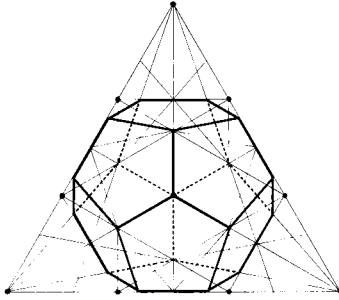


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# VIDYA

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Spring 2026

Number 2

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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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Volume XXVII No. 2

Edited by students of the United Lodge of Theosophists, Santa Barbara

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सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

THERE IS NO RELIGION HIGHER THAN TRUTH



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## FLOW FREELY, WATERS BORN ON SUMERU

**K**now, Conqueror of Sins, once that a Sowanee hath cross'd the seventh Portal, all Nature thrills with joyous awe and feels subdued. The silver star now twinkles out the news to the night-blossoms, the streamlet to the pebbles ripples out the tale; dark ocean waves will roar it to the rocks surf-bound, scent-laden breezes sing

it to the vales, and stately pines mysteriously whisper: “A Master has arisen, A MASTER OF THE DAY”.

He standeth now like a white pillar to the west, upon whose face the rising Sun of thought eternal poureth forth its first most glorious waves. His mind, like a becalmed and boundless ocean, spreadeth out in shoreless space. He holdeth life and death in his strong hand.

Yea, he is mighty. The living power made free in him, that power which is HIMSELF, can raise the tabernacle of illusion high above the Gods, above great Brahm and Indra. Now he shall surely reach his great reward!

Shall he not use the gifts which it confers for his own rest and bliss, his well-earn’d weal and glory—he, the subduer of the Great Delusion?

*Nay*, O thou candidate for Nature’s hidden lore! If one would follow in the steps of holy Tathagata, those gifts and powers are not for Self.

Would’st thou thus dam the waters born on Sumeru? Shalt thou divert the stream for thine own sake, or send it back to its prime source along the crests of cycles?

If thou would’st have that stream of hard-earn’d knowledge, of Wisdom heaven-born, remain sweet running waters, thou should’st not leave it to become a stagnant pond.

Know, if of Amitabha, the “Boundless Age”, thou would’st become co-workers, then must thou shed the light acquired, like to the Bodhisattvas twain, upon the span of all three worlds.

Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and the Deva-Wisdom thou hast won, must, from thyself, the channel of Alaya, be poured forth into another bed.

*The Voice of the Silence*

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF PERFECTION

The philosophy of perfection centres upon a constellation of important ideas which can be clarified by distinguishing between three levels of reflection. First are those considerations that turn upon the relativity of perfection as a concept in the realm of time and in the world of the visible. Secondly, there are other factors which focus upon what may be called the engine or motivating power which actually makes perfection not just a concept, but a driving force in human life and evolution. The elements in this engine—imagination, illumination and devotion—are involved in the problems of relativity intrinsic to the concept of perfection and require a philosophy or metaphysics to put in perspective. Thirdly, there are those transcendental virtues (*paramitas*) that refer to perfection in its deepest and highest aspect: perfection in spiritual wisdom. In *The Voice of the Silence* the Teacher speaks of “the great Perfections three.” These are like three degrees in the attainment of spiritual wisdom.

To take the simplest level first, ‘perfection’ as a term is always relative. It is relative to a context, relative to standards set or recognized as relevant. It is also relative to expectations, and so to the dynamic and painful, contradictory and compelling patterns of human relationships. A great deal of misdirected energy goes into perfecting other people, coupled with a refusal to learn anything at all, let alone to be told anything by anyone else. This involves something tricky and even treacherous, which has a lot to do with perfectionism, fussiness and sheer bloody-mindedness. Such perfectionism, indeed, has given the very notion of perfection a bad name, making it static

and tyrannical, and making the notion of perfectibility seem at best a fantasy myth in politics. No wonder, then, it is the prevailing fashion among right-wing thinkers to turn their noses against perfectibility; though few Americans would have the courage to turn their noses directly against the Founding Fathers, they will readily turn their noses against their ideas—all in the name of being Americans. This has happened before. It happened in reference to Buddha. It happened in reference to Christ. It happened, to a lesser extent, in reference to earlier Teachers like Krishna and later Teachers like Pythagoras. It certainly happened a great deal in reference to Confucius, a fact central to the history of China.

If the word 'perfect' is used in a relative sense, it is most meaningful when talking about the perfection of a skill or a function. Everyone can understand a functional view of perfection: mastering a craft or a musical instrument, or else summoning a certain speed, smoothness or efficiency, as when one sits before a typewriter and aims at a certain standard of perfection. This idea, however, has been infected in the modern age with a spurious precision that arises entirely out of quantification. This approach is perfectly meaningful, though somewhat illusive, at the cosmic level, but when translated into machines it gives one a mechanistic view of robotic perfection. This can enormously oppress a whole nation, such as Japan, which has become the latest entrant in the appallingly perverse drift towards mechanization in the name of progress.

Such a mechanized and quantified notion of perfection, connected with the use of machines, may allow one to speak of perfectly smooth-running machines or perfect computers. But this notion has spread so far that some people have forgotten about the deeper organic meaning of perfection, as, for example, when it is applied to the human body. The human body is still a mystery, not only to medicine but

also to modern man. If perfection has as much to do with resilience, resistance and abstention as with smoothness, if it involves not doing something as much as doing something, it becomes much more than a merely functional term. If the heart or any of the human organs persistently overdoes something, that is a sure sign not only of imperfection but of disease and death. In the body, perfection consists in doing only what is needed. This applies to the brain, with its vast complex of mostly untapped centres of electricity. It is true in reference to the heart and the entire nervous system. It is crucially true in reference to the cerebellum and the sympathetic and autonomic systems and their relation to the cerebrum and the conscious process of selection. There is something about the way the process of selection works that is balanced by a sense of limit—one only selects as much as one can handle. These considerations alone yield a concept of perfection much richer than what one would find in a purely functional notion grafted onto a mechanistic picture of robots.

Nonetheless, at the root of this limited and limiting idea of perfection is an idea that anyone, even a child, can understand, and is relevant to the very highest levels of spiritual perfection. It is the idea of an art. It is the idea of judicious use. It is most readily understandable in music. One may listen to several distinctive but 'perfect' renditions of a great piece of music. How can there be several different perfect versions of the same piece, each communicating something different, each transmitting something distinctively new? To understand this is to pay tribute to the inexhaustible depth of music and to the potential wealth of artistic genius. But it also refers to that complex relationship between human beings and instruments matured over a period of time which enables a person to use an instrument so as to hover trembling at

the limits of what is audible, and, in pregnant moments of silence, to give a sense of the deeper unstated meaning of music.

This conception is much subtler than even the organic notion of perfectibility. It involves a rich conscious relationship between subject and object. This leads one to ask what is the metaphysical basis of a view of perfection which can accommodate myriad possible views, modes and instances—in function or form, in art or music, in a leaf or a flower—without limiting or exhausting the content of possibility. In short, perfection requires assumptions not only about what actually exists but also about what is possible. In other words, there is a dialectical relation between potential and actualization. To admit this capacity to actualize unknown potential necessarily inserts a subjective element into the notion of perfection. It is therefore totally absurd to say that a human being can ever settle for an objective external view of what is perfect. If ten imperfect men befriended a ‘perfect’ woman, each would have to work out a very different relationship with her. Each would also have to revise and rethink the notion of what is perfect.

Whenever one considers a relational notion of perfection, which is to be experienced, assessed, tested, revised and rethought, one must acknowledge the element of subjectivity. To take a simple example, when one talks of a perfect meal, there is a good reason why nothing tastes quite like what one’s mother cooked long ago, and nothing in turn tastes like what one’s mother learnt from her mother. And so it goes, from the accumulated wisdom of cooking that is not transmissible through a recipe book. Cooking becomes esoteric and can never be revealed; cooking becomes exemplified. Here one is talking about one’s own experience of examples in the past, one’s own attempt to

relate them to expectations and evolving standards, all of which affect one's notion of perfection.

This much being clear, one is beginning to stand at the threshold separating the empirical, the linguistic and the semantic from the metaphysical. What, then, is the metaphysical basis of perfection? An excellent example in modern thought is provided by Leibniz, for whom there is something intrinsic in every organism and therefore in every monadic atom in every being in all the visible kingdoms. There is, in the monad, an entelechy, an intrinsic propulsion towards realization and elaboration of all that is already programmed in everything that is already potential. Because the monad is not concrete, this has metaphysical implications. The monad is not limited by reference to external physical form, nor is it psychologically bounded in reference to inward experience. It is philosophically similar to the theological notion of the soul, which was tainted by dogmatism even in the time of Leibniz, but which implies something abstract, having to do with logical possibility, and therefore something that is theoretically prior to the empirically given.

At the same time, what makes this conception metaphysically compelling is the notion of necessity attached to that which is theoretically and ontologically prior to what exists. This is a philosophical way of saying that human beings, as immortal souls, have already within themselves something which is deeper than an image, profounder than a concept, and more lasting than even an urge to perfection — something rooted in the nature of consciousness itself. Metaphysically, it concerns the relationship of the infinite richness of consciousness to the infinite variety of possible form. It does not lie in either separately, but is hidden in the relationship of consciousness to form. If this is the metaphysical basis of such a notion of perfection, it is equally important in practice. Every human being is

searching for a sense of distinction between the real and the unreal, the ever-changing and the evanescent, the immortal and the mortal. Every human being is engaged in defining what is perfect and perfectible amidst conditions of limitation and imperfection.

This insight gains especial significance when seen in the light of a central metaphysical tenet of the philosophy of perfection in Gupta Vidya: namely, the proposition that all human beings are both perfect and imperfect, both immortal and mortal. Human beings are capable of a degree of creative vision and imagination in elaborating what is potentially possible. At the same time, the fullness of perfection far transcends the capacity of expression in words, in sketches or even in mathematical formulae. One can always draw a circle to circumscribe something in the mind, but there is much more that is implied in the blank space within and outside the circle. There is always a gap between what people are capable of conceiving and what people are actually capable of creating. There is a further gap between what they are capable of creating and what in fact they actually create. These two gaps are crucial to the philosophy of perfection.

Given the second gap in human life, much weight is given to intention. Where there is an intention to create for a noble and selfless purpose, a great deal can be overlooked in the realm of the created. Suppose that one person actually creates something better than another person, but in the first person the motivation is largely self-satisfaction, competition and self-indulgence, while in the second person the motive is charity, inspiration and gratitude. An objective observer looking at the two will notice a very real sense in which the more imperfect creation is actually a greater example of the richness of mental perfection. Ever since the last war, people have become used to having international exhibitions of children's paintings. Many people have

come to see that in these often badly structured and crude paintings there shines a vitality, a dignity and a beauty that transcends many finished works of art. The trained eye sees in them an *eros* struggling to breakthrough.

Chinese and Japanese artists often held that one should never attempt anything without including incompleteness and imperfection, an emptiness that leaves room for further growth. To do otherwise is an insult to the viewer, a failure to leave room for the imagination. In that sense, the greater part of any actual creation is what it intimates about the future. Put in a paradoxical way, the less perfected something is, the more perfect it is. That which is less perfected opens the door to greater perfection.

Metaphysically, if every human being is both perfect and imperfect, there is a clear need for a much deeper explanation of the relation between spirit and matter, consciousness and form, *purusha* and *prakriti*. If one is perfect in consciousness, whilst imperfect in form, what, then, is human perfection? Human perfection must refer to the relationship between that which is mortal and that which is immortal, that which is finite and that which is inexhaustible. Clearly, one cannot work out such a doctrine of perfection without a doctrine of planes of consciousness and states of matter, with correspondences and consubstantiality between each plane of ideation and each state of matter. Therefore, the entire notion of perfection involves a cosmology. It also involves a complex system of teachings about the interactions between the finitizing tendency in Nature and in human consciousness and the transcendent elements that work through matter.

Thus one reaches the critical conclusion that one cannot know from the outside, in the realm of the mortal and the imperfect, what is really going on inside human beings. One has very little clue to the degrees of growth made by souls. Yet by watching the way a person sits,

the way a person moves, the way a person chooses, one can see something about the relation between inner and outer. A crucial starting point, which provides a criterion of the spiritual quality of different cultures and collective notions of progress, goes back to a contribution of Pico della Mirandola at the time of the Renaissance: *human beings are so constituted that what is paradigmatic about being human is the possibility of exercising the power of choice.* This goes much further than any Aristotelian emphasis on reason or any conception of man as a rational animal capable of seeking happiness. Yet it is also diametrically opposite to the conventional Christian notion of man as an original sinner created by an omnipotent god. Man is that being who, alone in the universe, has both the prerogative and the predicament of exercising free choice. The extent to which a human being matures, develops and perfects the power of choice governs the extent to which he or she is able to bring down perfection into the realm of time, while at the same time recognizing the limits of what is possible in time. One cannot perfect the power of choice if one's concern is with anything less than the universal good. This insight goes all the way back to Plato. It comes through in Leibniz and it is implicit in Pico. If one is choosing in relation to a universal standard or the universal good, it is important to choose well. But it is also important not to expect that what one chooses will be more than a limited actualization of what is possible.

Take an example of effective choice. The average person has forty or fifty years between youth and old age in which to hold a job. One may, at high school and in the early years of university life, be spoilt by being able to switch constantly from course to course, by dropping out and coming back. Nonetheless, a point comes at which one has to choose to make the most of one's life vocationally, in terms of perfecting a skill and offering something useful to society.

One stays with the job until ready to retire. Whatever the limitations of one's job, one makes the most of it, lending it meaning from outside, and bringing to it a moral quality that goes beyond the technical job description. One must make an art of one's life, of the way one discharges duties, grows as a human being, and continues to read, think and learn. At the same time, one must learn from errors and make adjustments, not only in one's psyche, but also in one's expectations, and above all in one's relationships, so that one comes to value fidelity. One must not see others as expendable in terms of one's erratic notions of unlimited satisfaction, but must stick with them. The moment one chooses a specific vocation—what Buddha called right livelihood—one must limit oneself.

The moment one begins to see the subtleties in the notion of perfection, one must prepare for a shock. Every human being defines himself or herself at the moment of birth by the way he or she pronounces the AUM. Human beings delude themselves over a lifetime, because they have in fact defined themselves by the sound they uttered at the moment of birth. The way that sound is uttered, the quality of it, the degree of detachment it represents, marks the degree of honest recognition of the limitations built into physical incarnation. It is a cry of universality, of enthusiasm and of gratitude to the mother. If this is not shock enough, one must also see that the sound uttered by human beings at the moment of death has consequences equally devastating to complacency. How many human beings are able to die with the same sound they began with as babies? If all babies begin life with the AUM, how many can die with it on their lips, not uttered in the same way as before, but uttered with wisdom, detachment and compassion? If one sees this connection between the moment of birth and the moment of death, one will understand something about continuity in life.

How little, then, is known about human beings from the outside, and how little do people know about themselves. There is no basis whatsoever for making any external judgements about the status of human souls, because all such notions can only be made from the outside. No wonder, then, that people caught up in empiricism and perfectionism reduce their assessments of human stature to false ideas about tall and short. Often people are imprisoned in totally false and unnecessary myths. It is so sad to think of whole nations wasting their energy trying to be taller. There must be something more inspiring to human life. Yet this is what happens when people will not be agnostic and calm, will not look within and be honest with themselves. Anxious to settle for an external criterion, they will usually go for a crude measure that tells nothing at all about the human condition. This is only possible because today, as never before, people are willing to divorce notions of perfection from ethical considerations. All the notions of perfection that sustained excellence in classical cultures for a long time had ethical foundations. In the most ancient civilizations, this went far beyond any notions of heaven and hell, salvation and damnation.

Once one has genuinely faced one's ignorance of perfection, one is entitled to ask what it is that will actually provide consciousness a means of sifting and selecting. How can one not only get to know, but get to know better? How can one learn to do better and sustain an incentive to grow, to perfect oneself beyond specific skills and beyond limiting lists of moral virtue? To answer these questions, one will have to look at all the ingredients involved in this process. The most important are illumination and imagination. Illumination is very rare. Each human being may have moments of illumination in deep sleep, certainly in meditation, but illumination is not something one can command. Nor is it something one can contrive or fool

oneself about: it is something for which one has to prepare oneself. Imagination, on the other hand, is something everyone can start working with. The first step involves a good spring-cleaning job, as one cleans out the imagination, empties out all the rubbish put into it for years by television, the media and the visual bombardment of sensation. One should remove all limiting concepts of a perfectionist nature in regard to either the moral or the mental life, let alone the spiritual. One should also completely eradicate any lingering notion about whether perfected men are either bearded or beardless. *Yogins* may look like beggars. They may come as kings. They may come in whatever form suits them, for part of their whole purpose is to come in a form in which they are invisible. They are certainly not going to fulfil the requirements and expectations of those who are looking from outside.

In deep sleep, the immaculate imagination may recover the forgotten language of the soul. This may take the form of geometrical signs or more elaborate glyphs and symbols, but it can also take the form of powerful ideation. Above all, there is no richer food for the imagination than the magnificent portraits of Sages given in the sacred texts. Every day in his ashram throughout his adult life, Gandhi used the last nineteen verses in the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the great section on the Self-Governed Sage. That one passage gives a basis for meditating about the perfected man, not in terms of anything external, but in terms of internal essence. Like a master musician who is not concerned with performing on stage, the Sage has perfected within himself his relationship to the instrument, to the vestures. One may read these great portraits in the *Gita* and make them come alive, just as millions of people around Southeast Asia have made come alive something that is intangible behind the Buddha statue. Such statues are all too often the subject of humour in Western drawing

rooms, but to the poor peasant in Thailand they are everything. God, humanity and all the sages speak to him through the silence of that small stone statue. The gap in consciousness between this purity of imagination and the so-called sophistication of the polluted modern mind underscores the necessity of refining and redefining one's sense of imagination. When an island of pure thought is formed in waking meditation, it can link up with deep sleep, and the soul can become ready for illumination.

Full illumination requires complete mastery of the paradox of the manifest and the unmanifest, and supreme spiritual perfection requires effortless exemplification of the transcendental virtues "that transform the body into the Tree of Knowledge". Mystically, the three great Perfections are the three *kayas*, the three bodies of the perfected man. In Buddhist tradition they are the *dharmakaya*, the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*. Each represents a type of spiritual perfection. In the first case, spiritual perfection involves a long, deliberate and strenuous process of detachment through meditation upon emptiness, *shunyata*, and mastery of the ability to withdraw at will from one's astral form. At some point in some life, one attains absorption into the golden aura of the unmanifest Logos. This is a very high nirvanic state, equivalent to *moksha* or liberation in the Hindu tradition. It enables an individual to cut the chain of involuntary incarnations into a body in a world of suffering. But this emancipation is secured at the expense of cutting such beings off from any possibility of communication with ordinary suffering humanity. Those who take this *dharmakaya* vesture are absorbed into the most pristine state of matter that can be imagined. It is actually the state of matter that is the basis of *Adibuddha*, the ultimate Buddha-nature. Essentially, it is the basis of all perfected beings, but there are crucial

differences in the ways that different kinds of perfected beings make use of that light-substance, *suddhasattva*. The *sambhogakaya* represents a second mode of spiritual perfection that is universally relevant to all manifested divine incarnations: Krishna is a paradigm of it. Wherever an exalted incarnation comes to give an indication of the divine graces and excellences possible for human beings, that is the *sambhogakaya*. Such a glorious being lives in the golden aura of the manifested Logos, whether he is called Christos, Krishna or by any other name.

The third type of spiritual perfection, designated as the *nirmanakaya*, is the specific goal represented by Gautama Buddha and the continuing work of the Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas, the Mahatmas who breathe solely for the sake of universal enlightenment. The *nirmanakaya* is a distinctive and extremely difficult kind of perfection. It involves perfection of the capacity to create out of the subtler vestures an astral form which is devoid of qualities. This alchemically regenerated form enables one to move anywhere invisibly and to assist human beings unknown to them. It also enables one consciously to take whatever body is necessary or available for the purpose of extending the work of universal enlightenment. Most Nirmanakayas are unseen, anonymous and disguised. One cannot discern them from outside, because they have chosen to come in ways in which they can perfect right livelihood and, at the same time, maximize the work they do in the realm of contemplation, ideation, true theurgy, healing and, above all, beneficent meditation.

The three types of spiritual perfection represented by the three *kayas* may be thought of in terms of different types of meditative discipline. The paradox is that going higher does not necessarily represent the attainment of a higher level of spiritual perfection. Going high and bringing down what one can for the sake of raising others is the highest

perfection. Among the Mahatmas, therefore, there is no greater example of the perfect man than Gautama Buddha. Greatness among Mahatmas has to do with greatness in renunciation, greatness in control of temper, greatness in freedom from possessions, and greatness in total sacrifice for the sake of the least and the most tormented, so that they may re-enter the kingdom of divine selfhood. The whole challenge of the philosophy of perfection lies in one's potential, which is something less than one's conceivable perfection and more than one's actual perfection. It lies in the ratio of silence to speech, of patience to self-assertion, of surrender to imposition. The more one is non-violent, the more one is willing to yield to another. "Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for another" is one of the greatest mantrams of all times. Here is the authentic accent of that particular kind of spiritual perfection which is the highest and holiest in human evolution. It is much harder than everything else because it involves overcoming the ego, while at the same time remaining in a world which, as depicted in the Allegory of the Cave, remains a dungeon whose language is egotism.

Spiritual perfection requires extraordinary courage and patience. Continuity of consciousness is, therefore, the most meaningful way of looking at perfectibility. How much can one maintain a vibration through day and night? Through the days of the week? Through a month? Through the seasons between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, between the spring equinox and the summer solstice—not just through one year, but through seven years? Can one even imagine what it means to maintain a spiritual vibration until the last breath? If so, can one then begin to imagine what it is like to be able to keep appointments across future lives, not in the realm of fantasy, but in the realm of painful fact?

An extraordinary story is told of Ananda, the disciple of Buddha, who once turned aside an attractive young lady because she was totally unready for renunciation. Before she could curse him, he said, "One day, when no one else wants you, I will be there." Decades later, when she was a dying, rotten carcass in the streets, Ananda heard her cry and left the company of Buddha. He went many miles to reach her, and then, practically unknown even to her, washed her body, tended it, and helped her enter the Sangha before she died. What a different criterion of greatness this is from anything in modern times. The present is an age in which people cannot even be true in the evening to a promise made in the morning. Yet this sad fact only reinforces the therapeutic importance of considering examples of beings so great that they can keep appointments over decades and across lives.

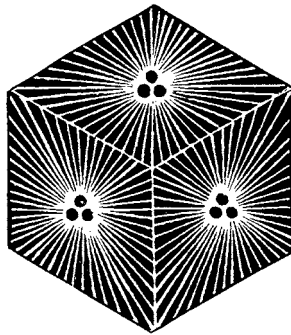
The one thing one must never do is sell short the ideal of human perfection. All human beings are perfected gods in chains. But all human beings also have to go through the same arduous process before they can attain to a high degree of spiritual wakefulness, fidelity and control. Where individuals can remain true to a vibration, they must do so, showing the moral courage of those, like Thoreau, who listen to the beat of another drummer. Those who hear and heed the music of the spheres can rarely share it with others, because most people are totally caught in the noise of the age. To be able to remain with and among all those people, who are like lotuses suffocating in the mire, while at the same time giving hope and instruction to those rare flowers that are struggling to rise to the surface, is indeed a high degree of continuity of consciousness.

Unless one establishes oneself in what is universal, on the side of all beings and the future, one will irreversibly fall behind. The stakes for humanity have become extremely high, and the ultimacy of choice represented by the words of Jesus,

“Whom choose ye this day?”, has come to pass. It is truly the case that the Perfect Sage has no name and no form. He lives in the nameless, and he is formless. But the current of light-energy and good represented by such a being leaves one no choice except to be with it or to be tossed away by its force. Starting from small concepts and simple examples, one can see that the notion of perfectibility embraces something so much vaster than can ever be put into any categories. At the same time, it is a viable, living, relevant ideal for every human being, because each human being archetypally goes through the same stages, is involved in the same powers and faculties, and lives in a common field of space, time and energy. Every human being by day, and certainly in deep sleep at night, experiences something of the true meaning of the odyssey of the soul in its long and immemorial quest towards the perfecting of all humanity.

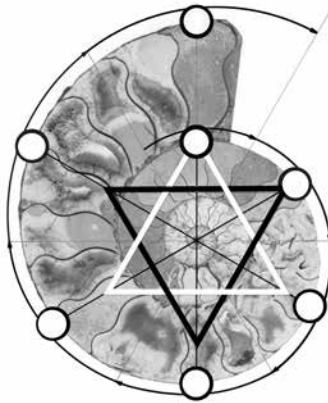
*The Gupta Vidya II: The Golden Thread*

RAGHAVAN IYER



*When the high heart we magnify,  
And the clear vision celebrate,  
And worship greatness passing by,  
Ourselves are great.*

JOHN DRINKWATER



*A character broad in vision, generous in sympathy, deep in motivation, firm in the degree of deliberation — this is the self-created product of thought ranging from calm consideration to continuous meditation.*

HERMES

## GRACE

Theosophists may find the concept of grace awkward. One might think of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, still officially held by some Christian denominations, in which God already knows the fate—Heaven or Hell—of all human beings, and therefore their fate is fixed. From birth one is fated to one of these ends, and nothing one does alters that ultimate end. God’s grace determines that end, and some receive it and others do not. Predestinationists also believe that sincere efforts to live the Christian life of loving others as oneself and being compassionate and generous to others (at least to fellow Christians) are indications that one has that grace and will go to Heaven, but they do not guarantee it. The how and why of the bestowal of God’s grace is unknowable; this is one of God’s mysterious ways, beyond human understanding.

To a non-Christian, the invocation of God’s “mysterious ways” looks like a convenient mask covering God’s arbitrary actions. A Theosophist has been taught that nothing is arbitrary in all existence, visible and invisible, and so such conceptions of grace are unsatisfactory. These views are tied up to the idea of a personal God who dispenses grace as he pleases, and, however dressed in theological garments, such distribution still looks like divine whim. Yet given that Christian ideas pervade those areas in which Christianity reigned supreme until the rise of secular society and still suffuse it, narrow conceptions of grace linger in consciousness.

Theosophists have been taught about “the grace of the Guru,” and ancient teachings have always contained concepts of grace. But these teachings have something in

mind quite different from “the will of God” as characterized above. What then is grace?

The Hindu sacred texts contain a number of great utterances, perhaps the most renowned of which is *tat tvam asi*, “That thou art” (You are That). Who is this “you” in this profound statement? One’s understanding will depend on who or, better, what one thinks one is. If one thinks one is the body or the personality, then the statement is simply false. If one thinks one is the monad in the sense of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, then the statement is relevant at that level. But if one recognizes that one is *Atma*, which is utterly universal and includes all existence, then the statement is true, and is a spiritual tautology. Such recognition, however, requires nothing less than the transformation of the individual.

In *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P. Blavatsky provided a picture of intelligence and consciousness pervading the unfoldment of the universe and of the involution and evolution of consciousness in the human being who becomes human with the lighting up of *manas*, the thinking principle thereby becoming self-conscious. The human being now begins to self-consciously participate in evolution, elevating all existence and undertaking the long journey to its Source, the One Life, and ultimately beyond. For the individual human being, this means transforming one’s consciousness so that the spiritual light increasingly manifests in the individual and radiates beneficently out to everything the individual encounters. What unfolds and returns in this magnificent process is always present potentially, to use a word from Aristotle. Unfoldment is the movement from pure potential to dynamic possibility to actualization. Return, for the human being, is the self-conscious retracing of that path to the Source. Since each human being is utterly entwined with all that is, this pilgrimage has effects quite beyond the individual undertaking it.

*The Voice of the Silence* offers a grand portrait of the path of the individual aspiring to Truth and Reality, and many instructions are set out as to what the aspirant must do to proceed along that path. To place this process in its universal context, we need to consider a larger picture than offered by the individual thinking in terms of himself or herself.

Regarding the Great Sacrifice, H.P.B. wrote:

He is the “Initiator”, called the “GREAT SACRIFICE”. For, sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit at the fountain of primeval Wisdom, at which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know—aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely, sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their home are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE.

It is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHA—(great)—GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind became, from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity. It is through these “Sons of God” that infant humanity got its first notions of all the arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge; and it is to they who have

laid the first foundation-stone of those ancient civilizations that puzzle so sorely our modern generation of students and scholars.

In this awe-inspiring portrait of the highest consciousness in our manifest world we have the radiant source and foundation of all our spiritual possibilities. This is not some one-time event or series of events at some point in humanity's long pre-history. It is the fundamental fact of human life. Pandit Bhavani Shankar said:

It is the Light of the Logos (*Daiviprakriti*) which keeps up the Guruparampara; for it is the spiritual light that is transmitted from Guru to the disciple when the time for real initiation comes.

Contacting such a Teacher is not only desirable but necessary for full realization, for becoming in consciousness the *tvam* of *tat tvam asi*. Yet in our increasingly secular world, where pseudo-teachers and ersatz teachings abound along with denials of the reality of anything spiritual, it seems virtually impossible to find any authentic teacher. But is this really so?

Here *The Voice* is deeply relevant, for it sets out the Path to such a teacher. The Masters—Mahatmas—behind the Theosophical Movement represented by H.P.B. and her closest companions like William Quan Judge, clearly stated that taking one step toward them allows them to take one step toward the aspirant. And here is a vital clue. As the great Neoplatonist Iamblichus made clear, the gods do not descend to us in our ignorant, confused, chaotic and distracted lower selves, with which we all too readily identify. We must in some sense rise to their level. What this means is that we must cleanse ourselves of those confusions and distractions and focus on what we really are, immortal rays of the divine Light. This is an inward and

outward process—we must put into practice the *paramitas* of *The Voice*—*dana, shila, kshanti, viraga*—generosity, ethical conduct, patience, indifference to pleasure and pain—outwardly, in our daily activities facing the world—and inwardly—*virya, dhyana, prajna*—dauntless energy toward the goal, meditation, wisdom. Our external life needs to be ordered in a spiritual direction so that our internal life can receive the attention it requires. To the degree that we endeavor to do this, we increasingly discover that the outer and inner dimension are one unfoldment, and all the *paramitas* are essential to both. We engage the self-induced process of purification from our illusions and delusions by treading this path. No matter our ignorance in trying to do so, we learn now from concentrated focus on the great panorama H.P.B. offered, aspiration for Truth and realization of it, and devotion to the guru.

To the degree that we are successful, we prepare ourselves for the guru, whom H.P.B. says we will sense long before we encounter. The voice likens this to the tuning of an instrument like a lyre, so that it can respond in tune, so to speak, with the guru's plucking, or like a flute, to the breath-voice of the teacher. Put simply, we invoke the guru that is deep within each of us to align with the guru who is teaching us. Without that attunement, the teacher's words will fall on deaf ears. In cleansing ourselves of what is irrelevant and a hindrance to spiritual unfoldment, the creative power of the Guru can reach us. One step toward the Master allows the Master to take one step toward us.

We must discern and choose the guru to whom we will be devoted, and everything just discussed must occur. Once sufficiently purified by removal of the dross of personal concerns, worldly desires, distractions of every kind, we are open to the inner light that has always been present but heretofore obscured. To the degree one is attuned, the

guru can teach, so what one receives depends on one's self-chosen and determined efforts. At various points in this ever ongoing process, which occurs at many levels, physical, mental, astral, kamic, we can be initiated. This helping us over one threshold or another of the many that lead to full realization is an initiation at the appropriate level, and this initiation is the grace of the guru. To put it metaphorically, we climb the stairway to heaven with help at every step, but we must take the steps. If we do, there is grace. This is true at every level, right up to that of the Great Sacrifice.

Clearly there is nothing personal in this process. If we undertake this effort for purely personal reasons, we will at some point fail miserably. As an inseverable part of humanity, which consists of individuals only below a certain level of existence, we tread this path for humanity itself—indeed, for all existence. For as we rise, so to speak, we uplift others. This is the message of *The Voice* when it says of one who reaches the lofty goal:

Hark! ...from the deep unfathomable vortex  
of that golden light in which the Victor bathes  
ALL NATURE'S wordless voice in thousand tones  
ariseth to proclaim: ....A NEW ARHAN IS BORN.

May we all merit that grace which is our birthright but which we must earn. In the words of *The Voice of the Silence* and many Buddhist sacred texts: *Peace to all beings.*



# LIVING SPRINGS



**R**ise up, O Sun! most glorious minister and light of day!  
Flow on, ye gentle airs, and bear the voice of my rejoicing!  
Wave freshly, clear waters, flowing around the tender grass;  
And thou, sweet-smelling ground, put forth thy life in fruit and flowers!

**Follow me, O my flocks, and hear me sing my rapturous  
song!**

**I will cause my voice to be heard on the clouds that  
glitter in the sun.**

**I will call, and who shall answer me? I shall sing; who  
shall reply?**

**For, from my pleasant hills, behold the living, living  
springs,**

**Running among my green pastures, delighting among  
my trees!**

**I am not here alone: my flocks, you are my brethren;  
And you birds, that sing and adorn the sky, you are my  
sisters.**

**I sing, and you reply to my song; I rejoice, and you are  
glad.**

**Follow me, O my flocks! we will now descend into the  
valley.**

**O, how delicious are the grapes, flourishing in the sun!  
How clear the spring of the rock, running among the  
golden sand!**

**How cool the breezes of the valley! And the arms of the  
branching trees**

**Cover us from the sun: come and let us sit in the  
shade...**

**Here will I build myself a house, and here I'll call on His  
name;**

**Here I'll return, when I am weary, and take my pleasant  
rest.**

**WILLIAM BLAKE**

# THREE PRINCIPAL ASPECTS OF THE PATH

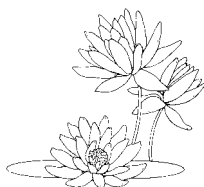
Homage to the precious noble masters!

1. The very essence of all the buddhas' teachings, the path that is praised by the noble Bodhisattvas, and the entrance for all fortunate ones desiring liberation—to the best of my ability, I shall now set forth.
2. You who are unattached to *samsara's* pleasures, and strive to make full use of the freedoms and advantages, you who follow the path delighting all the buddhas—fortunate ones, listen well, with a clear and open mind.
3. Whilst lacking *pure renunciation* there is no way to pacify the continual thirst for pleasure in the ocean of *samsara*, and since all living beings are bound by their craving for existence, you must begin by finding the determination to be free.
4. The freedoms and advantages are rare, and there's no time to waste—reflect on this again and yet again, and dispel attachment to this life. To dispel attachment to your future lives, contemplate repeatedly the unfailing effects of karma and the sufferings of *samsara*.
5. When, through growing accustomed to thinking in this way, hope for the pleasures of *samsara* no longer arises even for an instant, and throughout both day and night you long for liberation, then, at that time, true renunciation has been born.

6. Yet if this renunciation is not embraced by the *pure motivation of bodhichitta*, it will not become a cause for the perfect bliss of unsurpassed awakening, so the wise should generate supreme *bodhichitta*.
7. Beings are swept along by the powerful current of the four rivers, tightly bound by the chains of their karma, so difficult to undo, ensnared within the iron trap of their self-grasping, and enshrouded in the thick darkness of ignorance.
8. Again and yet again, they are reborn in limitless *samsara*, and constantly tormented by the three forms of suffering. This is the current condition of all your mothers from previous lives. Contemplate their plight and generate supreme *bodhichitta*.
9. If you lack the *wisdom* that realizes the nature of things, although you might grow accustomed to renunciation and *bodhichitta*, you will be incapable of cutting through conditioned existence at its root. Exert yourself, therefore, in the methods for realizing interdependence.
10. The one who sees that cause and effect operate infallibly for all the phenomena of *samsara* and *nirvana*, and for whom any objects of conceptual focus have subsided, has set out upon the path delighting all the buddhas.
11. The knowledge that appearances arise unfailingly in dependence, and the knowledge that they are empty and beyond all assertions—as long as these two appear to you as separate, there can be no realization of the Buddha's wisdom.

12. Yet when they arise at once, not each in turn but both together, then through merely seeing unfailing dependent origination, certainty is born, and all modes of misapprehension fall apart—that is when discernment of the view has reached perfection.
13. When you know that appearances dispel the extreme of existence, while the extreme of nothingness is eliminated by emptiness, and you also come to know how emptiness arises as cause and effect, then you will be immune to any view entailing clinging to extremes.
14. When, in this way, you have correctly understood the key points of the three principal aspects of the path, withdraw to solitude, dear son, strengthen your diligence, and swiftly accomplish the ultimate and lasting aim.

JE TSONG KHA PA



*On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven,  
a perfect round.*

ROBERT BROWNING



*Kwan Yin*



## QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

*Philosophy begins in wonder.* PLATO

### DYNAMIC UNITY

**QUESTION:** How is this Lodge a reflection of the Lodge of Adepts in this age of inversion?

**RESPONSE:** To the extent that any Lodge teaches and embodies the principles of the Declaration it is a reflection of the Great Lodge. The Great Lodge is universal and so are these principles. But there are no chosen ones; if Masters can work through some, it is because they have fitted themselves for that work. To the extent that a Lodge strives for universal brotherhood in practice and a profounder conviction, they reflect the Great Lodge.

But there are always degrees of reflection; we reflect more or less, and can ever reflect more. The reflective capacity depends on the effort of each individual in the Lodge. Hence finding the Lodge which reflects and then sitting back does not help. We are a dynamic unity and must each make the effort. In this way we individually and collectively reflect.

The Masters need focal points to work in the world. If we do not provide these points, we are not rejected but they must find them elsewhere.

**QUESTION:** How may we have a conscious life in Spirit?

**RESPONSE:** We are self-conscious beings and so have some level of self-awareness. But we mostly live with

consciousness caught up in the phenomenal world. It is colored by the false ego which arrogates reality to itself, and some start on the wrong basis. Self-regeneration is the attempt to reverse our direction, to live in spirit and not matter. When we begin to entertain archetypal ideas, we move like the prisoner in Plato's cave away from the back wall and toward the entrance. This is the process of self-regeneration, moving consciousness toward the eternal verities. The Buddha taught that the first step of the Noble Eightfold Path is "Right View". We need to rethink our preconceptions and conclusions and turn consciousness towards the realm of the Spirit. The mind can redirect consciousness when the Higher Mind turns toward *Buddhi*. Philosophical understanding that the real Self is not the ego is critical, though intellectual understanding is not enough. It must be put into practice to grow. It is possible for consciousness to dwell consciously in the Spirit even while being involved in the phenomenal world.

**QUESTION:** How can shifting mental perspectives support regeneration?

**RESPONSE:** Robert Crosbie said that we think that this is a world of persons and things when it is a world of forces and ideas. Persons, for us, means separate entities, as we also think of objects. We often look upon people as objects, thinking in terms of their usefulness to us and in no other way. Even when we look upon them as persons, we may think of them as personalities, and we see nothing behind that. But there are immortal souls behind such things, involved in an eternal process. Thus we see stills from a film which we cannot see properly. Such views produce much psychological and ecological karma, such as creating

psychological tensions or degrading the resources others depend on merely for personal satisfaction or monetary gain. Everything has a degree of consciousness and life, and everything is part of one great chain of being.

If we look on the world as ideas and forces, we begin to see ourselves as part of a network of forces. Such a view is dynamic. There is a constant interaction between our deployment of energy and the energetic field around us. We are knots of such energy, the meeting point of lines of karma which seeks eternally to restore balance. The universe is intertwined in all its parts; everything is energy; thus karma works.

Indra's net is infinite, and where its strands meet, there is a gem which is a being. If there is pulling at that point, the whole net is skewed...

Ideas rule the world, for in their archetypal form they shape the world through laws. We are meeting points of forces—*vijnana*, consciousness in general, that which makes up the individual at any given time. This general coloration affects all that we think and do. So we can look upon individuals as sets of ideas upon which lives are lived and actions played out. Self-regeneration involves changing a mind-set, discarding outmoded, defunct and useless ideas and replacing them with more dynamic ideas which involve more of the truth.

**QUESTION:** How is it that no man has a burden greater than he can bear?

**RESPONSE:** Indra's net shows the interconnectedness of things. But then we have to look specifically at human karma. Karma deals out not only what we have sown in the past but also what it is appropriate to reap now. This implies that karma is an intelligent law. Here 'bear' refers

to the soul and not the personality, which claims that it can bear very little.

**QUESTION:** There are different kinds of regeneration. How are they connected?

**RESPONSE:** The key to spiritual regeneration is at the mental and moral level. The mind, Shankara says, is what binds us, but it also sets us free. It is Kurukshetra where the battle must be fought. The ray of *Atman* is reflected in *Buddhi*, but that does not fully incarnate and must be mediated through *Manas* which works through its projected ray. So we must do a 180 degree turn in consciousness.

Shiva is depicted as burning all the lower nature with his eye. When it is cremated, the Spirit can quicken what is left. Hence Shiva dances in the cremation ground. It is not the personality *per se*, but the separate sense of self which must be annihilated. The moral level deals with motives, and it too is critical. At the moral level we need a Copernican revolution, which is a total displacement of the center of our thinking, and this will affect our motives. As we see our true identity is the *Atman*, old motives fall away, for they are closely connected with the way we see things. If we do not see Spirit, it is difficult to have pure motives, for there is nothing but the personal self. This break is therefore a radical shattering of our worldly perceptions and our coming to see that the ego is illusory. That changes motives. Identity with all beings becomes the lever which culminates in the *Bodhisattva*, whose compassion leads him to work in every way for the regeneration of all beings. Thus to the extent that we strive to regenerate ourselves, we contribute to the regeneration of the whole. Thus all nature rejoices when a new Arhan is born.

ARIEL

# HENRY DAVID THOREAU:

## THE REDISCOVERY OF ANCIENT WISDOM

### Part I



*To affect the quality of the day, that is the  
highest of arts.*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

**H**enry David Thoreau (July 12, 1817 – May 6, 1862) is typically referred to as a leading Transcendentalist, poet-naturalist, proto-environmentalist and philosophical anarchist. As an American visionary of penetrating wit and consummate literary craftsmanship, he is best known for his landmark book *Walden* and his gripping essay on “Civil Disobedience.” As a man whose life marked the transition from the first to the second Industrial revolution,

he is widely remembered for his distrust of the value of new technologies, his plea of “Simplicity!”, his semi-monastic retreat to a tiny, self-built cabin on the shores of Walden Pond and his deep appreciation of our natural environment in both mythic and scientific terms. The precise observations he collected at Walden are still used by climate scientists today, and later in his life he sent some nine hundred different plant specimens to the Swiss-born Harvard biologist Louis Agassiz. However, it has not as often been emphasized that Thoreau was also a deeply intuitive spiritual seeker and natural mystic. Though he was an outspoken critic of the dogmas and empty rituals associated with institutionalized religion, the more profound strains of Thoreau’s writing reveal a depth of interior spiritual experience and communion that generations since have turned to for insight and nourishment. Moreover, a careful reading of his journals reveals that his mystic reveries and ecstasies, were not confined to his youth or his retreat at Walden. Joyous “influxes” of what he called a “serene and unquestionable wisdom” coupled with “intimations of immortality” continued even into his troubled later years. As one of his most intimate and lifelong mentors and friends, Ralph Waldo Emerson called him “a man of rare, tender and absolute religion.” While on his death-bed in 1862 Thoreau was reportedly asked by his aunt if he had made peace with God and he replied, “I did not know we had ever quarreled.”

All this begins to explain why professor Laura Walls, author of an extensive 2017 biography, stated that Thoreau has never been entirely captured in written description. “He defies classification.” He was too multi-dimensional and unbounded, nuanced, mischievous, brilliant and paradoxical. Even the friends who knew him best while he lived, she says, despaired of offering an accurate portrayal.

So rather than another biographical account, we might instead attempt to answer two questions:

1. In what way is Thoreau's life and thought relevant to us today? How is it applicable in an era where political, social and economic elitism and inequality plague the globe, where zoonotic pandemics arise with increasing frequency, where climate change and vast species extinction is accepted as a fact of what we call modern civilization. Does Thoreau's voice help us to see the fundamental roots of these devastating problems?

2. As students of ancient wisdom ourselves, we might also ask in what way does Thoreau's life and thought align with the primary themes of the modern Theosophical movement as it began to emerge on the American continent just a few years after his death? An approach to these questions leads us to examine four broad interconnected themes: Thoreau's Legacy; *Ex Oriente Lux*: "Light from the East"; Walking the Talk; and The Mystic Path.

## **Thoreau's Legacy**

Compared to many iconic figures of American history, Thoreau left us an abundant record. Unable to make a living either as a writer or public speaker, this did not prevent him from fulfilling his vocational calling as "a man of letters." During the twenty-five years from his graduation at Harvard, until his death at age forty-four, his books, articles, essays, journals, and poetry amounted to more than twenty volumes. The vast majority of that creative work occurred in his two million word journal, what some scholars refer to as his true masterpiece and from which his more formal pieces emerged.

Though mentored and at times promoted by the more popular and sagely Emerson, many of his literary

contemporaries either criticized, dismissed or studiously ignored Thoreau's writing. And his first major publishing venture, a book titled *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) was a small disaster for him. Four years after its release he finally acquiesced to his publishers' plea to accept the seven hundred six unsold copies piled in the warehouse and to pay for them. Having famously built a cabin in the woods for \$28.12 just four years earlier, Thoreau now owed \$290 to his publisher, a debt which took him four years to pay off. Thoreau noted wryly in his journal: "I now have a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven-hundred of which I wrote myself."

His second book, *Walden*, enjoyed some success upon its release, but still took five years to sell two thousand copies, and then went out of print until his death. Decades after his passing, the American poet Robert Frost wrote of *Walden*, "In one book...he surpasses everything we have had in America." Today *Walden* is widely considered one of the finest classics of American literature, available in at least seventeen different editions. By the late twentieth century, the book had been translated into eleven languages. In 2002, the *Walden* scholar Ken Kifer wrote:

Thoreau's careful observations and devastating conclusions have rippled into time, becoming stronger as the weaknesses Thoreau noted have become more pronounced...Events that seem to be completely unrelated to his stay at Walden Pond have been influenced by it, including the national park system, the British labor movement...the hippie revolution, the environmental movement, and the wilderness movement.

*Walden* is not disconnected from Thoreau's revolutionary influence in other arenas. Besides being a lifelong student of classical scripture, American Indian

culture and the reverential preservation of nature, Thoreau was also a lifelong opponent of all forms of injustice, especially of government sanctioned oppression. This included slavery, the slaughter and abuse of indigenous Indian populations and imperialistic war. In 1845, age twenty-eight, having withheld paying poll tax for six years to the US government on the basis that its actions were morally unsupportable, Thoreau famously was arrested and imprisoned. The time spent in Concord jail lasted only a single night, for that very same evening, an unsolicited and anonymous donor brought cash to his jailor to cover the unpaid taxes. Still, the experience inspired an essay by Thoreau which came to be titled "Civil Disobedience."

The question the essay raises has not grown old with the passing of time. It is just as biting and relevant to every person today as it was when written. What is our duty as citizens and moral agents, Thoreau queries, when we see government enacting policies or laws which are unjust or immoral? Are we not obligated to act on the basis of conscience and universal ethical principles, at whatever the cost to ourselves, despite what might be expedient or in our best economic interest?

Action from principle, the perception and the performance of right, changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with anything which was. It not only divides states and churches, it divides families; ay, it divides the individual, separating the diabolical in him from the divine.

Thoreau was articulating aspects of what H.P. Blavatsky forty years later called the heart of *Theosophia*. It is that of divine ethics promulgated by sages and adepts down through the ages. Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience became a corner-stone of twentieth century

protest against unjust laws and oppressive regimes across the world, impacting the lives of millions.

The two most notable examples would be M.K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.. In 1908, his *satyagraha* movement in South Africa well underway, Mohandas K. Gandhi first read Thoreau's essay while in prison. The idea of non-violent civil disobedience reinforced Gandhi's thinking already based on the Sermon on the Mount, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the ancient ideal of "holding onto truth" found in the great Indian epics. Gandhi wrote and published a synopsis of Thoreau's argument, calling it "the scientific...essence of his political philosophy," containing an "incisive logic...that is unanswerable." Years later Gandhi recommended the study of Thoreau's essay to all those who sought to help the cause of Indian Independence and called Thoreau "one of the greatest and most moral men America has produced."

Almost a full century after the essay appeared, Martin Luther King Jr. had his first encounter with the idea of nonviolent civil resistance in 1944 while attending Morehouse College. He wrote in his autobiography:

Here, in this courageous New Englander's refusal to pay his taxes and his choice of jail rather than support a war that would spread slavery's territory into Mexico, I made my first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance. Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, I was so deeply moved that I reread the work several times. I became convinced that noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. No other person has been more eloquent and passionate in getting this idea across than Henry David Thoreau. As a result of his writings and personal witness, we are the heirs of a legacy of creative protest. The teachings of Thoreau came alive in our civil rights movement; indeed, they are

more alive than ever before. Whether expressed in a sit-in at lunch counters, a freedom ride into Mississippi, a peaceful protest in Albany, Georgia, a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, these are outgrowths of Thoreau's insistence that evil must be resisted and that no moral man can patiently adjust to injustice.

### *Ex Oriente Lux*

*Ex oriente lux* may still be the motto of scholars, for the Western world has not yet derived from the East all the light which it is destined to receive thence.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

H. P. Blavatsky taught that when rightly translated and understood in their esoteric meaning, ancient Hindu and Buddhist teaching will be found to be one of the richest expressions available to us of divine wisdom. The study and appreciation of these traditions would be an invaluable aid to the Western mind in the effort towards true spiritual and moral awakening. This drawing together of East and West, she wrote to the American Section in Boston just a few decades after Thoreau's passing, was so "that each may supply the qualities lacking in the other," thus aiding in "more fraternal feelings among Nations." The recognition of universal truths in nature common to many traditions, would help dissolve the barriers to harmonious relations, to the cultivation of true and authentic brother and sisterhood. Towards this aim, the modern Theosophical movement has produced and supported the publication of many fresh translations and recensions of ancient sacred texts, both Eastern and Western, along with insightful commentaries thereon.

Woven into Thoreau's journals, books and essays, is a similar underlying keynote. Long before it was popular or acceptable, the Transcendentalists openly embraced and revered the ancient sacred texts of central Asia and incorporated these scriptures into their poetry and prose and in varying degrees, into the moral tenor of their lives. Philip Goldberg, author of *American Veda, How Indian Spirituality Changed the West*, called Emerson "the first American *jnana yogin*," Thoreau was the *karma yogin* and Whitman the *bhakti yogin*. And it is through their influence, Goldberg asserts, that millions of educated Americans, now spanning several generations, began to be touched by and interested in the fundamental religious and philosophical precepts of ancient India.

The sub-title of this essay, the "rediscovery of ancient wisdom" points to the fact that the relatively modern interest in the Orient is a repeated theme in the larger history of Western culture. According to Iamblichus for example, in the sixth century B.C.E., Pythagoras, called by some scholars the father of Western philosophy and science, sought out and was accepted by the hierophants of the temples of India, the Middle East and Egypt, and was initiated into their deepest mysteries. It was not until the age of fifty-six that he returned to Greece to begin his public teaching. His "music of the spheres" and geometrical decade were reformulations of Brahma Vach. Likewise Plato, known as the foremost student of Pythagoras, is described by Blavatsky much like the true Jesus, as an Initiate and emissary who put the core tenets of Eastern Philosophy and ethics into fresh formulation. She asserted that the purest strains of the ancient Greek Mystery Schools, before their corruption and demonization, were deeply rooted in Oriental wisdom, ancient India having been the spiritual alma mater and preserver of nature's deepest truths. Blavatsky taught and Raghavan Iyer confirmed

that in the last quarter of each century, a concerted effort has been made by Eastern Adepts and sages who have sent their messengers to the West. Their mission is to further the aims of universal enlightenment and the continuity of collective growth through the revival of the perennial philosophy and the centrality of the Bodhisattva Path, the common inheritance of the whole of humanity.

It is a well-documented fact that in the modern West, beginning around the late 1700s the ancient East was filtering westward through other, more publicly known literary channels. This literature is said to have given birth to what is called the European Oriental Renaissance, initiated through the first scholarly translations of ancient Sanskrit texts into western languages. Sponsored by the Asiatic Society of Bengal founded in 1784, the initial intent was quite different than that of the promulgation of wisdom. The financing of linguistic scholars such as Sir Willian Jones, Charles Wilkins and Max Müller were made in order to serve the commercial and imperial interests of the British empire. It also was intended to serve the missionary aim of converting “the natives of India to the Christian religion.” In order to convert, it was argued, the missionary must first understand the viewpoint of the natives. Combined with the shallow philosophic prejudices of Western orientalist and symbologists, these purposes tended to bias both the translations and the commentaries. Despite the drawbacks, there were cultural benefits that followed. Not only the *Bhagavad Gita*, but other key scriptures, translated directly from Sanskrit to English, were reaching Boston harbors starting in the 1830s and became deeply influential to Transcendentalist thought.

There are several of these translations which are known to have especially caught the attention of Thoreau: a) *The Hitopadesa*, which is a traditional collection of Hindu folk tales. b) Some portions of the *Manava-Dharmashastra*

or 'Laws of Manu.' This was Thoreau's early favorite and is a text which we also find many references to in *The Secret Doctrine*, as having deep esoteric significance. c) Colebrooke's translation of the *Samkhya Karikas* (1837) which is a summation and commentary on the Sankhya system of Indian philosophy. d) The *Vishnu Purana*, a core text of the Vaishnava tradition, and e) a French translation of the *Harivamsa Purana*, a sacred text from the Jain tradition. In addition to being deeply influenced by these texts, Thoreau himself translated an episode of the *Harivamsa* from French into English. Never published as a stand-alone book, Thoreau translated the title as "The Transmigration of the Seven Brahmans." At one level it depicts the activity over several reincarnations of wise rishis. Allegorically, it also draws attention to the seven-fold principles of cosmic and human nature, a core feature of eastern philosophy found in the Vedas and Upanishads which H.P. Blavatsky went to great lengths to explain as a central keynote of Trans-Himalayan philosophy, i.e.: *Theosophia*.

Thoreau's initial engagement with these texts appears to be somewhat conditioned by the platitudes of European Orientalism. But *Walden*, by the time of its publication in 1854, had gone through at least six significant re-writes and revisions over a ten year period and therefore represents his more mature thinking. There are over forty quotations from Eastern texts in *Walden*. Oriental lore had become a sublime touch stone by which Thoreau measured wisdom, a kind of ancient hymn in which Thoreau's own inner voice and luminous insights found confirmation and resonance.

In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem

puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.”

*Walden*, “The Pond in Winter”

In an 1849, age thirty-two, in letter to his friend H.G.O. Blake, Thoreau wrote about yoga and its meaning to him:

Free in this world as the birds in the air, disengaged from every kind of chains, those who practice yoga gather in Brahm the certain fruits of their works. Depend upon it that, rude and careless as I am, I would fain practice the yoga faithfully. The yogi, absorbed in contemplation, contributes in his degree to creation; he breathes a divine perfume, he hears wonderful things. Divine forms traverse him without tearing him, and united to the nature which is proper to him, he goes, he acts as animating original matter. To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a yogi.

Of course, the yoga of which Thoreau is speaking is not the *asanas* and *pranayamas* of Hatha Yoga whose watered down versions are so popular in modern culture. It is rather more akin to what W. Q. Judge called the “Kingly Yoga” or the *Raja Yoga* of Patanjali’s aphorisms. The *Bhagavad Gita* delineates this path in such extraordinary depth that Judge also called it “the study of adepts,” the “science of devotion” which will arouse the conviction that there is One Spirit, not several. The *Gita* portrays the allegorical

Mahabharatan war by which the mind which perceives and acts on the basis of a separate, self-seeking identity is entirely overcome. All the boundaries of finitizing consciousness and personal desire are progressively conquered and all veils lifted as microcosm merges with macrocosm, the aspirant with Krishna. As Thoreau seemed to grasp, the discipline not only re-unites one with the whole, but with all enlightened beings and all seekers in all times, in all cultures and climes.

The oldest Egyptian or Hindoo philosopher raised a corner of the veil from the statue of the divinity; and still the trembling robe remains raised, and I gaze upon as fresh a glory as he did, since it was I in him that was then so bold, and it is he in me that now reviews the vision. No dust has settled on that robe; no time has elapsed since that divinity was revealed. That time which we really improve, or which is improvable, is neither past, present, nor future.

In another passage from *Walden*, we find the fundamental message of Chapter XIII of the *Gita* filtered through Thoreau's own words and internal experience. It is the teaching regarding the distinction between the mortal vs the immortal self, in Sanskrit the *Kshetra* and *Kshetragna*. The *Kshetra* or the "field", refers to the vestures of incarnation and the manifold conditions and circumstance which arise through them. These are all mutable, transitory and perishable. While *Kshetragna* refers to the conscious knower of the field, the Witness or the Perceiver, what Thoreau calls "the spectator", which in the *Gita* is of the same essence as Knowledge—immutable, eternal and imperishable.

With thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense. By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their

consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature. I may be either the driftwood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it. I may be affected by a theatrical exhibition; on the other hand, I may not be affected by an actual event which appears to concern me much more. I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it, and that is no more I than it is you. When the play, it may be the tragedy, of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned..

*Walden*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

The spectator, Thoreau explains, is no more the personal I, than it is the personal you. It is beyond self and other, past and future, an utterly transcendent and immortal point of consciousness, the God within each. At the same time, Thoreau is not separating his true self from nature, even in its most transitory forms. He is “the driftwood in the stream,” as much as any other ephemeral thing in continual evolution and change. Thus, in a single paragraph the ancient Upanishadic teaching of maya as well as of deity, both Transcendent and Immanent is suggested.

Blavatsky taught that the true pantheistic “idea of a general Spirit-Soul pervading all Nature” is the oldest of all the philosophical notions,” and is intimately bound up with idea of humanity and nature as differentiations of deity, rather than creations apart. This appears to have been no mere doctrine for Thoreau, but a living reality to



*Yosemite Valley, California*

which he dedicated his life. For Thoreau, evidence of that truth could be most easily found in the untamed wilds. He spoke of the deepest, un-touched forest as his “cathedral” and “sanctum sanctorum.” “All the motions of nature... the running stream, the waving tree, the roving wind,” he called the “circulations of God.” He thought himself more favored than other men for he directly experienced an unending “sweet and beneficent society in Nature... an infinite and unaccountable friendliness,” and sustaining atmosphere. “Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended” him. In every scene which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary, he was distinctly aware, he wrote, of “something kindred,” such that he thought he could never be lonely, nor any place ever strange to him again.

*(to be continued...)*



## CORRELATIONS

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

PATANJALI

## IDEALS AND LIMITATIONS

The goal of the aspirant for spiritual wisdom is entrance upon a higher plane of existence; he is to become a new man, more perfect in every way than he is at present, and if he succeeds, his capabilities and faculties will receive a corresponding increase of range and power, just as in the visible world we find that each stage in the evolutionary scale is marked by increase of capacity. This is how it is that the Adept becomes endowed with marvellous powers that have been so often described, but the main point to be remembered is, that these powers are the natural accompaniments of existence on a higher plane of evolution, just as the ordinary human faculties are the natural accompaniments of existence on the ordinary human plane.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

What is to learn, is to be content, or, rather, resigned to ourselves and our limitations even while striving to get above them... You need never excuse yourself at all in the forum of your own judgment, but when you have passed your judgment, bow your head. We cannot all at once live up to these high ideals as some others live up to theirs. Some are pleased with themselves because their rules allow it, and they are thus quiet, but it is not that quiet I refer to. Your soul may be quiet even while the body rages.

(See *The Voice of the Silence*.) I am never, nor you, satisfied with ourselves, but we must be resigned to the limitations of our character as they appear to us. The greatest error in occultism is to doubt one's self, for it leads to all doubt. The doubts of others, which we have, always spring from the inward doubt of self. Do not doubt, then, even so much as you admit, in yourself.

W.Q. JUDGE

The words "Universal Divine Perfections" have a significance not usually perceived. Men speak of perfection from the standpoint of imperfection, and always in relation to forms, conditions and appearances that are constantly changing; so that with humanity in general the standard of perfection is an ever-receding and elusive, as well as delusive idea. Here again, as with our modern science, we reason from particulars to universals, instead of from universals to particulars, never perceiving that nothing less than *the cause itself* could ever know *itself*.

The discourses of Krishna but repeat that which was known before, to the perfected men of all ages, and that which all divine incarnations have since declared—that Man is identical with the Absolute unmanifested, and also with the Deity as we see It manifested in Nature.

ROBERT CROSBIE



# WALT WHITMAN AND THEOSOPHY

## PART I

**I**t is not surprising that Walt Whitman has stirred, and continues to stir-up, attention among theosophists. You find frequent references in his writing to the doctrines of karma, reincarnation, spiritual evolution, pluralism, immortality, the equality of the sexes and races, compassion, the dignity of the common laborer, and even the avatar and the elder brothers of the race. Of course, you don't necessarily find these *terms*—the nomenclature that theosophists use. But the doctrines are unmistakably expressed and may readily be cited. That said, Whitman would bristle at the mention of belonging to any school of thought or religion. He wanted to stir people up and set them free from narrow dogmas and ideas, from the Victorian emotional inheritance of shame and self-diminishment, and to release in readers a vital self-confidence, a spontaneity of expression, a renewed wonder at the natural world, and a spiritual feeling of cosmic belonging. He was a man of heart who was initiating his readers into the way of the heart. His path involved the whole person, not merely the intellect.

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the  
Soul,  
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the  
pains of hell are with me,  
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the  
latter I translate into a new tongue.

He chided the “proud libraries”, which could never provide a fitting home for his book of poems, *Leaves of Grass*. He was not writing primarily for the literary elite but for the common man or woman, who he imagined would read his poems in the open-air during respites from their daily toil. He loved them, and he called for their love in return.

Whitman died in 1892. In other words, he lived for seventeen years after the inauguration of the Theosophical Society in 1875 and there is some traceable mingling of his sphere with its members. Sylvester Baxter, a staff writer for the Boston *Herald* was a friend and admirer of the poet. Baxter lobbied his congressman to help secure Whitman a government pension. (Whitman had served as a volunteer nurse to wounded soldiers during the Civil War.) But Baxter was also a member of the Theosophical Society, and assisted his friend, W.Q. Judge, with the publication of *The Path* magazine. Judge and Baxter co-wrote *Poetical Occultism*, an article on Whitman’s work, which was sent to the poet. Baxter tried to convince Whitman that he was really, in fact, a theosophist. Other friends, in turn, found in Whitman a socialist or an anarchist. Such is the open texture and universality of *Leaves of Grass*, that its language accommodates the perspectives of myriads of idealists. “I am large, I contain multitudes,” wrote Whitman towards the end of *Song of Myself*. Impatient of being pigeon-holed, he mused to his friend Horace Traubel, “How much of me is going to be left for myself after all the claims of the radicals are satisfied?” In his own words, he was untranslatable, as genuine art always is. No more than a symphony or a painting, the direct experience of a great poem is never reducible to any explanation. Knowing *about* is not the same as *knowing*. ‘About’ always circles the outskirts. Comparing himself to a hawk, in the last section of *Song of Myself*, Whitman says, “I too am not a bit tamed, I too am

untranslatable,/ I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.”

In still another article in *The Path* magazine, editor W.Q. Judge penned some deeply suggestive lines about the poet. He begins by claiming that no body of Hierophants had yet taken up residence in Europe or America, for the society and culture are inhospitable, based in externals and economics. However, there *is* real work going on; preliminary work at the mental and psychic level, like the pioneering effort to clear trees before agriculture and settlement may take place. And this work is performed by “Messengers”, Judge says. These Messengers “possess a faith that carries them through a long course of effort without a glimpse of those who have sent them.” They must be undeterred by the critical attitudes of those who, wanting a sign, doubt that these messages really do come from higher authorities. “Yet at the same time, some of them now and then see very plain evidence of the fact that they are constantly assisted.” Judge then appears to identify Whitman as one such Messenger, for he quotes the poem “To Him that was Crucified” in full.

MY spirit to yours dear brother,  
 Do not mind because many sounding your name  
   do not understand you,  
 I do not sound your name, but I understand you,  
 I specify you with joy O my comrade to salute you,  
   and to salute those who are with you, before  
   and since, and those to come also,  
 That we all labor together transmitting the same  
   charge and succession,  
 We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of  
   times,  
 We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers  
   of all theologies,  
 Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,

We walk silent among disputes and assertions,  
 but reject not the disputers nor any thing that  
 is asserted,  
 We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd  
 at by divisions, jealousies, recriminations on  
 every side,  
 They close peremptorily upon us to surround us,  
 my comrade,  
 Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over,  
 journeying up and down till we make our  
 ineffaceable mark upon time and the diverse  
 eras,  
 Till we saturate time and eras, that the men  
 and women of races, ages to come, may prove  
 brethren and lovers as we are.

A paragraph later Judge quotes a line from Whitman's  
 "Song of the Rolling Earth": "When the materials are all  
 prepared and ready the architects shall appear." Whitman  
 states in several places that his work was preparatory, that  
 "poets to come" will do far more.

Whitman appears to make a similar distinction in his  
 rather occult poem, "The Answerer". Rather than speaking  
 of Adepts and Messengers, in Whitman's terminology it  
 is the "Poet" and the "singers." The Poet, like the Avatar,  
 strikes a keynote. The singers are specialists who extend  
 and apply the resounding vibration in particular directions.  
 Their inspiration is derived; through them overtones and  
 echoes of the Avataric impulse are extended. The singers  
 are many and various; the birth of "the maker of poems",  
 however, is rare. Centuries pass between such births.

What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the  
 pleasant company of singers, and their words,  
 The words of the singers are the hours or minutes  
 of the light or dark, but the words of the maker  
 of poems are the general light and dark,

The maker of poems settles justice, reality,  
immortality,  
His insight and power encircle things and the  
human race,  
He is the glory and extract thus far of things and  
of the human race.

The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,  
The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear  
often enough, but rare has the day been,  
likewise the spot, of the birth of the maker of  
poems, the Answerer,  
(Not every century nor every five centuries has  
contain'd such a day, for all its names.)

“Song of the Answerer”

What do we make of this elevated concept of the “poet”? This question is key to a deeper appreciation of Whitman, expanding our regard for him from that of an artist to a prophet. Poetry, for Whitman, was not the art of wordplay. Nor was the true poet necessarily a writer. (The Greek root *poiein* is a generic term, *to create*, applicable to all the arts.) Of course, a poet may use words, but words are only a means for moving souls. Whitman believed that same end could also be achieved through speech, song, touch, or by means of a glance. At the deepest level, poetry is the spiritual influence that passes from one soul to another. Rooted in his inward spiritual culture, the poet’s verbal and written expressions are as spontaneous and unstudied as the sprouting of wild grass.

### **The Self — *Atman***

Poet and translator Stephen Mitchell calls “Song of Myself” the greatest American poem ever written. Of course, not everyone shares that opinion. Many readers

have difficulties making sense of Whitman's reference to the self. Whitman's contemporary, poet Sydney Lanier wrote, "As near as I can make out, his argument seems to be that because a prairie is wide, therefore debauchery is admirable; and because the Mississippi is long, therefore every American is God." An 1856 review from *The Boston Intelligencer* summarily dismissed Whitman's work as a "heterogeneous mass of bombast, egotism, vulgarity, and nonsense." Not long ago, I was speaking with a retired English teacher about the epidemic of narcissism in American culture. To my surprise and dismay, she traced it back to Walt Whitman. How so? I asked. "Song of Myself!" she replied, as if self-evident, "Me, me, me!"

The 'self' in Whitman's poetry is varied and fluid. His poems speak from varying levels and states of consciousness. Sometimes it *is* the personality of the poet himself, Whitman even using his own name.

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,  
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and  
breeding,  
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and  
women or apart from them,  
No more modest than immodest.

At other times, it is the soul behind that personality—transcendent, impersonal, detached, nonjudgmental. In "Song of Myself" the poet contrasts distracting personal concerns with the presence of the immortal 'witness' within.

Trippers and askers surround me,  
  
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life  
or the ward and city I live in, or the nation,  
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies,  
authors old and new,

My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments,  
 dues,  
 ...These come to me days and nights and go from  
 me again,  
 But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what  
 I am,  
 Stands amused, complacent, compassionating,  
 idle, unitary,  
 Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an  
 impalpable certain rest,  
 Looking with side-curved head curious what will  
 come next,  
 Both in and out of the game and watching and  
 wondering at it.

Still, at other times, the 'self' is plastic and sympathetic to the extreme, mirrored in all people, all occupations, all natural forms, all afflictions. Many passages in *Leaves of Grass* read something like the tenth chapter in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "The Yoga of the Universal Divine Perfections," a dizzying deluge of images and ideas seemingly arranged by free association, but beginning with the primordial Self (the *Atman*).

I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all  
 beings;  
 I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all  
 existing things.  
*Bhagavad Gita*, Ch.10

This is likely the passage Henry David Thoreau had in mind when he asked Whitman (during their only personal meeting) if he had read "the Orientals." "No," Whitman replied, "Why don't you tell me about them." A typically evasive reply by the furtive poet.

In section fifteen of “Song of Myself”, for example, we find some sixty lines apparently arranged by no logic at all. The reader’s mind races through a slide show.

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
 The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of  
 his foreplane whistles its wild ascending lisp,  
 The married and unmarried children ride home  
 to their Thanksgiving dinner,  
 The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down  
 with a strong arm,  
 The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance  
 and harpoon are ready,  
 The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious  
 stretches,  
 The deacons are ordain’d with cross’d hands at  
 the altar,  
 The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the  
 hum of the big wheel . . .

That’s only eight of the lines. On and on it goes, the reader bewildered by the torrent—likely overwhelmed, even fatigued—wondering where it is all tends. When cultural critics bemoan today’s short attention spans, and music videos average cut durations of 0.8 seconds, I think of Whitman’s verbal “slide shows” in the mid-nineteenth century—at once fracturing attention but also challenging the reader to become the thread himself. Commenting wryly on this aspect of the poet’s art, Thoreau wrote to his friend, Harrison Blake, that Whitman takes him to a hilltop expecting to see wonders—and then throws in a ton of bricks! Emerson sent a copy of *Leaves of Grass* to Thomas Carlyle in England, with the ambiguous compliment that the work was a curious blend of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *New York Herald*. (He enjoined Carlyle to light his pipe with the pages if nothing else—cagey behavior for a man who had written privately to Whitman expressing full-

throated praise.) But I think we should regard Whitman's pile-on method as deliberate. As a writer and editor he took great care. I like to reach for the Buddhist concept of *skillful means* when characterizing Whitman and his method. If the reader is *patient*, and moves lightly, freely, with enjoyment and imagination through the torrent, the method earns trust by experience. Walt always emerges personally at some point as you rise for air, above the multitude of specifics, and assume a general perspective. He moves you from the Many to the One, and back again; for like the Platonic *Eros*, Whitman's Self is the intercourse between the two worlds. He ends section fifteen:

And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward  
to them,  
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
And of these one and all I weave the song of  
myself.

Or, again, a bit earlier in the poem, Whitman is "a fluid and swallowing soul",

In me the caresser of life wherever moving,  
backward as well as forward sluing,  
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person  
or object missing,  
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

*(to be continued...)*



## UNITED LODGE OF THEOSOPHISTS

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Spring 2026

*Sundays, 7:15 P.M.*

April	5	The Light of the Christos
	12	Fellowship and True Community
	19	Sleep and Dreams
	26	The Symbol of the Dove*
May	3	White Lotus Day: H.P. Blavatsky—The Service of Humanity
	10	Karma and Freedom
	17	The Vast Chain of Being
	24	Cultivating Calmness
	31	The Three Classes of Karma*
June	7	Reincarnation—Journey of the Soul
	14	States of Consciousness
	21	U.L.T. Day: Unity, Study and Work
	28	The Theosophical Seal*

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.

*We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own — indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life, with which we have shared our evolutionary process.*

WANGARI MAATHAI

# REAL KNOWLEDGE

The important question: "What is Real Knowledge?" should be answered. Many people confound physical seeing with knowledge. They do not think deeply enough to discover that one may see a thing and not know it, while he may know a thing and yet not see it.

True perception is true knowledge. Perception is the capacity of the soul; it is the sight of the higher intelligence whose vision never errs. And that can be best exercised in true serenity of mind, as Mahatma K.H. observes: "it is upon the serene and placid surface of the unruffled mind that visions gathered from the invisible, find a representation in the visible world." In short—as the Hindu allegory has it—"It is in the dead of night that Krishna is born."

In Occultism, Krishna represents the Christ Principle; the *Atma* of the Vedantins, or the seventh principle; the Logos of the Christians—the Divine Spirit, who is the manifested Son of the unmanifested Father. In the dead of night, that is, when there is complete physical and mental rest, when there is perfect quiet and peace of mind. It is only then that the individuality of man—his higher nature—becomes a fit vehicle for the manifestation of The Word. This is what is meant in the Bible where it says that we must try to obtain "redemption through Christ". The Divine Principle in man is indivisible; the human soul is universal. He who would live and enjoy eternal life must live in and unite the human soul with the Divine Principle. Therefore, a sense of personal isolation brings on death and annihilation, while genuine unselfish philanthropy places the individual in touch with the Divine Spirit, and thus gives him eternal life.

The Divine Spirit is all-pervading, and those who put themselves en rapport with the Divine Spirit are

necessarily *en rapport* with all other entities who are also *en rapport* with it. Hence, the Mahatmas, who are conscious of the Logos, are in constant magnetic relation to those who succeed in extricating themselves from the lower animal nature; and, by evolving the higher *Manas* (the mind, the fifth principle of the occultist), [try] to unite it permanently with *Buddhi* and *Atma*, the sixth and the seventh principles mentioned in the occult doctrine. It is by this means that the Mahatmas must first be known. What is a Mahatma? Is it his physical body? No! The physical must perish, sooner or later. But the Mahatma lives in his higher individuality and, to know him truly, he must be known through that individuality in which he is centered. The body is merely a fulcrum of the lever through which physical results have to be produced. But, for him, the body is like a house. He inhabits it so long as it serves his purpose.

Knowledge increases in proportion to its use. That is to say, the more we teach, the more we learn. In the same manner, the more that an organ is exercised, the greater is its functional activity increased; provided, of course, that too much is not expected of it at once. So also is the will strengthened, the more it is exercised; and the more one meets with temptation—which can only be possible if he lives with his companions—the greater opportunities has he of exercising, and thereby strengthening the will. In this process, there does come a time when the constitution of one is changed as to incapacitate him for work on the physical plane. He must then work upon it, through higher planes into which he must retire. But until that time arrives he must be with humanity, and unselfishly work for their real progress and advancement. This alone can bring true happiness.

DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR

# THE SINGLE HEART

*He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me,  
to him I am never lost, nor is he lost to Me.*

*Bhagavad Gita VI.30*

SHRI KRISHNA

**A**ll her life Rabia had a great love for God. She always carried God in her heart, and yet she sighed and longed for him. She often fasted and prayed.

Once she had fasted for a whole week, never resting and always praying. When she was weak and exhausted from hunger, a neighbour woman happened to bring her a bowl of food.

Rabia went to get a lamp so that she could have a light to eat by. But when she came back with the lamp, she found that a cat had knocked the bowl to the ground and the food had spilt.

This time Rabia went to get a pitcher of water, thinking, "If I cannot have food, I will at least have water."

But as she was returning with the pitcher, it fell from her hand and broke, and the water spilt from it.

Sad and bewildered, Rabia sighed such a sigh that it would have set the world on fire. She cried, "O God, what do you want of me? I am poor and helpless. How long will you let me suffer?"

Then came a voice, saying, "Rabia, you know that even at this moment I could give you the whole world, all that lies between the Fish under the earth and the Moon above it. But in the moment that I did so, you would find that I was no longer in your heart. All your life you have grieved and longed for me. If you begin to care for the things of this world now, your love for me will vanish. Think on this: Not

in a hundred years will longing for me and for the things of this world meet together in a single heart.

“If you wish to suffer for me, you must forsake the world forever. If you wish to suffer for me, you must pay the price.”

A SUFI TALE

*Know that what is other than the Real, that is, the Cosmos, is, in relation to the Real, as a shadow is to that which casts the shadow.*

MUHYIDDIN IBN AL-‘ARABI

*Live your life while you have it. Life is a splendid gift.... But to live your life you must discipline it. You must not fritter it away in “fair purpose, erring act, inconstant will” but make your thoughts, your acts, all work to the same end and that end, not self but God. That is what we call character.*

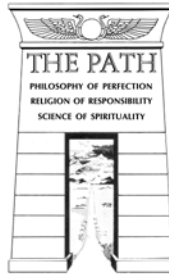
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

*Restrain voice in thyself, restrain thyself in the understanding, restrain the understanding in the witness of the understanding, restrain that in the universal Self, going beyond separateness, and thus enter into perfect peace.*

SHANKARACHARYA



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