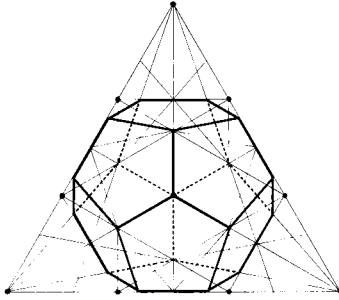


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# VIDYA

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THEOSOPHY, in its abstract meaning, is Divine Wisdom, or the aggregate of the knowledge and wisdom that underlie the Universe—the homogeneity of eternal GOOD; and in its concrete sense it is the sum total of the same as allotted to man by nature on this earth.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

*Vidya*, or Knowledge, points to the timeless *Theosophia*, the source and synthesis of science, religion and philosophy. This publication is consecrated to the keynote sounded by the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, who have appeared to all peoples, throughout all ages. As a journal of inquiry into the Teachings of Theosophy and its apt applications to daily life, VIDYA is offered to all who seek the path of spiritual self-regeneration in the service of humanity.

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सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

THERE IS NO RELIGION HIGHER THAN TRUTH



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## GRATITUDE AND RESPONSIBILITY

**G**ratitude to the spiritual Teachers of Humanity goes hand-in-hand with an awakened sense of responsibility. We see the manifold suffering of existence in Kali Yuga, yet we may also lift our eyes to the great exemplars of Compassion and Wisdom. How may we serve their Cause? Some of us know the painful

reality of ‘doing the right thing for the wrong reason’ and how this invariably embeds us in more difficult karma. Uncompromising self-reflection about one’s actions and motives is needed. The Mahatmas remind us, “If you wish to know us, study our philosophy. If you wish to serve us, serve our humanity.” True gratitude can only come about after recognition of the great gifts of wisdom and compassion in a Teacher or teaching.

Study, contemplation, and joyous meditation transform our consciousness to become more capable of rendering true service to others. That assistance could be on the physical plane, as we must not disregard the importance of “the bread which feeds the shadow.” All people deserve clean water, food, and adequate housing. But the most potent aid would be engaging *Buddhi*, *Manas*, or the higher octaves of *Kama*. One could generate a powerful feeling of love and good will on behalf of the spiritually suffering. A sparkling eye, gentle speech (music in the mouth of the virtuous), and multivalent facets of humble kindness may reflect outward spontaneously as long as the Buddhist ray is kept active. Thus one may affirm the dignity of the higher Self in all, and in so doing, be a responsible user of the gifts of *Buddhi-Manas*.

*Gentle speech flows from love, is free from  
deceit, and is as music in the mouth of the virtuous.  
Gentle speech, with a cheerful countenance,  
surpasses the gift of the wealthy.*

THIRUKKURAL

# ***THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE:* PATH OF COMPASSION<sup>1</sup>**

**L**et us explore together *The Voice of the Silence* as the path of compassion and let us be inspired to bring this compassion into our everyday lives. The book itself was written in 1889 by H.P. Blavatsky. Many students consider it to be the most precious pearl of all theosophical literature. We will go even further. We will say that it strikes the keynote necessary for being able, in an intuitive way, to truly penetrate her other literature, such as *The Secret Doctrine*, *Isis Unveiled* and all her articles, because it strikes the keynote of compassion. It is the path of the heart that opens us up for another type of understanding instead of pure intellection. We may not at all understand the terminology when we first encounter *The Voice of the Silence*. But there is something in this beautiful poetry that awakens our soul memory — reminiscence, a remembrance, a resonance from some time long ago — and it awakens the memory of who we truly are as spiritual beings. In that sense, it constitutes a process of initiation, and it activates a very powerful integration of all aspects of our selves. But it also invites us into the current of all previous and all future enlightened beings. We now enter what is called the great chain, the golden chain, the Guardian Wall, or the *Guruparampara* chain. It implies that we are always being encouraged by those who have gone before, and hopefully we will be of encouragement to those who come after.

Imagine a little white, blurred point within a dull black background. We found this to be a good symbol for the Voice

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<sup>1</sup> Transcription of talk given at the International Theosophy Conference, August 2025

of the Silence, the voice within each one of us. We may have heard it in the moments we listen to our intuition, or the voice of conscience. But mainly it begins to be more audible when we decide to ask those important questions in life: Who am I? How does it all work? and What is the purpose of my life? But we also know in our everyday life, full of stress, full of all kinds of troublesome tasks we have to take care of, and the global situation, with all its environmental problems, political problems, wars, etc., that it's very hard to discern this Voice, the Voice of the Silence. Because of all the static constantly disturbing us, it is a voice that seems to be very faint in the beginning.

Now the book is divided into three fragments, and for this talk, we have chosen to give them three different keywords: seek, find and share.

### **FRAGMENT I, *The Voice of The Silence*: SEEK**

To Fragment One, which is called *The Voice of the Silence*, we may apply the keyword—Seek. This is a type of preparation where we have to find out who we truly are as spiritual beings. We have to move through what is called *pratyahara* to *dharana*. *Pratyahara*, extremely simplified, is when we are in total control of our senses. For example, I walk down the road. I walk past a Starbuck's Café. I notice the lovely smell of freshly brewed coffee, and I say to myself, "Oh, I need a coffee." A couple of seconds later, I remind myself that I have just finished my breakfast. I just had my cup of coffee, but this is a little bit how the senses works. They make us think that we desire something before we even know of its existence. So, we have to be able, in that sense, to practice *dharana*, which is the focusing of the mind. It is concentration, the first step in all true

meditation. So, the first important question to focus on is, Who am I? And why is it so hard to find out who I really am? What is the main obstacle to it? *The Voice of the Silence* has the beautiful answer:

The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real. Let the  
Disciple slay the Slayer.

In order to be able to slay the slayer, we need to understand how that mind works, and here is one attempt to try and understand it.

The mind is a vast field of experience. It has been called the instrument of the inner spiritual man. And different aspects of the mind open up to us, depending on our point of identification. Say that I have a very personal point of identification. If I limit my point of identification to the persona, it means that I use only a very narrow sliver of the mind. I use that aspect of the mind which tends to separateness, tends to selfishness. It tends towards the attitude, What can I get out of this?

Now, as we begin to walk the spiritual path, we begin to identify with something else. We begin to see that there is that point of identification called “Individuality”, which comes from the latin word *individuus*, which means indivisible. It gives a sense of “I-am-I”.

“I-am-I”—whether I am a baby, a teenager, a mature person, or aged. There is that golden thread which runs from birth to death, but also beyond, from life to life to life, until we are fully realized as spiritual beings. And of course, when I start to identify with this, instead of the *persona*, a totally new vista of the mind opens up, a vista, you could say, that leads to larger questions: How can I contribute? How can I become less selfish? How can I go beyond the idea of separateness?

Then there’s also a universal aspect or point of identification, the “I AM” identification. That is the

identification with the One Universal Consciousness, the realization that the individual is but an aspect of the Universal One. And this, of course, for a fully realized being, makes an immense difference.

A fully realized being can move through the different layers of the mind and has aligned all three points of identification. These different layers of the mind are described in the first fragment as the Three Halls. We have, for example, the Hall of Ignorance, which is that state of mind where we are ignorant of everything but the purely material and selfish. Next is the Hall of Learning, where the consciousness is expanding and we are seeing different aspects of life. There's something more to it. There's the whole astral world to be explored. And then there's the Hall of Wisdom, the hall of our true spiritual nature. It is in this hall that we find all the inspiration for a compassionate life. And beyond that, it is said, we have the Veil of Bliss, which is also described as sevenfold.

Now if we try to break it down to something that may be a bit more understandable, we can view it in the perspective of a twenty-four hour cycle. We have to move from the Hall of Ignorance, the state of waking life, through the Hall of Learning, the dreaming state, the astral plane. Then we have to move into the third hall, the dreamless sleep state. And in order to do this consciously with awareness, we have to develop that which is called the Witness Position. We need to train ourselves when we put our head on the pillow and let the body go to sleep, to be able to move consciously into the dreaming state, and then from the dreaming state into the dreamless, and then bring all the spiritual inspiration and intuitions back through the dreaming state, back to the waking state. And this is something we can practice every night.

So, one way to practice this as a way to strengthen the Witness Position, apart from trying to be consciously

present in everyday life, in every moment, is to follow Pythagoras' advice and make a review of the past day before going to sleep. To make that conscious review of how the day has been, just like we have a review at the end of this life. We know from those individuals who have had near-death experiences how one may, in a very few seconds, review an entire life. So here we are trying to practice it consciously—not judging, not saying this is bad or this is good—but rather trying to remain in the Witness Position. This will facilitate our ability to move from waking, through dreaming, to the dreamless state and back consciously. Most probably as an extension of this, it will also facilitate the process of retaining conscious memories from life to life.

## **FRAGMENT II, *The Two Paths*: FIND**

Now let's try and explore the second fragment, *The Two Paths*. The key word we may apply here is: Find. We have to discover what the Two Paths are about. And we have to be able to move from *dharana*, the concentration of the mind, into the state of contemplation, which is a kind of prolonged *dharana*, of focus. For example, when we study metaphysical literature, we do not only have to be able to focus on what we are reading, but we actually have to try to penetrate into the words, into the ideas themselves, in order to understand what they truly mean, what it means from an intuitive perspective. It is similar to meeting with another person in everyday life. When we truly try to listen to someone, we have to focus and be fully present. But we also have to maintain that focus, so when the person tells us something important, he or she feels that they are truly being listened to; and not merely that, but also understood.

So here in the second fragment we find the terms "Liberation" and "Renunciation", and the statement that:

The PATH is one, Disciple, yet in the end, twofold.

Marked are its stages by four and seven Portals.

At one end—bliss immediate, and at the other—bliss deferred.

Both are of merit the reward: the choice is thine.

So, let's see if we can make this a little bit more understandable. What follows, of course, is only one way of looking upon it and understanding it. We must remember it's a very limited view; but still, we would like to share it with you.

Stage One has to do with the four portals that lead to liberation from the perspective of a 24-hour cycle, previously mentioned. We have to be able to consciously transition without losing our conscious awareness, from the different states already discussed; go going through waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, *Turiya* and back. Now, when we are able to do that, we will also be able to train ourselves to go from one life to the next life consciously, until we have, you could say, worked out our karma. A being that has achieved this has won the right to the bliss of Nirvana, and can choose Liberation and go into Nirvana to realize individual bliss.

Stage the Second has to do with Renunciation and the seven portals. Such a being, a Bodhisattva of Compassion, sometimes called a *Nirmanakaya*, has also to go through the first stage of Liberation. But instead of choosing to go into Nirvana for the individual state of bliss, they choose to remain until every other sentient being has reached the same point. Now, behind each of the seven portals is an occult force that emanates straight from the seven *Dhyani Buddhas*, or the seven different aspects of One Universal Consciousness. The Bodhisattva of Compassion,

or *Nirmanakaya*, needs to be able to handle and utilize these seven forces in order to help all sentient beings in all aspects of the three worlds.

To sum it up, the Bodhisattva of Compassion is a being who has transcended both Samsara and Nirvana, has transcended all material desires, but also the desire for individual spiritual bliss. In one sense, you could say that to choose Liberation is to hold the awareness of the timeless within time. Whereas, Renunciation is the ability to unfold the Timeless in time. It means that a Bodhisattva of Compassion needs to abide in Timelessness and operate from that Timelessness in order to help all sentient beings.

Never will I seek nor receive private individual salvation. Never will I enter into final peace alone. But forever and everywhere will I live and strive for the redemption of every sentient being throughout the world from the bonds of conditioned existence.

The Pledge of Kwan-Yin

We may learn to practice this Pledge in everyday life. One way to reinforce it is to hold it as the final thought before going to sleep, and also the first thought upon waking. In Theosophical teaching the final thought in this life is said to have an influence on the after-death states, as well as on the coming incarnation. Now, to practice maintaining our motivation for compassionate service, we can practice reminding ourselves of the pledge before going to bed, and recalling it as the first thought when we wake up. This will help to maintain the motivation of Renunciation.

### FRAGMENT III, *The Seven Portals*: SHARE

Let us now move into the last fragment, the “Seven Portals”. The key word here is: Share. What fun would it be to acquire wisdom if we could not share it? Self-Realization is the ability to move from *Dhyana*, extended concentration, into contemplation, penetrating the ideas themselves or getting to the heart of any matter; and then to remain in that state of *Samadhi*, which is a conscious, persistent, continued awareness, compassionate in every moment, in every thought, in every word, in every deed.

Self-Realization, from that perspective, is summed up in this beautiful imperative, “act for and as the self of all sentient beings” in whatever you do. And of course, we may ask ourselves at the beginning of the path, Who am I?—I who know so little—do I really have anything valuable to share? And this beautiful sentence from *The Voice* says;

Point out the “Way”—however dimly, and lost among the host—as does the evening star to those who tread their path in darkness.

These critical lines remind us that we are always both student and teacher at the same time. If we tend to focus on the student role, we may get crystallized in it, and we will never develop Self-reliance. We will be like little baby birds who open their beaks to continuously receive information from the outside. On the other hand, if we crystallize in a teacher role, we will most certainly establish the foundation for spiritual pride. So, the thing to realize here is the quality of fluidity. We always have to learn, but we also have to share what we have learned in order to facilitate a flow of mind, preventing crystallization in any kind of role.

Now, let’s look more closely at the Path. It has been said that we cannot travel the on path before we have become that path itself. One way of viewing this is to regard the

Path as a state of consciousness. The *Antaskarana* is said to be a ladder with seven different levels. We are told that it is that state of consciousness which connects the lower everyday mind with the higher mind. This would imply that each time we realize a metaphysical idea and put it into an ethical act of compassion in everyday life, we are in that state. We have become the Path, if only for a brief moment. But of course, only a true, fully SELF-realized being can achieve this all the time. We very often fall off the path and then we climb up again. But you know, it doesn't matter how many times we fall as long as we climb up again.

The very treading of the path is associated with the cultivation of virtues. And the virtue, you could say, constitutes the right relationship between the whole and the part. There has to be a synchronicity between the two. In that sense, practicing the *Paramitas* is a calibration of our own being to the One Being.

But it has also been said that the *Paramitas* are only realized within the background of the Unmanifested. And what does that mean? One way of understanding this is that these are not ethical rules imposed on us from the outside. But they are actually occult forces within ourselves that get activated as we spiritually mature. So it's a process of maturation that needs to come from the inside; and gradually, so that it is our own and not imposed from the outside. We have to realize that a *Paramita* is an occult force, as we said before, a force that is hidden behind each of those portals. We ourselves constitute the golden keys, so when we have developed our capacity, our intuition, our Buddhist quality of discernment, we will be able to open up those portals wisely, with compassion. They will be forces that activate and transform our whole nature.

The Kwan-Yin pledge that we have taken makes us a stronger focus for Karma. It initiates a process of intensified Karma, and we will see how this works. But keep in mind it

is a process of transformation. It is necessary for everything which is not compatible with the aim and practice of these *Paramitas*, or occult forces, to come up to the surface. That is, it will become conscious in our own mind in order that we can start to transform it.

Now let's look at the *Paramitas* one by one.

The first *Paramita* is *Dana*, "the key of charity and love immortal". It strikes the keynote for our whole spiritual journey, a key-note of compassion. And I don't know how it is for you, but very often when I try to practice this in everyday life, I stumble. I repeatedly find myself irritated, critical, and stuck in all those qualities that are actually working against *Dana*. And of course, it's easy in such a position to lose hope and feel despair. But remember, this is actually a good proof that the process is working, because it is bringing everything to the surface that is not compatible with *Dana*. The same goes for the second *Paramita*, *Shila*, "the key of Harmony in word and act, the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for Karmic action." Just think for a moment what a challenge it is to express compassion in your thoughts, words and actions simultaneously, leaving no trace behind except compassion and love, which leaves no further room for karmic action. I dare say, that such a resolve is more challenging than walking a tightrope over the Grand Canyon.

Let's move to the third *Paramita*: *Kshanti*, "patience sweet that not can ruffle", the ability to be compassionate and to see unity in diversity the whole time. It is to see that if someone is different, it does not mean they are "less than", because they are not me ... because they are "other." *Kshanti* sees unity, but in diversity. And of course, this is something we know in moments of meditation. But what about the moment in my car heading down the freeway

when someone cuts me off. Well, there goes the patience! I become impatient. I become irritable. So, all these things come up to the surface and need to be taken care of. But impatience is so much more. Impatience is also the inability to stay in the present moment. Whereas patience is the ability to stay in the Witness Position, the ability to be here and now, continuously.

Now let us look at the fourth *Paramita*, that of *Viraga*, “indifference to pleasure and to pain, illusion conquered, truth alone perceived”, transcending likes and dislikes. This is the *Paramita* of balance. We have listed three *Paramitas* before this one; and there are three after. So here you can go both ways; you may go up or down.

I would present this challenge to you: think back to the moment when you woke up this morning, and now connect it to this point where you are now. How many likes and dislikes have you been able to detect in yourself? Probably quite a few, starting with “The coffee that is not strong enough”; “I like marmalade”; “I don’t like cheese”; I like this, but do not like that, and so forth. Therefore, *Viraga* is a tremendous task: to be able to transcend likes and dislikes. It is the ability to transcend the three *Gunas*, the qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and move into what is sometimes called the *Nirguna* state. It is also the ability to do what is described in the fourth book of Patanjali: Isolation from the modifications of the mind, so that they don’t affect the soul. When this takes place, even if it is just for a brief moment at a time—for example, when we are actually able to transcend our personal self, its likes and dislikes, and compassionately act for another human being—then what we find is the awakening of the force described in the fifth *Paramita* named *Virya*. This is the “dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal truth out of the mire of life terrestrial”. It is the very force of Divine Will and Compassion which makes us transcend

all our likes and dislikes, and moves us into yet another state of consciousness: that of the sixth *Paramita*, called *Dhyana*. “*Dhyana*, whose Golden Gate once open, leads the Narjol towards the realm of SAT eternal and its ceaseless contemplation.”

Of course, when these *Paramitas* are described, they are described from the point of view of perfection or perfectibility. But any moment that we experience a *Paramita* itself constitutes a golden moment. It is important to be charitable even towards your own personality; to see yourself as a guiding force for that personality so that it moves in the right direction and transforms into an useful instrument for the inner spiritual being. Such a moment is when we attain to ceaseless contemplation of Truth, which will in turn blossom forth as the seventh *Paramita: Prajna* or divine wisdom. But even *Prajna* is sevenfold, we are told, and the force to unlock it is described “the key to which makes of a man a god, creating him a Bodhisattva, son of the Dhyânis.”

This is the spiritual potential within each one of us, and which is in the heart of all sentient beings, waiting to be realized. A good practice for the beginner may be to focus on one *Paramita* for each day of the week. In so doing we are reminded of the old saying: that the way to realize something is to continuously dwell upon it. When we strike the specific *Paramita* as a keynote for each day of the week, or however we want to practice it, it activates that force in ourselves, and in this way, it aids the process of realization. One of the most beautiful quotes from *The Voice of the Silence* is found in the third fragment.

Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of LAWS eternal Harmony, Alaya's SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting Right and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal. The more thou dost become at one

with it, thy being melted in its Being, the more thy Soul unites with that which IS, the more thy wilt become COMPASSION ABSOLUTE.

So, to conclude, whenever we have a moment of despair, it may be wise to remind ourselves of the Master's words from the Mahatma Letters. "Try, ever keep trying."



**Ring in the valient man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.**

**ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON**

## ASTRAL INTOXICATION

**T**here is such a thing as being intoxicated in the course of an unwise pursuit of what we erroneously imagine is spirituality. In the Christian Bible it is very wisely directed to “prove all” and to hold only to that which is good; this advice is just as important to the student of occultism who thinks that he has separated himself from those “inferior” people engaged either in following a dogma or in tipping tables for messages from deceased relatives—or enemies—as it is to spiritists who believe in the “summerland” and “returning spirits.”

The placid surface of the sea of spirit is the only mirror in which can be caught undisturbed the reflections of spiritual things. When a student starts upon the path and begins to see spots of light flash out now and then, or balls of golden fire roll past him, it does not mean that he is beginning to see the real Self—pure spirit. A moment of deepest peace or wonderful revealings given to the student, is not the awful moment when one is about to see his spiritual guide, much less his own soul. Nor are psychical splashes of blue flame, nor visions of things that afterwards come to pass, nor sights of small sections of the astral light with its wonderful photographs of past or future, nor the sudden ringing of distant fairy-like bells, any proof that you are cultivating spirituality. These things, and still more curious things, will occur when you have passed a little distance on the way, but they are only the mere outposts of a new land which is itself wholly material, and only one remove from the plane of gross physical consciousness.

The liability to be carried off and intoxicated by these phenomena is to be guarded against. We should watch, note and discriminate in all these cases; place them down

for future reference, to be related to some law, or for comparison with other circumstances of a like sort. The power that Nature has of deluding us is endless, and if we stop at these matters she will let us go no further. It is not that any person or power in nature has declared that if we do so and so we must stop, but when one is carried off by what Boehme calls "God's wonders," the result is an intoxication that produces confusion of the intellect. Were one, for instance, to regard every picture seen in the astral light as a spiritual experience, he might truly after a while brook no contradiction upon the subject, but that would be merely because he was drunk with this kind of wine. While he proceeded with his indulgence and neglected his true progress, which is always dependent upon his purity of motive and conquest of his known or ascertain-able defects, nature went on accumulating the store of illusory appearances with which he satiated himself.

It is certain that any student who devotes himself to these astral happenings will see them increase. But were our whole life devoted to and rewarded by an enormous succession of phenomena, it is also equally certain that the casting off of the body would be the end of all that sort of experience, without our having added really anything to our stock of true knowledge.

The astral plane, which is the same as that of our psychic senses, is as full of strange sights and sounds as an untrodden South American forest, and has to be well understood before the student can stay there long without danger. While we can overcome the dangers of a forest by the use of human inventions, whose entire object is the physical destruction of the noxious things encountered there, we have no such aids when treading the astral labyrinth. We may be physically brave and say that no fear can enter into us, but no untrained or merely curious seeker is able to

say just what effect will result to his outer senses from the attack or influence encountered by the psychical senses.

And the person who revolves selfishly around himself as a center is in greater danger of delusion than any one else, for he has not the assistance that comes from being united in thought with all other sincere seekers. One may stand in a dark house where none of the objects can be distinguished and quite plainly see all that is illuminated outside; in the same way we can see from out of the blackness of our own house—our hearts—the objects now and then illuminated outside by the astral light; but we gain nothing. We must first dispel the *inner* darkness before trying to see into the darkness without; we must know *ourselves* before knowing things extraneous to ourselves.

This is not the road that seems easiest to students. Most of them find it far pleasanter and, as they think, faster work, to look on all these outside allurements, and to cultivate all psychic senses, to the exclusion of real spiritual work.

The true road is plain and easy to find, it is so easy that very many would-be students miss it because they cannot believe it to be so simple.

“The way lies through the heart”;  
 Ask there and wander not;  
 Knock loud, nor hesitate  
 Because at first the sounds  
 Reverberating, seem to mock thee.  
 Nor, when the door swings wide,  
 Revealing shadows black as night,  
 Must thou recoil.  
 Within, the Master’s messengers  
 Have waited patiently:  
 That Master is Thyself!

# SANKHYA YOGA

The term 'Sankhya' is ultimately derived from the Sanskrit root *khya*, meaning 'to know', and the prefix *san*, 'exact'. Exact knowing is most adequately represented by Sankhya, 'number', and since the precision of numbers requires meticulous discernment, Sankhya is that *darshana* which involves a thorough discernment of reality and is expressed through the enumeration of diverse categories of existence. Philosophically, Sankhya is dualistic in its discernment of the Self (*purusha*) from the non-self (*prakriti*). In distinguishing sharply between *purusha*, Self or Spirit, on the one hand, and *prakriti*, non-self or matter, on the other, the Sankhya standpoint requires a rigorous redefinition of numerous terms used by various schools. Even though later Sankhya freely drew from the Vedic-Upanishadic storehouse of wisdom which intimates a rich variety of philosophical views, its earliest concern does not appear to have been philosophical in the sense of delineating a comprehensive conceptual scheme which describes and explains reality. Early Sankhya asked, "What is real?" and only later on added the question, "How does it all fit together?"

Enumerations of the categories of reality varied with individual thinkers and historical periods, but the standard classification of twenty-five *tattvas* or fundamental principles of reality is useful for a general understanding of the *darshana*. Simply stated, Sankhya holds that two radically distinct realities exist: *purusha*, which can be translated 'Spirit', 'Self' or 'pure consciousness', and *mulaprakriti*, or 'pre-cosmic matter', 'non-self' or 'materiality'. Nothing can be predicated of *purusha* except as a corrective negation; no positive attribute, process

or intention can be affirmed of it, though it is behind all the activity of the world. It might be called the Perceiver or the Witness, but, strictly speaking, no intentionality can be implied by these words, and so *purusha* cannot be conceived primarily as a knower. *Mulaprakriti*, however, can be understood as pure potential because it undergoes ceaseless transformation at several levels. Thus, of the twenty-five traditional *tattvas*, only these two are distinct. The remaining twenty-three are transformations or modifications of *mulaprakriti*. *Purusha* and *mulaprakriti* stand outside conceptual cognition, which arises within the flux of the other *tattvas*. They abide outside space and time, are simple, independent and inherently unchanging, and they have no relation to one another apart from their universal, simultaneous and mutual presence.

*Mulaprakriti* is characterized by three qualities or *gunas*: *sattva* or intelligent and noetic activity, *rajas* or passionate and compulsive activity, and *tamas* or ignorant and impotent lethargy, represented in the Upanishads by the colours white, red and black. If *mulaprakriti* were the only ultimate reality, its qualities would have forever remained in a homogeneous balance, without undergoing change, evolution or transformation. Since *purusha* is co-present with *mulaprakriti*, the symmetrical homogeneity of *mulaprakriti* was disturbed, and this broken symmetry resulted in a progressive differentiation which became the world of ordinary experience. True knowledge or pure cognition demands a return to that primordial stillness which marks the utter disentanglement of Self from non-self. The process which moved the *gunas* out of their perfect mutual balance cannot be described or even alluded to through analogies, in part because the process occurred outside space and time (and gave rise to them), and in part because no description of what initiated this universal transformation can be given in the language of logically subsequent and

therefore necessarily less universal change. In other words, all transformation known to the intellect occurs in some context—minimally that of the intellect itself—whilst the primordial process of transformation occurred out of all context, save for the mere co-presence of *purusha* and *mulaprakriti*.

This imbalance gave rise, first of all, logically speaking, to *mahat* or *buddhi*. These terms refer to universal consciousness, primordial consciousness or intellect in the classical and neo-Platonic sense of the word. *Mahat* in turn gave rise to *ahankara*, the sense of ‘I’ or egoity. (*Ahankara* literally means ‘I-making’.) Egoity as a principle or *tattva* generated a host of offspring or evolutes, the first of which was *Manas* or mind, which is both the capacity for sensation and the mental ability to act, or intellectual volition. It also produced the five *buddhindriyas* or capacities for sensation: *shrota* (hearing), *tvac* (touching), *chaksus* (seeing), *rasana* (tasting) and *ghrana* (smelling). In addition to sensation, *ahankara* gave rise to their dynamic and material correlates, the five *karmendriyas* or capacities for action, and the five *tanmatras* or subtle elements. The five *karmendriyas* are *vach* (speaking), *pani* (grasping), *pada* (moving), *payu* (eliminating) and *upastha* (procreating), whilst the five *tanmatras* include *shabda* (sound), *sparsha* (touch), *rupa* (form), *rasa* (taste) and *gandha* (smell). The *tanmatras* are called ‘subtle’ because they produce the *mahabhutas* or gross elements which can be perceived by ordinary human beings. They are *akasha* (aether or empirical space), *vayu* (air), *tejas* (fire, and by extension, light), *ap* (water) and *prithivi* (earth).

This seemingly elaborate system of the elements of existence (*tattvas*) is a rigorous attempt to reduce the kaleidoscope of reality to its simplest comprehensible components, without either engaging in a reductionism

which explains away or denies what does not fit its classification, or falling prey to a facile monism which avoids a serious examination of visible and invisible Nature. Throughout the long history of Sankhya thought, enumerations have varied, but this general classification has held firm. Whilst some philosophers have suggested alternative orders of evolution, for instance, making the subtle elements give rise to the capacities for sensation and action, Ishvarakrishna expressed the classical consensus in offering this classification of twenty-five *tattvas*.

Once the fundamental enumeration was understood, Sankhya thinkers arranged the *tattvas* by sets to grasp more clearly their relationships to one another. At the most general level, *purusha* is neither generated nor generating, whilst *mulaprakriti* is ungenerated but generating. *Buddhi*, *ahankara* and the *tanmatras* are both generated and generating, and *Manas*, the *buddhindriyas*, *karmendriyas* and *mahabhutas* are generated and do not generate anything in turn. In terms of their mutual relationships, one can speak of kinds of *tattvas* and indicate an order of dependence from the standpoint of the material world.

No matter how subtle and elaborate the analysis, however, one has at best described ways in which consciousness functions in *prakriti*, the material world. If one affirms that *purusha* and *prakriti* are radically and fundamentally separate, one cannot avoid the challenge which vexed Descartes: how can *res cogitans*, thinking substance, be in any way connected with *res extensa*, extended (material) substance? Sankhya avoided the most fundamental problem of Cartesian dualism by willingly admitting that there can be no connection, linkage or interaction between *purusha* and *prakriti*. Since consciousness is a fact, this exceptional claim involved a redefinition of consciousness itself. Consciousness is

necessarily transcendent, unconnected with *prakriti*, and therefore it can have neither cognitive nor intuitive awareness, since those are activities which involve some centre or egoity and surrounding field from which it separates itself or with which it identifies. Egoity or perspective requires some mode of action, and all action involves the *gunas*, which belong exclusively to *prakriti*. Consciousness, *purusha*, is mere presence, *sakshitva*, without action, dynamics or content. Awareness, *chittavritti*, is therefore a function of *prakriti*, even though it would not have come into being—any more than anything would have evolved or the *gunas* would have become unstable—without the universal presence of *purusha*. Thus it is said that *purusha* is unique in that it is neither generated nor generating, whereas all other *tattvas* are either generating, generated or both.

In this view, mind is material. Given its capacity for awareness, it can intuit the presence of *purusha*, but it is not that *purusha*. All mental functions are part of the complex activity of *prakriti*. Consciousness is bare subjectivity without a shadow of objective content, and it cannot be said to have goals, desires or intentions. *Purusha* can be said to exist (*sat*)—indeed, it necessarily exists—and its essential and sole specifiable nature is *chit*, consciousness. Unlike the Vedantin *Atman*, however, it cannot also be said to be *ananda*, bliss, for *purusha* is the pure witness, *sakshi*, with no causal connection to or participation in *prakriti*. Yet it is necessary, for the *gunas* could not be said to be active save in the presence of some principle of sentience. Without *purusha* there could be no *prakriti*. This is not the simple idealistic and phenomenological standpoint summarized in Berkeley's famous dictum, *esse est percipi*, "to be is to be perceived". Rather, it is closer to the recognition grounded in Newtonian mechanics that, should the universe achieve a condition of total entropy, it could not be

said to exist, for there would be no possibility of differentiation in it. Nor could its existence be denied. The presence of *purusha*, according to Sankhya, is as necessary as is its utter lack of content.

Given the distinction between unqualified, unmodified subjectivity as true or pure consciousness, and awareness, which is the qualified appearance of consciousness in the world, consciousness appears as what it cannot be. It appears to cause and initiate, but cannot do so, since *purusha* cannot be said to be active in any sense; it appears to entertain ideas and chains of thought, but it can in reality do neither. Rather, the action of the *gunas* appears as the activity of consciousness until the actual nature of consciousness is realized. The extreme break with previous understanding resulting from this realization—that consciousness has no content and that content is not conscious—is emancipation, the freeing of *purusha* from false bondage to *prakriti*. It is akin to the Vedantin realization of *Atman* free of any taint of *maya*, and the Buddhist realization of *shunyata*. Philosophical conceptualization is incapable of describing this realization, for pure consciousness can only appear, even to the subtlest cognitive understanding, as nothing. For Sankhya, *purusha* is not nothing, but it is nothing that partakes of *prakriti* (which all awareness does).

Sankhya's unusual distinction between consciousness and what are ordinarily considered its functions and contents implies an operational view of *purusha*. Even though no properties can be predicated of *purusha*, the mind or intellect intuits the necessity of consciousness behind it, as it were. That is, the mind becomes aware that it is not itself pure consciousness. Since this awareness arises in individual minds, *purusha* is recognized by one or another egoity. Without being able to attribute qualities to *purusha*, it must therefore be treated philosophically as a plurality. Hence it is

said that there are literally innumerable *purushas*, none of which have any distinguishing characteristics. The Leibnizian law of the identity of indiscernibles cannot be applied to *purusha*, despite the philosophical temptation to do so, precisely because philosophy necessarily stops at the limit of *prakriti*. *Purusha* is outside space and time, and so is also beyond space-time identities. Since the minimum requirements of differentiation involve at least an indirect reference to either space or time, their negation in the concept of indiscernibility also involves such a reference, and cannot be applied to *purusha*. Even though Sankhya affirms a plurality of *purushas*, this stance is less the result of metaphysical certitude than of the limitations imposed by consistency of method. The plurality of *purushas* is the consequence of the limits of understanding.

Within the enormous and diverse history of Indian thought, the six *darshanas* viewed themselves and one another in two ways. Internally, each standpoint sought clarity, completeness and consistency without reference to other *darshanas*. Since, however, the *darshanas* were committed to the proposition that they were six separate and viable perspectives on the same reality, they readily drew upon one another's insights and terminology and forged mutually dependent relationships. They were less concerned with declaring one another true or false than with understanding the value and limitations of each in respect to a complete realization of the ultimate and divine nature of things. Whilst some Western philosophers have pointed to the unprovable Indian presupposition that the heart of existence is divine, the *darshanas* reverse this standpoint by affirming that the core of reality is, almost definitionally, the only basis for thinking of the divine. In other words, reality is the criterion of the divine, and no other standard can make philosophical sense of the sacred, much less give it a practical place in

human psychology and ethics. In their later developments, the *darshanas* strengthened their internal conceptual structures and ethical architectonics by taking one another's positions as foils for self-clarification. Earlier developments were absorbed into later understanding and exposition. Historically, Sankhya assimilated and redefined much of what had originally belonged to Nyaya and Vaishesika, and even Mimansa, only to find much of its terminology and psychology incorporated into Vedanta, the most trenchantly philosophical of the *darshanas*. At the same time, later Sankhya borrowed freely from Vedantin philosophical concepts to rethink its own philosophical difficulties.

Despite Sankhya's unique distinction between consciousness and awareness, which allowed it to preserve its fundamental dualism in the face of monistic arguments—and thereby avoid the metaphysical problems attending monistic views—it could not avoid one fundamental philosophical question: What is it to say that *prakriti* is dynamic because of the presence of *purusha*? To say that *prakriti* reflects the presence of *purusha*, or that *purusha* is reflected in *prakriti*, preserves a rigid distinction between the two, for neither an object reflected in a mirror nor the mirror is affected by the other. But Sankhya characterizes the ordinary human condition as one of suffering, which is the manifest expression of the condition of *avidya*, ignorance. This condition arises because *purusha* falsely identifies with *prakriti* and its evolutes. Liberation, *mukti*, is the result of *viveka*, discrimination, which is the highest knowledge. Even though *viveka* might be equated with pure perception as the *sakshi* or Witness, the process of attaining it suggests either an intention on the part of *purusha* or a response on the part of *prakriti*, if not both. How then can *purusha* be said to have no relation, including no passive relation, to *prakriti*? Even Ishvarakrishna's

enchanting metaphor of the dancer before the host of spectators does not answer the question, for there is a significant relationship between performer and audience.

Such questions are worthy of notice but are misplaced from the Sankhya standpoint. If philosophical understanding is inherently limited to the functions of the mind (which is an evolute of *prakriti*), it can encompass neither total awareness (*purusha*) nor the fact that both *purusha* and *prakriti* exist. This is the supreme and unanswerable mystery of Sankhya philosophy, the point at which Sankhya declares that questions must have an end. It is not, however, an unaskable or meaningless question. If its answer cannot be found in philosophy, that is because it is dissolved in *mukti*, freedom from ignorance, through perfect *viveka*, discrimination. In Sankhya as in Vedanta, philosophy ends where realization begins. Philosophy does not resolve the ultimate questions, even though it brings great clarity to cognition. Philosophy prepares, refines and orients the mind towards a significantly different activity, broadly called 'meditation', the rigorous cultivation of clarity of discrimination and concentrated, pellucid insight. The possibility of this is provided for by Sankhya metaphysics through its stress on the asymmetry between *purusha* and *prakriti*, despite their co-presence. *Prakriti* depends on *purusha*, but *purusha* is independent of everything; *purusha* is pure consciousness, whilst *prakriti* is unself-conscious. *Prakriti* continues to evolve because individual selves in it do not realize that they are really *purusha* and, therefore, can separate themselves from *prakriti*, whilst there can never be complete annihilation of everything or of primordial matter.

Whereas Yoga accepted the postulates of Sankhya and also utilized its categories and classifications, all these being in accord with the experiences of developed *yogins*, there

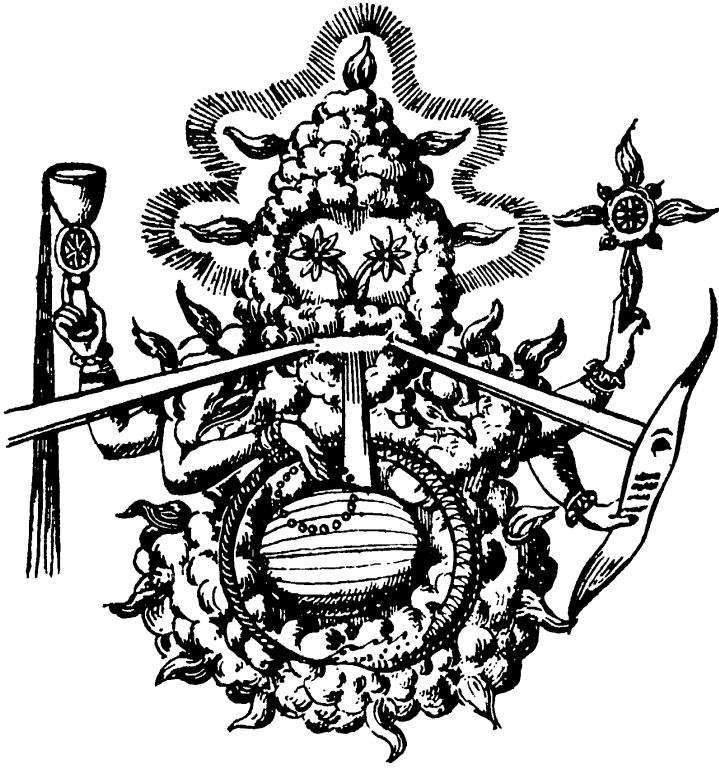


are significant divergences between Yoga and Sankhya. The oldest Yoga could have been agnostic in the sense implicit in the *Rig Veda* Hymn to Creation, but Patanjali's Yoga is distinctly theistic, diverging in this way from atheistic Sankhya. Whilst Sankhya is a speculative system, or at least a conceptual framework, Yoga is explicitly experiential and therefore linked to an established as well as evolving consensus among advanced *yogins*. This is both illustrated and reinforced by the fact that whereas Sankhya maps out the inner world of disciplined ideation

in terms of thirteen evolutes—*buddhi*, *ahankara*, *Manas* and the ten *indriyas*—Patanjali's Yoga subsumes all these under *chitta* or consciousness, which is resilient, elastic and dynamic, including the known, the conceivable, the cosmic as well as the unknown. Whereas Sankhya is one of the most self-sufficient or closed systems, Yoga retains, as a term and in its philosophy, a conspicuously open texture which characterizes all Indian thought at its best. From the Vedic hymns to even contemporary discourse, it is always open-ended in reference to cosmic and human evolution, degrees of adeptship and levels of initiatory illumination. It is ever seeing, reaching and aspiring, beyond the boundaries of the highest thought, volition and feeling; beyond worlds and rationalist systems and doctrinaire theologies; beyond the limits of inspired utterance as well as all languages and all possible modes of creative expression. Philosophy and mathematics, poetry and myth, idea and icon, are all invaluable aids to the image-making faculty, but they all must point beyond themselves, whilst they coalesce and collapse in the unfathomable depths of the Ineffable, before which the best minds and hearts must whisper *neti neti*, "not this, not that". There is only the Soundless Sound, the ceaseless AUM in Boundless Space and Eternal Duration.

*The Gupta Vidya III:  
The Pilgrimage of Humanity*

RAGHAVAN IYER



*BRAHMĀ*

# THE WISDOM RELIGION BEFORE H.P.B.<sup>1</sup>

*Selflessness is sky.  
The bird of the heart  
flies nowhere  
but there.*

Jalaluddin Rumi

**T**he Wisdom Religion, which Hinduism sometimes calls *Sanatana Dharma*, and Western history has sometimes called *Theosophia*, and named Theosophy by Helena Blavatsky, has always existed. The ancient *Stanzas of Dzyan* are the oldest account of the Wisdom Religion available to us. But we are incarnated beings, just beginning the reascent from matter to spirit as the Fifth Sub-Race on this fourth globe of the Fourth Round. Here *Manas*, mind, which when fully awakened or developed is universal in thought, is brought to the fore. Given our current state of collective evolution, we necessarily use language to communicate and share with one another.

Much earlier in our history, much earlier than anything written down, we knew the Wisdom Religion in our hearts. But the involution or descent into increasingly concrete matter, now at its most solid, so to speak, obscured and eventually eclipsed that innate knowledge. It is our task in collective evolution to remove that obscurity so that the Wisdom Religion can shine through our buddhic hearts in ever purer radiance. *The Voice of the Silence* teaches us how that can be done—indeed, the only way it can be done—no matter whether we choose to do it for ourselves alone or for all humanity. This choice, of course, is the ultimate choice

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<sup>1</sup> Transcription of talk given at the International Theosophy Conference, August 2025

we all will have to make in the future, but as Theosophy makes clear, every choice we make, every reaction we have, tends in one or the other direction—escape for oneself or uplift of the whole—so that when the great moment of that ultimate choice comes, our response will be based on our tendencies through numberless incarnations.

Plato taught that all knowledge is recollection, and it is this recollection of what is latent in us, the Wisdom Religion itself, that he meant. Since we are incarnated here and now, the Wisdom Religion has to be expressed in the languages that we use to link ourselves together. In fact, we are all the One Life, but that life expresses itself in great diversity, and it is only through the awakening of Manas in human beings that conscious movement toward realizing the One Life is possible. This movement includes the reflection and self-reflection required for any level of realization of that Truth. Hence it is our *dharma*—our duty, the law of our being—to strive to realize that One Life and uplift not only humanity but the whole of Nature, the whole of embodied existence, toward that realization. Theosophy, as given us in *The Secret Doctrine* and other writings of H.P.B., and eloquently supported by profound teachers in her day and in the century and a half since the founding of the Theosophical Society, is an expression of the Wisdom Religion, the most comprehensive expression given to humanity in recorded history.

Even this magnificent Teaching, Theosophy, is an expression of the Wisdom Religion, not the whole of that Truth nor a perfectly transparent expression of it. For it reaches even beyond the One Life, the unity of spirit and matter, to the formless and That which gives rise to the formless potential that involution and evolution actualizes. And, as the Upanishadic Hindus say, That Thou Art—*tat tvam asi*. The Wisdom Religion did not spring altogether new in the nineteenth century: it has always been with

humanity, but its expression has always been subject to two limitations. One limitation is the nature of the language, culture, and psychic condition of the people for whom it is expressed. The second limitation is the sacred safety of those to whom it is expressed. The Masters of Wisdom cannot interfere with karma, and so even the greatest of Teachers will not give more than the people whom they teach can absorb without harming themselves or others. Nor can the most sacred truths be given to those who could only distort or mock them. The karma of denigrating the truth is heavy, tempered only by the degree of ignorance in doing so. No wonder the Christian Bible says that the one unforgivable sin is to know the truth and to reject it. Here our ignorance is a protecting illusion.

If the Wisdom Religion has always been with us; if, as H.P.B. taught, it is the source of the religions, philosophies, and sciences of humanity, past and present, then it must be discernable in all of them. Doing so requires understanding the concepts used in these human endeavors. It requires looking beyond the concrete and literal surfaces of those concepts and the ways they are used. That is, it requires an esoteric understanding of all traditions. While such discernment requires training, we are all familiar with the process. When someone tells us about some problem or crisis, we listen to what they say, but we also watch their expressions and body language to glean a deeper understanding than their words alone can convey. Hence we can often tell when someone is not telling the exact truth, when they are dodging the real issue, and so on. Friendships are often based on the ability of both parties to “read” each other without judgement or criticism. Sometimes we can discern another’s deep concern more clearly than they can themselves.

Such discernment is required for sensing the gold in the ore that presents itself to the prospector’s senses. When

another speaks of her beliefs, rather than merely asserting that they are not our own, or describing how we think they are in error, discernment allows us to see where therein is a sense of Truth—Theosophy—and we can respond in terms of that. By establishing such a bond, we can then explore together thoughts in that direction rather than merely talking past one another.

H.P.B., in *The Secret Doctrine, Isis Unveiled*, and many of her other writings, showed us how we can exercise such discernment. We cannot explore her many examples in this short essay, and we will restrict ourselves to philosophy and religion. We recall her detailed esoteric analyses in “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels” and in her many discussions of the Kabbalah throughout her writings, as well as her discussions of the real nature of the Old Testament God and the many distortions involved there. And we can exercise the principle of discernment for ourselves.

Take, as an example, the Chinese classic *Dao de jing* (Tao te ching in the older transliteration). This work is said to have been written by Laozi (Lao Tzu), a name which simply means “Old Master.” Who he was has been the subject of much debate and need not concern us here. Written perhaps almost six centuries before the Common Era (C.E., old A.D.), it contains much metaphysical and practical wisdom. The text as we have it consists of 81 sections, sometimes called chapters, divided traditionally into two parts—the *Dao*, which is broadly more metaphysical, and *de*, which generally illustrates practical application of ethics. One very old text discovered at Dunhuang reverses these two sections. From the various ancient Chinese manuscripts, we know that the text was modified over time, though its essential message has remained constant.

Translation always faces two challenges. One is converting concepts accurately from one language to another, and when those languages are quite different,

rendering the translation in a readable form is an enormous task. The second challenge is to choose words that both convey the meaning of the original thought and do not carry all the baggage associated with them. Think of the many meanings of 'logos' or of 'soul,' both of which have centuries of attached philosophy and theology which may unintentionally distort the accuracy of the translation. Even more is this true in the case of ancient Chinese, a language quite different from English, Spanish or Portuguese. As an example, the Chinese character for *dao* can be a noun or a verb, depending on context, and this is true of many Chinese characters. *Dao*, for instance, can mean 'way,' 'path,' 'That,' 'the Absolute,' even 'name,' as a noun and 'walked,' 'trodden,' 'be told,' 'spoken of' as a verb. Similar multivalent meanings attach to almost every character in the text. We recall H.P.B.'s discussion in *The Secret Doctrine* of the difficulty in translating the even more ancient *Senzar* into the Stanzas of *Dzyan* as we know them. The case of the old Chinese language led one translator, Jonathan Star, to produce a rendition that includes an analysis of each Chinese character in the text in terms of its possible meanings, along with his own translation.

The first verse in the *Dao* section has been translated in many ways, but the following version captures much in common with all of them.

The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao  
 The name that can be named is not the eternal  
     name  
 The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth  
 The named is the mother of myriad things  
 Thus, constantly without desire, one observes its  
     essence  
 Constantly with desire, one observes its  
     manifestations  
 These two emerge together but differ in name

The unity is said to be the mystery  
 Mystery of mysteries, the door to all wonders.  
 (translation by Derek Lin, 2006)

We immediately notice that “the Way,” “the Absolute,” that is eternal cannot be spoken of—just pointed to here. Thus, the name that can be named is not eternal, though it may seem eternal to us. The Absolute, which cannot be spoken of, is the origin of Heaven and Earth, a traditional Chinese metaphor for all existence, visible and invisible to human senses. What can be named—the lower *Dao*, so to speak, is the mother of “myriad things,” a phrase which can also be translated “ten thousand things,” another traditional metaphor for all that exists. The nameless *dao*, the unmanifest and formless gives rise to the *dao* that can be named, the manifest and form. When *dao* is understood as the Way, the manifest Way arises from the unmanifest Way and is a cosmic principle also found in the human being.

The text then turns to the individual and his or her capacity for perception. If one is truly desireless, one can discern its essence. The word for “discern” can be translated “witness” or “recognize,” and “essence” can also be “mystery,” “true nature,” or even “one’s true nature,” among other possibilities. If one has desires, one only discerns the ten thousand things. Desire is the key to knowledge. When we have desires, we can only see objects of desire, being attracted to or repelled by them. But when we are without desire, we can penetrate the true nature of existence, which is also our true nature. Here Theosophists might think of *viraga* in *The Voice of the Silence*. We are told that these two modes of discernment or observation are distinguished but are really only one—they merge—and this unity is a great mystery but also the door to “all wonders,” and, given the Chinese characters used to express this, we can also say it is the door to one’s true nature.

This all too brief discussion of just the first chapter of the first section of the *Dao de ching* is enough to show the profound depth of its teaching. The remainder of this short book—containing about 5000 characters or words—expands on this doctrine and applies it to the individual human being, to society as a whole, to the nature of governance, and also characterizes the truly wise individual. Reading the whole work, one can readily find the seven keys to the portals that lead “to the other shore,” according to *The Voice of the Silence*. The keys are oneself, purified by the *paramitas* which name the portals, for, the *Voice* teaches, one cannot travel the Path until one becomes the Path. One follows *dao* by becoming *dao*. We see here the Wisdom Religion expounded two thousand years before H.P.B., though in a form suitable to the time and civilization in which it was given. And, like all expressions of the Eternal Wisdom, it remains relevant to us today, though we live in a quite different time and culture.

Islam, the tradition founded by Muhammad and embodied in the Qur’an, consisting of revelations by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad over a period of years and gathered together after his death, has two broad dimensions. The common form of Islam is legalistic, reminiscent of the Talmud of Judaism though quite different. The other form is Sufism, which avers that the Qur’an must be read esoterically. Believing that the divine has permeated all religious traditions at least to some degree, Sufis teach that only through such esoteric understanding can God be understood. This stance is true in both great branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi’ite.

Scholars have long studied the emergence of Sufi groups in Islam. They realize that Sufi thought and practice draws on classical Greek thinking, Neoplatonism, and Zoroastrianism while adhering to the message and

language of the Qur'an. While academic scholarship cannot trace the spirit of Sufism farther back than the emergence of the great religions of the world, it is clear that it reaches back to the Wisdom Religion. H.P.B. said that the most ancient religions are the Indian, Mazdean, and Egyptian. Although scholars cannot trace these traditions beyond their emergence in recorded history, H.P.B. affirms that they have one source—the Wisdom Religion. All subsequent lasting spiritual traditions come from these original expressions of that one source. Henry Corbin (1903-1978) boldly traced much Shi'ite Islamic spirituality, found especially in Sufism, to Zoroastrian, that is, Mazdean, religion. Given that the mystical dimension of Islam in its Shi'ite forms is found in Iran, once known as Persia, this is not surprising.

Corbin explored the teachings of Shihab al-Din 'Umar al-Suhrawardi (1154-1191), known as Shaykh-i-Ishraq, Master of Illumination, for his philosophy of light. It seems that he was executed while still comparatively young for teaching esoteric doctrines. He drew on ancient Persian religious teachings to assert that everything is an outflow of primordial Light which, as it descends, loses intensity, and thus becomes dispersed. All existence consists of levels of light and darkness. Human beings are souls that have become divided, so to speak, one half of which remains in heaven, that is, in eternal luminosity, while the other half is trapped in the shadowy body. The aim of self-conscious existence is to transcend embodiment and return in full consciousness to the arena of the pure light which is Reality. We detect here the Theosophical teaching of the dual nature of incarnated human beings. Suhrawardi drew on Zoroastrian symbolism and its doctrines to elucidate a Path to perfection, tying metaphysics to ethical inner and outer development. It consists of "stations" or portals of various colored lights, leading ultimately to the untainted

Light, the source of existence. Here one might think of the references in *The Voice of the Silence* to sounds one hears in one's meditational efforts and to the sound in the light and light in the sound. Suhrawardi held that Plato, Hermes Trismegistus, and Pythagoras had all traveled the path of God. Corbin said, "In northwestern Iran, Sohrawardi (d. 1191) carried out the great project of reviving the wisdom or theosophy of ancient pre-Islamic Zoroastrian Iran." Muslims following the legalistic side of Islam, even in its Shi'ite version, would certainly find this heretical.

In the Sunni version of Islam, once extending from Arabia to the Iberian Peninsula, Muhyiddin ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240 CE) so permeated Islamic theology that his presence in all subsequent Islamic philosophical thought is like that of Plato in Western thinking. One of his favorite metaphors was that of the polished mirror. Islam holds that the Qur'an reveals ninety-nine names of Allah. (Allah as the "name" of God comes from the Arabic '*al-illah*,' meaning *the* God.) Many of these names are the opposites that are featured in human experience. There is also a secret 100th name, which remains unknown. Ibn al-Arabi taught that these "names" are the intelligent aspects of deity that permeate all Nature, indeed, they constitute it. Only in the human being, however, are all the names found together, though they are present in a confused, even chaotic, manner. One might think of them as intelligent forces, which need to be spiritually rectified. Ibn al-Arabi's favorite metaphor is that of the polished mirror. In his time, mirrors were polished metal that could reflect one's image. Polishing the mirror consists in nurturing and living the virtues suggested by the names. One name is '*al-haqq*,' the true or the real. If one reads his voluminous work, one discerns the same Path indicated in *The Voice*, but put in Islamic terms. Notably, these virtues include reverence

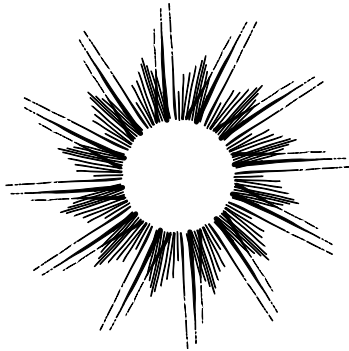


the “names,” *wahdat al-wujud*, the unity of being, which Theosophists know as the One Life.

These few examples, chosen from among many that could have been picked, merely scratch the surface of the Wisdom Religion’s presence before H.P.B.. They intimate, as H.P.B. demonstrated throughout her writings, that the Wisdom Religion was never entirely lost from its expression at the beginning of our Fifth Race. As human beings descended ever deeper into matter and grew ever more involved in its distractions, the most sacred Teachings were, when necessary, hidden, and, as humans turned away from their spiritual natures, sometimes actively suppressed. In the West, one can think of the suppression and loss of Gnostic texts, many recovered only within the last century, and of the corruption of ancient doctrines by those who too easily said “Behold, I know.” The academic pressure to be “original” rather than to understand ancient, timeless thinking, has not helped in this regard. Theosophists strive to understand, and, while they work to express such wisdom in fresh and comprehensible ways, they do not see such ephemeral originality, since, as the Hebrew Bible taught, there is nothing new under the sun. What is new in the last 150 years is the unveiling of the Wisdom Religion to an extent not seen in well over two millennia and more.

Humanity in general lost its natural connection with the Wisdom Religion through identifying with the lower nature, mistakenly believing that human beings are the tools—the lower quaternary—that they use to gain experience. The Wisdom Religion, or that unveiled portion of it called Theosophy, aims to awaken us from that misidentification. The error is so deep—*The Voice* calls it the dire heresy of separateness—that we have to walk the *paramita* Path, climb the ladder of Lights, polish the mirror of our being, through gradual inner realization and pure expression of that realization in outer interactions with

others and all of Nature. In doing so, we not only regain our inheritance, which is our true Self, but uplift the whole of humanity and Nature, on the never-ending evolutionary path of increasing awareness. We approach Reality, which we are. For the logos in the cosmos is the god in man, and we are what is best in us.



*Who has not found the Heaven below  
Will fail of it above.*

EMILY DICKINSON

## RAJA YOGA

**R**aja Yoga encourages no sham, requires no physical postures. It has to deal with the inner man whose sphere lies in the world of thought. To have the highest ideal placed before oneself and strive incessantly to rise up to it, is the only true concentration recognized by Esoteric Philosophy which deals with the inner world of *noumena*, not the outer shell of *phenomena*.

The first requisite for it is thorough purity of heart. Well might the student of Occultism say, with Zoroaster, that purity of thought, purity of word, and purity of deed—these are the essentials of one who would rise above the ordinary level and join the “gods.” A cultivation of the feeling of unselfish philanthropy is the path which has to be traversed for that purpose. For it is that alone which will lead to Universal Love, the realization of which constitutes the progress towards deliverance from the chains forged by Maya around the Ego. No student will attain this at once, but as our VENERATED MAHATMA states:

The greater the progress towards deliverance, the less this will be the case, until, to crown all, human and purely individual personal feelings, blood-ties and friendship, patriotism and race predilection, will all give way to become blended into one universal feeling, the only true and holy, the only unselfish and eternal one, Love, an Immense Love for humanity as a whole.

In short, the individual is blended with the ALL.

DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR



## CORRELATIONS

*The soul is the Perceiver; is assuredly vision itself pure and simple; unmodified; and looks directly upon ideas.*

PATANJALI

## EMANATION AND ELEMENTALS

Emanation is something from which another thing issues in a constant efflux, and emanates consciously. An orthodox Occultist goes so far as to say that the smell of a flower emanates from it 'consciously'—absurd as it may seem to the profane. Radiation *can* come from the Absolute; Emanation *cannot*. One difference exists in the idea that Radiation is sure, sooner or later, to be withdrawn again while Emanation runs into other emanations and is thoroughly separated and differentiated. Of course at the end of the cycle of time emanation will also be withdrawn into the One Absolute, but meanwhile, during the entire cycle of changes emanation will persist. One thing emanates from the other, and, in fact, from one point of view, emanation is equivalent to Evolution.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

There is, first, our own work, in and on ourselves, each one. That has for its object the enlightenment of oneself for the good of others. If that is pursued selfishly, some enlightenment comes, but not the amount needed for the whole work. We have to watch ourselves, so as to make of each a centre from which, in our measure, may flow out the potentialities for good that from the adept comes in large and affluent streams. The future, then, for each, will come

from each present moment. As we use the moment, so we shift the future up or down for good or ill; the future, being only a word for the present, not yet come, we have to see to the present more than all. If the present is full of doubt or vacillation, so will be the future; if full of confidence, calmness, hope, courage and intelligence, thus also will be the future.

W.Q. JUDGE

The only way in which the affairs of life may be brought into their proper relation and harmony is by an understanding of our own nature, and fulfilling it . . . The spiritual power that lies in man's thinking goes much farther than the formulation of it. Whatever error he produces finds its return from all parts of nature—from fire and air and earth and water—for all the elements are but the embodiments of so many degrees of intelligence, and we affect them against the nature of the whole, which is a synchronous evolution. We hinder the elemental lives of different kinds; the very organs in our bodies are composed of different kinds of elemental lives, all having their relations to different parts of nature.

ROBERT CROSBIE



# ALL IS OF CONSEQUENCE

All that a person does or thinks is of consequence.  
Not a move can a man or woman make that affects him  
or her in a day or a month or any part of the direct  
lifetime  
or the hour of death but the same affects him or her  
onward afterward through the indirect lifetime.  
The indirect is always as great and real as the direct.  
The spirit receives from the body just as much as it  
gives to the body.  
Not one name of word or deed . . . ever is or ever can  
be stamped on the programme but it is duly realized  
and returned,  
and that returned in further performances . . . and they  
returned again.  
Nor can the push of charity or personal force ever be  
any thing else than the profoundest reason,  
whether it bring arguments to hand or no.  
No specification is necessary . . . to add or subtract or  
divide is in vain.  
Little or big, learned or unlearned, white or black, legal  
or illegal, sick or well,  
from the first inspiration down the windpipe to the last  
expiration out of it,  
all that a male or female does that is vigorous and  
benevolent and clean is so much sure profit  
to him or her in the unshakable order of the universe  
and through the whole scope of it forever.  
If the savage or felon is wise it is well . . . .  
if the greatest poet or savan is wise it is simply the same...

**if the President or chief justice is wise it is the same . . .  
if the young mechanic or farmer is wise it is no more or  
less . . .  
if the prostitute is wise it is no more nor less.  
The interest will come round . . all will come round.**

**WALT WHITMAN**



## THE LAW OF KARMA

**T**he Universe of Law is accepted as a basic truth by all. The most superstitious slave of priestcraft, the believer in chance, coincidence, the “psychological moment,” fatalism, and also the most abject materialist reared by modern science—all avow that the universe, physical, moral, mental, is—must be—governed by law. Law, however, assumes the aspect of a whimsical and mysterious personal god with some; with others, is locked up in the power of thought exerted by human free will; is the code of the partly discovered and the partly to be discovered “facts” of modern “exact science” with a third class. The truth that the “infallible laws” of materialistic science break down in conflict with moral problems does not disturb the upholders of those “laws”; on the other hand the advance of knowledge which has overthrown the “revealed will of God” makes little difference to the blind believer in the non-existent “Almighty.”

That all humanity feels the presence of an unfailing power which works incessantly, and unmistakably producing results, is in itself the evidence that the universe is governed by Law. Further, in the material world, cause and effect have been related so often and with such unfailing resultants that instinctive human belief has taken a more substantial form and has become an intellectual belief with many. The nefarious influence of exoteric creeds and religions is so great that in spite of that intellectual perception, men and women fail to apply its lessons when confronted with moral problems and perplexities. For example, the intelligent person who utilizes the knowledge of medicine to cure a bodily ailment will forget that every

cause is related to its effect and pray to the mysterious god who “in his infinite wisdom called home through the gateway of death” the ailing friend or relative!

Since the days of Plato the correct understanding of the laws of Nature has been obscured till their very existence has become forgotten and unknown. The tyranny of the church drove men to unbelief and modern science gradually uncovered the fact that the laws of nature are infallible while the gods of the temples, the churches and the mosques are fragile and breakable idols. It was, however, left to Theosophy to proclaim the interdependence of the worlds of Spirit and Matter, to assign to the soul its proper place, from which both religion and science had dethroned it, and to give to the body its right position in the scheme of things—the lowest, most shadowy and transient of coverings, in which the immortal soul of man is sheathed, but which can be transformed into a veritable Temple of God, *i.e.*, of Man who has reached the Stature of Perfection. Through the channel of the greatest Theosophist of the modern age was once again the message given:—

...it suffices to ask these pretended agents of the three gods of the Trinity, how they reconcile it with the most rudimental notions of equity, that if the power to pardon sinners for sinning has been given them, they did not also receive the ability by miracle to obliterate the wrongs done against person or property. Let them restore life to the murdered; honour to the dishonoured; property to those who have been wronged, and force the scales of human and divine justice to recover their equilibrium. Then we may talk of their divine commission to bind and loose. Let them say, if they can do this. Hitherto the world has received nothing but sophistry—believed on blind faith; we ask palpable, tangible evidence of their God's justice and mercy. But all are silent; no answer, no reply, and still the inexorable unerring Law

of Compensation proceeds on its unswerving path. If we but watch its progress, we will find that it ignores all creeds, shows no preferences, but its sunlight and its thunderbolts fall alike on heathen and Christian. No absolution can shield the latter when guilty, no anathema hurt the former when innocent.

Away from us such an insulting conception of divine justice as that preached by priests on their own authority. It is fit only for cowards and criminals! If they are backed by a whole array of Fathers and Churchmen, we are supported by the greatest of all authorities, an instinctive and reverential sense of the everlasting and ever-present law of harmony and justice.

*Isis Unveiled, ii 544-545*

...There is no "chance" in Nature, wherein everything is mathematically co-ordinate and mutually related in its units. "Chance," says Coleridge, "is but the pseudonym of God (or Nature), for those particular cases which He does not choose to subscribe openly with His sign manual." Replace the word "God" by that of Karma and it will become an Eastern axiom....

*The Secret Doctrine, i, 653*

...we consider it [Karma] as the Ultimate Law of the Universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, Karma is that unseen and unknown law which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself unknowable, its action is perceivable.

*The Key to Theosophy, 201*

... Learn that no efforts, not the smallest — whether in right or wrong direction — can vanish from the world of causes. E'en wasted smoke remains not traceless. "A harsh word uttered in past lives is not destroyed, but ever comes again." ...

*The Voice of the Silence, 37*

Man is a triple being—he is the energizing spiritual Monad, plus the guiding intelligence (*Manas*), plus the gyrations of Matter (Karma). The impartite One Self or *Atman* energizes the Self-conscious Intelligence to gain knowledge and experience, to garner wisdom out of it, and thus to master the universe of matter. This triple work of (1) mastering matter, (2) by understanding its laws, so that (3) the march of the Monad continues, is neither the work of a designing God nor the result of a design less concurrence of atoms, as theology and science assert. *The Secret Doctrine* says:

The ONE LIFE is closely related to the one law which governs the World of Being—KARMA. Exoterically, this is simply and literally "action," or rather an "effect-producing cause." Esoterically it is quite a different thing in its far-reaching moral effects. It is the unerring LAW OF RETRIBUTION. To say to those ignorant of the real significance, characteristics and awful importance of this eternal immutable law, that no theological definition of a personal deity can give an idea of this impersonal, yet ever present and active Principle, is to speak in vain. Nor can it be called Providence. For Providence, with the Theists (the Christian Protestants, at any rate), rejoices in a personal male gender, while with the Roman Catholics it is a female potency, "Divine Providence tempers His blessings to secure their better effects," Wogan tells us. Indeed "He" tempers them, which Karma — a sexless principle — does

not. (*i*, 634.)... This Law—whether Conscious or Unconscious—predestines nothing and no one. It exists from and in Eternity, truly, for it is ETERNITY itself; and as such, since no act can be co-equal with eternity, it cannot be said to act, for it is ACTION itself. ... Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plans and creates causes, and Karmic law adjusts the effects; which adjustment is not an act, but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, ... KARMA is an Absolute and Eternal law in the World of manifestation; and as there can only be one Absolute, as One eternal ever present Cause, believers in Karma cannot be regarded as Atheists or materialists—still less as fatalists: for Karma is one with the Unknowable, of which it is an aspect in its effects in the phenomenal world.

*ibid.*, *ii*, 304-306

Karma is Action and, from the standpoint of the metaphysician as well as that of the student of Occultism and Esotericism, that Action is devoid of any personality. Karma gives birth to beings but its movement is *sui generis*, and it is above its creatures. Its intelligence is like that of a river—its waters find their own levels, make their own channels, and, however weary their journey, they wind surely to their destined sea. Its justice “knows not wrath nor pardon,” and is exhaustless in nature. Says *The Secret Doctrine*: “Karma is a mysterious law and no respecter of persons.”

Karma is the perpetual motion in the Absolute and its character is dual—cause and effect, Spirit-Matter, the primal pair in the manifestation of the One Life. There is no such thing as a causeless effect; there is no effect which does not become in its turn a cause; no Spirit without Matter and no Matter without Spirit. Thus we come to the third element of Karma—*Fohat*, the relation between Cause and

Effect, Spirit and Matter. This is the totality of the beings which compose “Nature.” Says *The Secret Doctrine*:

The whole order of nature evinces a progressive march towards a higher life. There is design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces. The whole process of evolution with its endless adaptations is a proof of this. The immutable laws that weed out the weak and feeble species, to make room for the strong, and which ensure the “survival of the fittest,” though so cruel in their immediate action—all are working toward the grand end. The very fact that adaptations do occur, that the fittest do survive in the struggle for existence, shows that what is called “unconscious Nature” is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent beings (Elementals) guided by High Planetary Spirits (Dhyan Chohans), whose collective aggregate forms the manifested verbum of the unmanifested LOGOS, and constitutes at one and the same time the MIND of the Universe and its immutable LAW.

*i*, 277-8

The “Great Breath” in which the triune differentiation lies concealed in latency is the Law of Attraction-Repulsion, of Cause-Effect. As its ideative or spiritual tendency impels, through its Fohatic or energetic nature (*dāvīprakṛiti*), its substantial or material nature (*mulāprakṛiti*), manifestation (*manvantara*) occurs; when it withdraws the impulsion, the material nature is absorbed, and *pralaya* ensues.

In the long series the same law produces reflections of reflections and shadows of shadows—the innumerable sub-manvantaras, followed by equally innumerable sub-pralayas. Sleep, death, *pralaya* of man and of nature, materially, mentally and spiritually, is by and under the one unvarying law of attraction-repulsion, of cause-effect, which is called the Law of Karma or Compensation.

By this Power sidereal universes, each with its many solar systems and each of the latter with its planets, come into being; they all are held together in their movements by this Power inherent in them; this same Power will in process of time and motion bring them back to a higher homogeneity. (Cf. *The Secret Doctrine*, i, 101-103.)

The Kingdoms of Nature on earth are formed by this Law of the triple nature of the One Life—elementals and elements, vegetables and animals, and ultimately Man—with his unique opportunity and possibility.

Thus Monads or Atma-Buddhis of varied degrees of unfoldment gain for themselves the power of an independent conscious existence; having passed through every elemental form, each has acquired individuality, the root, seed, or germ of self-consciousness which sprouts, grows and evolves into the state or condition of Self-consciousness. This is the axial point in evolution, the arrival at the human stage.

... It is the sphere of final evolutionary adjustments, the world of Karmic scales, the Hall of Justice, where the balance is struck which determines the future course of the Monad during the remainder of its incarnations in the cycle.... i, 182

... Evolution is an eternal cycle of becoming, we are taught; and nature never leaves an atom unused. Moreover, from the beginning of the Round, all in Nature tends to become Man. All the impulses of the dual, centripetal and centrifugal Force are directed towards one point—MAN...

ii, 170

This individual or entity in whom the germ of self-consciousness was unfolding is a “good *rupa*,” which “could

stand, walk, run, recline and fly. Yet it was still but a *chhaya*, a shadow with no sense,” says the Stanza. (*ii*, 102)

... It has already been stated that, to become a Self-Conscious Spirit, the latter must pass through every cycle of being, culminating in its highest point on earth in Man. Spirit *per se* is an unconscious negative ABSTRACTION. Its purity is inherent, not acquired by merit; hence, as already shown, to become the highest Dhyan Chohan it is necessary for each Ego to attain to full self-consciousness as a human, *i.e.*, conscious Being, which is synthesized for us in Man.... *i*, 192-3

The process which is so graphically described by Mr. Judge as the lighting up of *Manas* follows. *The Secret Doctrine* repeatedly speaks of the gift of the Rebels or Fallen Angels—the Luciferian Host. These “mind-born sons of Brahmā” project their radiant shadow or spark and give birth to the future inner man, who is described as the Conscious Entity; this radiance projected “later on becomes the Human Higher Self owing to the personal exertion of the individual...” (*ii*, 95)

...This “Conscious Entity” Occultism says, comes from, nay, in many cases is, the very entire essence and *esse* of the high Intelligences condemned, by the undeviating law of Karmic evolution, to reincarnate in this *manwantara*.

*ii*, 248

... Rudimentary man ... becomes the perfect man ... when, with the development of “Spiritual fire,” ... he acquires from his inner Self, or Instructor, the Wisdom of Self-Consciousness, which he does not possess in the beginning.... *ii*, 113

Thus the Law of Karma or Action comes into a new phase in its operation. Its blind intelligence adjusts the disturbed equilibrium in kingdoms other than human. The

relation between Cause and Effect is neither accidental, nor the result of deliberate conscious planning, but, so to speak, happens. In what happens, however, there is not an error or a mistake, nor any miscarriage of any kind whatever, for the Fohatic Will works without the aid of reasoning intelligence. Hence is there no moral “evil” in non-human kingdoms.

There is no Devil, no Evil, outside mankind to produce a Devil. Evil is a necessity in, and one of the supporters of the manifested universe. It is a necessity for progress and evolution, as night is necessary for the production of Day, and Death for that of Life—that man may live for ever.

*ii*, 389

If man perceives evil, cruelty and wastage—in short, Nature red in tooth and claw—it is because man is ignorant of the Fohatic aspect of the One Life. Human mind views the activity of consciousness in other forms in terms of its own powers and knowledge, imposes its own limitations and also its modes and processes on other grades of conscious life. The Emancipated Soul of the Master, through a definite development of his self-conscious intelligent nature, does not see the universe as mortals do who cast their own gigantic shadow on the screen of the universe and behold it as a glorified reflection of themselves. The Mahatma sees the universe as it is; it is reflected in Him; He is it; as an ancient verse has it, He has become “the Supreme Purusha who pervades the universe of the moving and the non-moving and whose form is a sphere.”

The attainment of this masterhood is possible for every son of man. This possibility lies in the right use of Karma. With the birth of self-consciousness cause and effect do not “happen”; Will is now joined to Intelligence; instinct and impulse have made room for reason. The creative power of Will has become active, when hitherto it worked passively.

Having received the gift of the gods, the Creative Fire of Intelligence, man comes under a new phase of Karmic operations: that creative fire has to energize him, to induce him, to Action or Karma. Now, man has to find ways and means, to devise efforts, to move from within. Hence the following:

... The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations....

*i*, 17

... there are no such privileged beings in the universe, whether in our or in other systems, in the outer or the inner worlds, as the angels of the Western Religion and the Judean. A Dhyan Chohan has to become one; he cannot be born or appear suddenly on the plane of life as a full-blown angel. ... Gods, created as such, would evince no personal merit in being gods. Such a class of beings, perfect only by virtue of the special immaculate nature inherent in them, in the face of suffering and struggling humanity, and even of the lower creation, would be the symbol of an eternal injustice quite Satanic in character, an ever present crime. It is an anomaly and an impossibility in Nature....

*i*, 221-222

This is the martyrdom of Self-conscious existence with which the problem of human evil and human suffering—one the cause, the other the effect—is related. *Buddhi per se* is a passive and latent principle, and only in conjunction with Manasic Self-consciousness it becomes the Higher Self in Man. (*cf. The Secret Doctrine ii* 231.) To live the Religion of Responsibility—the one and only true religion for any man—one has to become convinced of the existence of a

personal spiritual entity within the personal physical man. He has to recognize that there are external and internal conditions, which affect the determination of his will upon his actions. Further, he must reject fatalism which implies a blind course of some still blinder power, and perceive the fact that from birth to death he is weaving, thread by thread around himself, his own destiny, as a spider does his cobweb.

The conscious and will-full actor is Man. As such he is at the starting of a new path of evolution. Action or Karma guided by intelligence and energized by will is his special prerogative. The indulgence and use of it begets the sense of duty in him. *Dharma*, which is the characteristic property on the plane of effects in non-human kingdoms, becomes the sense of duty. When in the progress of evolution through the performance of duty, man comes to glimpse that self-consciousness means not the consciousness of one's self but that of the One Self, *dharma* assumes for him the still higher phase of *yagna* or sacrifice. Performance of one's own duty leads to family-*dharma*, to nation-*dharma*, to race-*dharma* with their respective virtues of protection, patriotism, humanitarianism—the giving of one's self to others. Thus the human soul grows. It will be seen that our individual Karma affects and is affected by family, nation and race Karma. Causes generated by a group of individuals, and in which all of them have concern, because of their complex nature, take a longer period of time to produce their due effects. Thus cycles are formed in which reactions take place to previous actions, and a return of effects to the centre of causation marks the completion. Hence the human soul has to free itself not only from cycles of individual Karma but also of group Karma. Freedom, salvation, liberation, *mukti*, is dependent on the knowledge of the workings of cycles. There are voluntary incarnations and avatars of emancipated beings as there are Karmic

returns of nirvanees of long ago. When through the knowledge of the Law of Cycles and Yugas an individual learns to apply the Law of Sacrifice and *Yagna* to his own growth he acquires the true virtues of *tyaga*—renunciation, and *vairagya*—dispassion; he knows himself not as one of the many who perform action but as the One Actor. In the Esotericism of the *Bhagavad-Gita* this is called Krishna-yoga.

Thus there are three stages of the path of the Human Soul—(1) the living of his individual life through and till the payment of debt incurred by himself; (2) the living of his corporate life through and till the payment of debt incurred by him and all those souls he directly contacted, without shouldering the burden of universal suffering; (3) the living of his universal life through all manifested Nature. In the first two instances the Intelligence is drawn into the vortex of evolution caused by cycles. In the third the Individual remains the Servant and therefore the Master of the revolving wheel of time. Therefore it is that we have (1) Pratyeka Buddhas or Buddhas of Selfishness, (2) Buddhas of Liberation and (3) Buddhas of Renunciation to whom reference is made in *The Voice of the Silence*.

Theosophy advocates the Great Path of Renunciation. The discipline of the Path lies through self-learning, self-correction, self-realization and self-expression; to educate, to energize ourselves, so that ultimately we come to know ourselves as the One Self-Actor whose service is Perpetual. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* this path of Karma, which sets man free from the bondage of Karma, is fully taught. Enough for our purpose to quote a few words:

... All actions are effected by the qualities of nature. The man deluded by ignorance thinks, 'I am the actor.' But he, O strong-armed one! who is acquainted with the nature of the two distinctions of cause and effect, knowing that the qualities act

only in the qualities, and that the Self is distinct from them, is not attached in action.

Five thousand years after Krishna repeated these words on the same battlefield of Kurukshetra, H.P.B. once again spoke them thus in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Thou hast to be prepared to answer *Dharma*, the stern law, whose voice will ask thee at thy first, at thy initial step:

“Hast thou complied with all the rules, O thou of lofty hopes?

“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, 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”.

## THE SECRET OF TRANSMUTATION

**S**eventy Thousand Veils separate Allah, the One Reality (*al-haqq*), from the world of matter and of sense. And every soul passes before his birth through these seventy thousand. The inner half of these are veils of light; the outer half, veils of darkness. For every one of the veils of light passed through, in this journey towards birth, the soul puts *off* a divine quality; and for every one of the dark veils, it puts *on* an earthly quality. Thus, the child is born weeping, for the soul knows its separation from Allah, the One Reality. And when the child cries in its sleep, it is because the soul remembers something of what it has lost. Otherwise, the passage through the veils has brought with it *nisyan*, forgetfulness: and for this reason, man is called *insan*. He is now, as it were, in prison in his body, separated by these thick curtains from Allah.

But the whole purpose of Sufism, the way of the dervish, is to give him an escape from this prison, an apocalypse of the Seventy Thousand Veils, a recovery of the original unity with the One, whilst still in this body. The body is not to be put off; it is to be refined and made spiritual—a help and not a hindrance to the spirit. It is like metal that has to be refined by fire and transmuted. And the shaikh tells the aspirant that he has the secret of this transmutation. “We shall throw you into the fire of Spiritual Passion”, he says, “and you will emerge refined.”

RIFA'I



## GLOSSARY

*Let us use with care those living messengers called words.*

W.Q. JUDGE

**al-haqq** (*Arabic*) ‘The true and the real’, one the ninety-nine names of God in Islam. Names of Allah are intelligent aspects of deity that permeate and constitute all Nature.

**Athanor** (*Occult.*). The ‘astral’ fluid of the Alchemists, their Archimedean lever; exoterically, the furnace of the Alchemist.

**Chit** (*Sk.*) Abstract Consciousness.

**Darshanas** (*Sk.*) The Schools of Indian philosophy, of which there are six: *Shad-darsanas* or six demonstrations.

**Magnetism.** A force in nature and in man. When it is the former, it is an agent which gives rise to the various phenomena of attraction, of polarity, etc. When the latter, it becomes ‘animal’ magnetism, in contradistinction to cosmic, and terrestrial magnetism.

**Nebo** (*Chald.*). The same as the Hindu Budha, son of Soma the Moon, and Mercury the planet.

**Srotapatti** (*Sk.*) Lit., “he who has entered the stream”, *i.e.*, the stream or path that leads to Nirvana, or figuratively, to the Nirvanic Ocean. The same as *Sowanee*.

**Tattwa** (*Sk.*). Eternally existing “That”, also, the different principles in Nature, in their occult meaning. Tattwa Samasa is a work of Sankhya philosophy attributed to Kapila himself. Also the abstract principles of existence

or categories, physical and metaphysical. The subtle elements—five exoterically, seven in esoteric philosophy—which are correlative to the five and the seven senses on the physical plane; the last two senses are as yet latent in man, but will be developed in the two last root-races.

## UNITED LODGE OF THEOSOPHISTS

Crosbie Hall, 326 West Sola Street  
Santa Barbara, California 93101  
(805) 965-3917    *www.theosophysb.org*

**Autumn 2025**  
*Sundays, 7:15 P.M.*

|          |    |                               |
|----------|----|-------------------------------|
| Oct      | 5  | The Foundation of Religion    |
|          | 12 | Theosophical Ecology          |
|          | 19 | Festival of Lights            |
|          | 26 | Attentive Listening*          |
| November | 2  | Faith in Karma                |
|          | 9  | “Raise the self by the Self”  |
|          | 16 | Learning from Pathfinders     |
|          | 23 | Cheerfulness and Generosity   |
|          | 30 | True Perception*              |
| December | 7  | Reincarnation — Cyclic Return |
|          | 14 | New Year’s Resolutions        |
|          | 21 | The Savior of Spiritual Man   |
|          | 28 | Gentle Speech*                |

STUDY CLASS: *Wednesdays, 7:15 P.M.*  
\**Meetings devoted to general questions.*

Meetings are free and open to all, and the Lodge is supported solely by voluntary contributions in time, money and work. The Lodge offers the journal VIDYA for those seeking the path of spiritual self-regeneration in the service of humanity.

## NARADA AND MAYA

One day Narada, the wandering saint and cosmic traveler, was walking with Lord Krishna. Narada had a unique skill. He casually asked the most difficult questions to try and coax Krishna into answering them. A question had been bothering Narada for some time, and he had been waiting for an opportune moment.

“Can you tell me, Krishna, what is Maya? I have heard and read so much about it and yet have never experienced it,” Narada blurted out, the excitement evident in his voice.

Krishna laughed and told Narada to ask any other question. He told him how Maya is one of the trickiest things to reveal, but Narada refused to budge. Krishna finally gave in and promised to reveal the secrets of Maya to him.

“It’s going to be a long answer, so while I lie in the shade of a tree, can you please get me some water?”

In search of fresh water, Narada tread a worn pathway to a small village nearby. The sun was beating down, and he himself was feeling thirsty. Near the center of the village he found a well and saw a beautiful girl drawing water from it. Her grace and devotional character was captivating and sparked a desire in his heart that he had never felt before. When she raised her sparkling eyes, he felt himself dissolving into them.

Her father, a landowner, saw the two together at the well and invited the radiant monk inside for dinner. Narada agreed and as they ate, the girl’s father noticed the glances exchanged between Narada and his daughter. He finally broke the awkward silence by telling Narada he had been looking for a match for his daughter for a long time. Since he had no son, all his land and cattle belonged to his

daughter, and if Narada agreed to marry her, he could stay with them and help manage affairs. Narada readily agreed and the couple was united in marriage within a few days.

Narada was ecstatic. He thoroughly enjoyed his marital life and within a few years beautiful children were part of the family. His father-in-law passed away, and he inherited all the land. He was an able administrator, and the family enjoyed a prosperous life. As he watched his children play under the setting sun, waves of bliss would fill his chest.

One day, the sky darkened, and it started raining. A heavy storm continued for weeks. The banks of the nearby river overflowed, flooding the entire village. One day, as the waters rose, Narada hurried with his wife and children to the highest part of the house. They waited and watched the water rise, until suddenly a wave swept the entire house away. Narada shrieked in distress as he saw his children being carried away by the current. He held on tightly to his wife trying to save her. However, the water was unrelenting, and they were parted. A visceral cry escaped Narada's throat as he felt unbearable pain in the pit of his stomach. "Krishna! Krishna!" he cried, not able to bear it any longer as he himself was overcome by the raging waters.

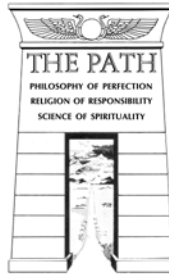
As he was carried away in the maelstrom, he could hear as from a distance "*N A R A D A ... where is my glass of water?*" It was Krishna calling him to waken from his dream. Suddenly, the flood disappeared, and he stood before Krishna.

"Where have you been, Narada?" Krishna asked him with a smile. "Did you bring my glass of water?"

*Adapted from a Hindu folk tale*



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