so firmly embedded in the soil of the personality. "What desires he encourages in his mind" – what desires he "allows to take root," what desires he allows "to grow" – this will reveal the motive he harbours. Very often our motives are hidden from us and on the score of motive many fail ere they begin. The Master K.H. once wrote:

The first and chief consideration in determining us to accept or reject your offer lies in the inner motive which propels you to seek our instructions, and in a certain sense – our guidance. [*The Mahatma Letters*, # 2,]

We have to learn to distinguish between inner or real and outer or superficial motive. Again, the same Master points out that "our Eastern ideas about 'motives,' and 'truthfulness,' and 'honesty' differ considerably from your ideas in the West." [*The Mahatma Letters* # 30,] In India, most of the "educated" have Western minds – to be more precise, Eurasian minds – and they suffer from the same limitations as Western-born men and women. The eastern idea of motive is a profound one, and in ascertaining our motive we must take time and have to be careful, judicious, alert and attentive.

While it is true that motive is everything, we must never overlook the clear teaching of history that "good motive without knowledge makes sorry work sometimes" Mr. Crosbie continues:

All down the ages there is a record of good motive, but power and zeal misused, for want of knowledge. Theosophy is the path of knowledge. It was given out in order, among other things, that good motive and wisdom might go hand in hand. [*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 4.]

On the plane of motive the student's attention is drawn from the beginning to the ideals of the higher life. Not entanglement in the world of matter through ambition and the like, but a withdrawal and a consequent complete emancipation from the universe of Illusion – *Maya* and its Play – *Lila*. The student has to choose between sense-life and soul-life, and when he is sufficiently confirmed in his higher desire to live as a soul, subduing the senses, he is presented with another, the grandest ideal humanity has ever known – Renunciation. Soul-culture leads the practitioner to the idea of Liberation, a state so much desired by the afflicted – by hearts laden with sorrow, by heads full of confusion. Having seen the cause of disease, having drunk the potion of cure, who would want to continue hospital life? Having perceived the degradation of a prostitute's life, who would want to live in a house of prostitution? Having recognized the world as a vast lunatic asylum, who would want to dwell therein, and not run away from it? Even a little knowledge of Theosophy shows to the thoughtful and earnest student that this world is like unto a hospital, full of the ailing and the scrofulous; that men and women in their millions prostitute their minds and their hearts; that the world is full of moonstruck neurotics who rush about hither and thither fancying themselves sane and sound. The Theosophical student registers that to be of this world is to seek disease, to prostitute powers, to become mad; "Let me have none of these," he says. Thus for more than one life the student fixes his mind on Liberation and his motive in leading the higher life is to free himself from "the world, the flesh, and the devil." *The Voice of the Silence* recognizes the place of the Path of Liberation – the conquest of Nirvana.

For many centuries the ideal of Liberation has inspired generations of mystics, and here in India especially the desire for Moksha and to reach Nirvana has become the supreme, nay, the only goal of spiritual striving. The great Buddha taught the Path of Renunciation and exemplified the teaching in his own life. Says H.P.B.:

Esoteric teachings claim that he renounced Nirvana and gave up the Dharmakaya vesture to remain a "Buddha of Compassion" within reach of the miseries of this world. [*The Theosophical Glossary*, p. 67]

With the passing away of His pure Teachings from the land of His birth, the concept of Moksha prevailed in India as the sole ideal, submerging that of Renunciation. Nowhere is the Teaching of the Path of Renunciation so clearly formulated, nowhere are its functions and objectives so profoundly contrasted with those of the other Path, as in *The Voice of the Silence*. One of the missions of H.P.B.'s incarnation was not only to point to this forgotten truth, but, further, to arouse in as many hearts as possible the aspiration to tread the Path of Renunciation. Therefore among the only three Fragments she gave to the public world is that of "The Two Paths" and among "the few" must arise those who will undertake the culture of the heart necessary for the treading of that path. The attractions inherent in the ideal of renunciation are so powerful and potent as well as patent that most among "the few" hastily say to themselves, "I will tread the Path of Renunciation." They overlook that special preparation is needed for that task and that between the great service of the Renouncers and the desire, however ardent, of the aspirant to love and to help his fellows there is a difference not only of degree but of kind – of quality. To acquire the wisdom necessary for that Path takes time and especial effort; and this is possible through Chelaship, not as it is understood in the religious and mystical world, but as it is understood in Occultism and Esoteric Philosophy. A special kind of training and development is necessary to walk the Way of Renunciation: it is the renouncing not only of the world of matter but also of the world of spirit; not of life in form only but also of life eternal. It is freedom from the bondage of passion which every Emancipated Soul enjoys but further it is acceptance of the Bondage of Compassion which the *mukta* does not accept.

The training of the Probationer includes the unfoldment of the right motive which the ideal of the Path of Renunciation presents. Chelaship implies the treading of that Path and the displacement of other motives – including that of Liberation – by the One Motive, the real inner motive, of which all outer motives should be but expressions and emanations. The choice comes at the end, but that choice is the culmination of innumerable choices made by the soul – from the stage of the Probationer to that of the Adept.

If we encourage in our mind the desire to renounce, if we nourish it that it may take root and grow, we will be getting the necessary training for acquiring the Right Motive. That training is not in mere resolve and verbal repetition of the famous Pledge of Kwan-Yin, but a remembrance of it during the performance of daily duties. The Great Renouncer does not rush to help here, there and everywhere, but "ever protects and watches over Humanity within Karmic limits." [*Theosophical Glossary*, p. 231] This implies knowledge, especially of the Law of Cycles and "the ultimate divisions of time." [*The Ocean of Theosophy*, 4 ULT-edition] That is why H.P.B. says that "It is easy to become a Theosophist ... But it is quite another matter to put oneself upon the path which leads to the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil." (Students will do well to reflect upon the differentiation made by H.P.B. – *Raja Yoga*, p. 17 [p. 19, 1973 ed.]; it is not easy to become a Theosophist, only comparatively less difficult; the path of the Esotericist "leads a man to that power through which he can do the good he desires, often without even apparently lifting a finger.")

The cultivation of Right Motive takes more than one life: the control of the wandering mind is a necessity universally recognized but how many think of the wandering heart? When the heart has been steadied concentration of mind becomes easy, for an objective has been found. The mind gathers itself together and makes the objective its centre; but without a goal or an objective the mind can never gain one-pointedness. Many and varied are men's objectives in life, and the student of Theosophy is no exception to the rule. If he determines his objective to be neither the bliss of Nirvana nor the developing of siddhis, low or high, nor achieving success in this or that sphere, but letting everything go, to tread the Path of Renunciation, disciplining himself for the life of *spiritual* service of Orphan Humanity, then

he has found the correct objective, the Right Motive essential for the life of Chelaship. Once an aspirant resolves to follow the Right Motive, it, whether he remembers it or not, will affect his life and force him to work for humanity in one way or another. Directly he attempts to gain spiritual benefit selfishly instead of trying to help his brothers, he will feel the inner call to work, which cannot be evaded. For the Great Choice, his time will come; but its coming will be hastened as he remains faithful to the great Choice of his present incarnation – to endeavour to make Theosophy a Living Power in his Life.

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2. – THE SLAYER OF THE REAL

The asceticism which *The Voice of the Silence* advocates is that of the thinking principle – the withdrawal of the mind from its present position in which it is a slave. The mind is a victim of internal images composed of elemental-lives which form the desire-principle, and these awaken the senses to activity and make them the feeders of that principle. Man's objective world is but a reflection – a shadowy emanation – of this subjective plane of desire-images.

In the waking state of consciousness man does not live in the world of the mind but in that of the senses ensouled by desires within which the mind is captive. Man's so-called reasoning is not a pure activity engendered by the mind but is premised on sense- impressions which are permeated by desires. Even men of Science in using their minds proceed from sense-data to deductions, and, though in most of them personal desires in connection with the objects of observation are in abeyance, they yet suffer from their dependence on desire-shot senses. The eyes of a drunken man see things askew: the mind of one who in drawing his conclusions depends on the senses fraught with the desire-principle also sees askew. Sense-data to be true and sense-observations to be accurate must be devoid of the forces of the desire-principle. When Esoteric Philosophy calls the world of objects illusory it means that it is so not in the sense that the objects do not exist but in the sense that our valuation of them is false. The objective world may well be compared to a great bazaar in which desire-enslaved minds, not knowing the true prices of things, are taken in, have to bargain, to haggle and to wrangle for things needed and have to be tempted to want and to acquire other things. The mind thus exploited in the bazaar of the objective world gains experience and learns to evaluate each object at its proper worth, and then – and not before then – man begins to live in that world.

Our difficulty, then, as will be readily seen, does not inhere in the objects but in our ignorance of the true values of those objects, due to our desires in which the mind is imprisoned. Desires by themselves, unaided by the power of thought, would be innocuous; energized by it they make man the worst of the animal kingdom. Therefore our textbook calls this mind the Slayer of the Real and at the very outset gives the injunction to the Disciple to slay the

Slayer. It also states the method – "become indifferent to objects of perception." This mind, captivated by desire, which courses in the nervous system of the body, is called the chief of the senses, and it is this mind-sense which makes man different from the animal – capable of becoming superior to it as also of developing into the most cunning and the most carnal of beasts.

Having become indifferent to objects of perception, the pupil must seek out the Rajah of the senses, the Thought- Producer, he who awakes illusion. The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real. Let the Disciple slay the Slayer. [*Voice* p. 1-2 ULT-edition]

It is the activity of this mind in the objective world which has first to be handled by the aspirant-chela. Unless we see that these objects become channels, offer food to internal images and help to satisfy our cravings we shall not be able to evaluate them correctly. We value an object in terms of the satisfaction or the delight which it gives to our desire-fraught senses. This is the cause of illusion which is ignorance – not total absence of knowledge but the false evaluation of objects, mistaking lust for love.

If thou would'st cross the first Hall safely, let not thy mind mistake the fires of lust that burn therein for the sunlight of life.
[*Voice*, p. 7]

The Thought-Producer makes love out of lust and when this is seen in actual life-experience a real step forward is taken by the practitioner. When this is seen the weakness of the world of objects compared to the strength of the world of images is recognized. It is this seeing, when not understood, which tempts the aspirant to run away from the world to the jungle.

When a seeker after the Light within sees the activity of the outer world of objects he naturally attempts to close the windows through which the objects attack him. In that retreat, psychological or physical, a short respite from that attack is all that he obtains. Very soon he locates the root of his trouble: the attraction or the aversion which the objects exert over him are not in the external objects but in the internal images – memory pictures of the past, not only of this life but also of previous incarnations.

Withhold thy mind from all external objects, all external sights.
Withhold internal images, lest on thy Soul-light a dark shadow
they should cast. [*Voice* p. 20]

This is the formidable work compared to which retreating from the objects of the senses is easy. If in the first exercise the chela learns the illusory nature of the objective world, now he encounters the delusive nature of his own subjective world. Looking for the God within he comes upon the devil; seeking soul-light, he finds darkness – so thick that he does not realize that it is a shadow. "O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon." [Milton, *Samson Agonistes* line 80] It is in that dark that we meet our fancy-created idols, our thought-created images, our desire-created phantoms. But that darkness has the peculiar power of deluding our consciousness. Very soon the sphere of darkness looks to us the region of pearly light – of soothing, restful, twilight sleep. The Maya of the objective world is but an effect caused by the Moha-delusion of this sphere of self-created subjectivity, lighted up by human passions. This is the world of Probationary Learning, which the Chela has to abandon, and he cannot do so till he understands it. The first real pitched battle of the greatest of all wars is in this region, called the Astral Light. When the Power of his Vow, made in the objective world, stirs in him, the fighter in the Astral Light feels that he is in a place where he ought not to be; that he must not listen to the sounds of these images, but to the word of the Soul within.

Theoretically every student knows that Lower Manas is different from Higher Manas, that Kama-Manas is demoniac and Buddhi-Manas divine. But the truth has to be experienced and we know the nature of the Soul's mind when we overthrow some of the enemy troops, *i.e.*, when we destroy some of our thought-created images. The great temptation for the Probationary Chela issues forth from the enhanced sense-delight when the plasticity of astral light is handled and absorbed; it is like the exhilarated state of the person who has just taken strong drink. Often, instead of fighting right away the already created images, he falls prey to the temptation of creating new ones. In the objective world we have to control the wandering mind, but here we have to fight the creative mind. Thus come a period of intense fight, and victory ensues when the soldier-soul has grasped this truth:

Ere thy Soul's mind can understand, the bud of personality must be crushed out; the worm of sense destroyed past resurrection. [Voice, p.13]

The grasping of this truth means that the Probationer has seen that he is other than the Personality, that the worm which early and late feeds upon the senses, once crushed, would lead to the death of the separative and ever-separating self which makes the Personality the supreme enemy. The glimpse of the Soul which uncovers the inimical nature of the Personality makes the fighting Probationer take refuge in that Inner Soul. And this implies some knowledge of the nature and the powers of that Soul.

Silence thy thoughts and fix thy whole attention on thy Master, whom yet thou dost not see, but whom thou feelest. [Voice, p.17]

Thyself and mind, like twins upon a line, the star which is thy goal burns overhead. [Voice, p.21]

The Master is the Higher Self, "the equivalent of *Avalokitesvara*, and the same as *Adi-Budha* ... Christos with the ancient Gnostics." [Voice, p.3, fn.] Unless this Master is felt as a Presence in Hall the second, that of Probationary Learning, entrance into the third, the Hall of Wisdom, remains closed. It is through the mind of the Soul that we touch the radiance of the God within, and it is through contact with the great Gurus that we touch the radiance of the God within Nature – Compassion Absolute.

When the mind-activity is silenced, the soul, aided by the Light of the Spirit, perceives itself as distinct and separate from the mind. Freed from Kama, it sees the possibility, nay, the certainty of a perfect unison with its Star – its Father in Heaven. In the translucent lake of the pure mind the star in high heaven reflects itself, and even that reflected influence stirs the mind to behold the glory that is – the greater glory to be. It is not sufficient to silence the thoughts; it is necessary to perceive the Star of Hope – the Parent Star, the Dhyani-Buddhic Source of our existence.

The obliterating of the internal images is the same as crushing the craving for sensuous existence. The process demands that we centre our attention on the inner Light. But turning away from internal images is not to be accompanied by turning away from the objective world. To be in the midst of objects but not to be their slave makes the fight a long one; for, in the long past we have created a whole army of personal thought-images; by our moods we have given birth to a brood of vices; by our mental indulgence we have committed many sins. One by one we have to slay them.

Woe, then, to thee, Disciple, if there is one single vice thou has not left behind Woe unto him who dares pollute one rung with miry feet His sins will raise their voices like as the jackal's laugh and sob after the sun goes down; his thoughts become an army, and bear him off a captive slave. [*Voice*, p.16-17]

This does not mean that the Probationer is expected to be flawless ere he starts, but he has to learn and attain purity ere he passes through the Golden Gate into the Hall of Wisdom, and has won the right to abide therein permanently. As a Probationer he has his day when he basks in the radiance of the Spiritual Sun, and then his night – the dark night of the Soul, during which his mind-sins laugh the jackal's laugh which is the cry of agony, terrifying to him, tempting him to his fall, nay, to his very doom. The jackals move in packs and therefore are able to hunt down sheep and even antelopes. When unable to obtain living prey they feed on carrion, and cunningly they follow cheetahs and even lions in order to finish the carcass after the latter have eaten their fill. The comparison of our lower thoughts to jackals is most apt, for they attack in packs our high thoughts and our noble aspirations, and when they cannot prey upon these living images they sniff out slumbering and dying ones and gorge on the latter – a phenomenon which is related to precipitation of Karma and the like. Also, like the jackal, our lower thought-images have an offensive odour, for they, too, like the jackal, secrete foulness from the base of their tails.

Now, we are told how we should deal with these our past creations:

One single thought about the past that thou hast left behind will drag thee down and thou wilt have to start the climb anew. Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences. Look not behind or thou art lost. [*Voice*, p.18]

If we do not choke off the memory of the past, if we dwell in it, we re-live the past *subjectively* and rejuvenate the thought- images. But now we have increased our power of thought and so those images express themselves more strongly. All students of Theosophy know that a storehouse of past Karma exists, but all do not know that in the subjective realm ghosts and elementaries of dead objective actions often work havoc.

The last quotation of the first Fragment of our textbook that we should consider is this:

Before the path is entered, thou must destroy thy lunar body, cleanse thy mind-body, and make clean thy heart. [*Voice*, p.12]

In a footnote H.P.B. explains that the astral form produced by Kama has to be destroyed. The Kama-rupa, ordinarily, is formed after the death of the body and ere the Ego goes into Devachan, freeing itself from that form. But in the life of the Probationer, as he enters the kingdom of the quickened, leaving behind that of the dead, there is the Kama-rupa phenomenon related to that of the Dweller on the Threshold. The quickened soul becomes consciously alive when, by chasing away from the field of the mind all Kama-fed thought-images, he begins to live by the power of the clean heart, *i.e.*, by the influence of Buddhi. For this dual process – dispersing the Kama-rupa and awakening Buddhi so that it can ensoul Manas, the objective world proves of great benefit.

The objective world of actions is not only valuable for enabling us to compare, to contrast and discriminatively to learn to concentrate, but it also proves a most helpful sphere when the strife of the subjective kind is on, of which mention is made above. The way the Probationer has to learn to make use of the objective world is through the right performance of duty. Duty is the axis round which his objective world rotates: mistakes made about Duty,

neglect of or dilatoriness in that which should be done, undertaking that which is not our business, etc., all become sins of omission and of commission. If a Probationer is rightly busy with real duty he finds no time for "mischief" – unconsciously done. Furthermore when attacks come from the subjective side of his lower nature, a wise engagement of the senses and the brain in objective functioning weakens the attack. Occultism advocates that we do not strengthen the enemy by brooding about him, nor by directly fighting him. Take no particular notice of the enemy, but keep the consciousness busy with protective and profitable mental and physical work. No Probationer can meditate and study hours on end and therefore calls of mundane duty like the earning of livelihood, etc., are highly beneficial and very necessary. Not the invention of special work but the doing of what there is to do expands the field of duty till humanity becomes our family and the world our country. Duty is the Divinity that shapes our objective world to perfection: Duty is the God of the objective world – that is the Truth: OM TAT SAT.

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