

Stars and Stones on

THE PATH

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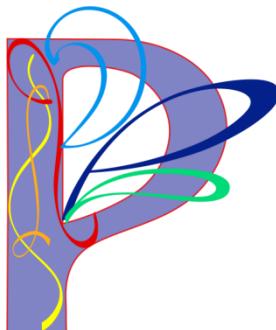
Integrative Theosophical Studies Online Series 5
Living the Life

Stars and Stones on
THE PATH

A practical manual for aspirants to Theosophy

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Contents and train of thoughts

Prefatory notes	4
Abstract	5
Opening thoughts	9
Prerequisites for aspirants	10
Esoteric Section Preliminary Memorandum	12
1. Loyalty and devotion to Truth make up the right attitude	15
2. Charity and mercy, harmlessness and humbleness, kindness and gentleness, define the right approach	20
3. Prerequisites for study and self-knowledge	26
4. Co-operation with Nature, diligent study, fortitude and perseverance in the face of adversity and, above all, unconditional love for humanity and all that lives, make up the right conduct	33
5. Stones on the Path	40
6. Chelas, Disciples, Shravakas, Upasans: united in thought and deed	43
7. When you see the light, that light is from you and it is you	47
A comparison of two sets of prerequisites for chelas	48



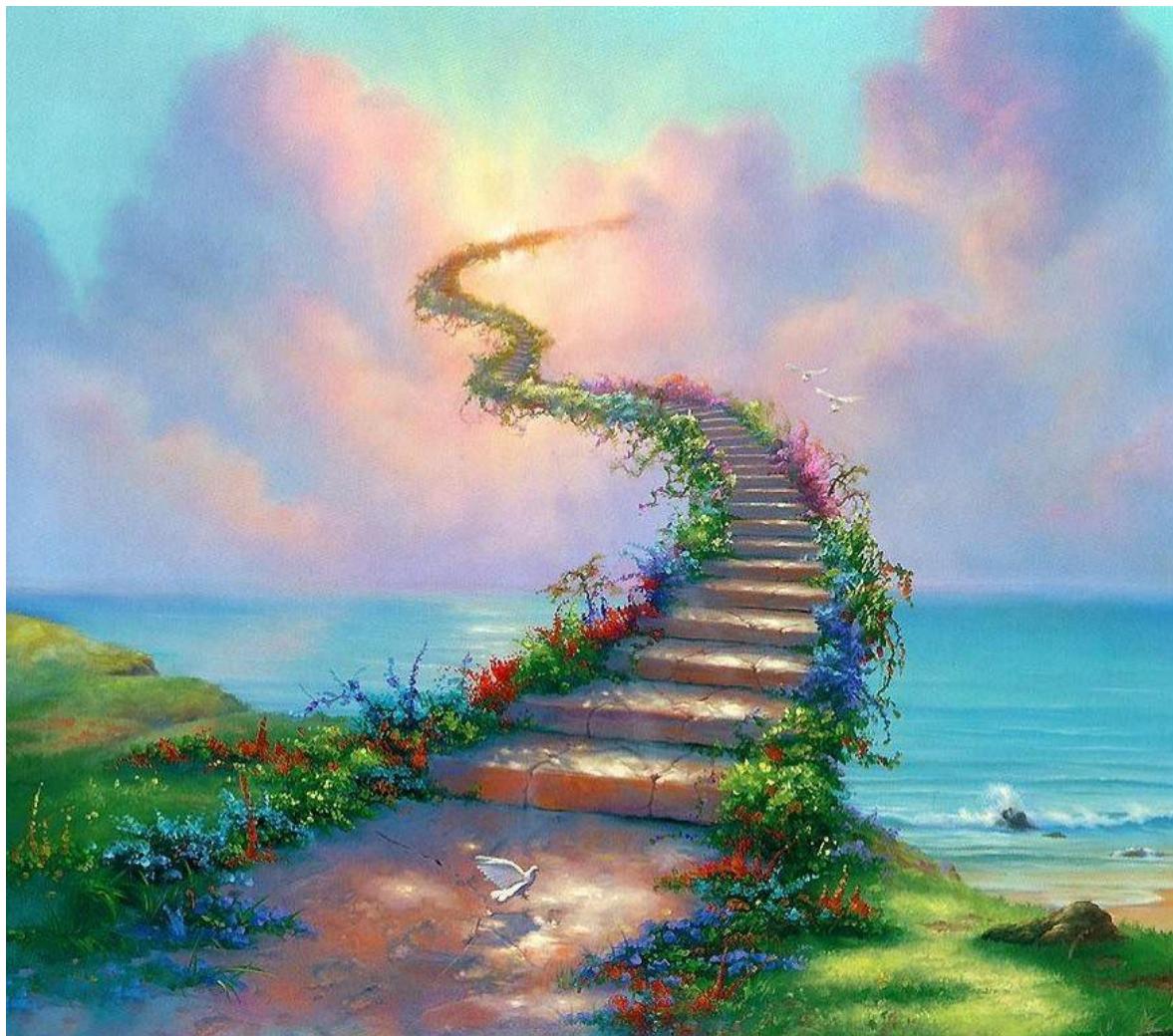
Prefatory notes

This is a practical manual for aspirants to Theosophy. It was first published in 2006 for fellow travellers along the same path. It reflects the advice of H.P. Blavatsky and the cis Himalayan Architects and Overseers of the Theosophical Society, and is the basis of a future companion volume to *Compassion the Spirit of Truth*.

Further revised and typographically enhanced, it is now republished as part of our Integrative Theosophical Studies Online Series 5 on Living the Life.

Titles of frequently quoted works are abridged as indicated in *Compassion: the Spirit of Truth* (2009). The Editor's Notes are common to all our publications and can be found in the same place.

SERIES EDITOR
17th November 2009



Abstract

Loyalty and devotion to Truth make up the right attitude.

The aspirant must unlearn all that he knows, prepare himself for martyrdom, and begin to learn a new alphabet on the lap of Mother Nature, every letter of which will afford a new insight to him, every syllable and word, an unexpected revelation.

Nature gives up her secrets and imparts true wisdom only to Philaletheians because they love Truth for her own sake.

Christianity has always put down and martyred those who have the audacity, in this time of social abasement and corruption, to live up to its ideals. The only scientific basis of morality is to be sought for in the doctrines of Lord Buddha and Sri Shankaracharya.

Occultism requires unflinching loyalty and devotion to Truth. Otherwise, the faint-hearted will be ridiculed and chaffed by the masses, and partake in the terrible fate of Oedipus. But Truth should not be sought for intellectual acquisitiveness, pleasure, contempt of others, profit, fame, honour, promotion, and for other inferior ends. A clean life is the first step towards the Temple of Truth.

An outward looking mindset, trapped in the gloom and doom of separateness, invariably gives rise to pessimism. But the abyss of despair has its advantages:

- 1 It encourages a mental U-turn from exterior preoccupations to interior realms of being and spirituality. It is like a chink in the dark prison walls of earth-life, through which breaks in a ray of light from the eternal home and which, illuminating the inner senses, whispers to the prisoner in his shell of clay the origin and the dual mystery of our being.
- 2 It is a tacit proof of the presence in man of that which knows, without being told, i.e., that there is another and a better life, once that the curse of earth-lives is lived through.

Charity and mercy, harmlessness and humbleness, kindness and gentleness, define the right approach.

Before you even think of treading the path, purify the material self. Otherwise you will end up degrading the spiritual. You have to fathom the mysteries of the heart, before you can hope to unravel the mysteries of the soul. Superhuman powers are stones on the path. Faculties and abilities will come naturally to those who are mentally and ethically fit to use them for the common good. Mere desire for powers is a form of selfishness, and receives no encouragement from our Teachers. If aroused prematurely, they will hinder rather than help. Self-interest can neither reveal the powers latent in man, nor can it alleviate the woes of the “Great Orphan.”

Take heed of the words of a Master of Wisdom. Even virtues can be vices in the eyes of the beholder.

Silently and quietly endure what life brings, without expecting neither plaudits nor feedback. Pristine efforts cannot be thwarted by criticism and apathy. Nor can anyone hide from the all-seeing Law. Woe to those who live without suffering.

Prerequisites for study and self-knowledge.

- Awareness of the ignorance and deception of the world we live in.
- Conviction that self-knowledge can be obtained by personal effort.
- Determination to obtain and face that knowledge.

Eastern Occultism is the origin and fount of all we know and can possibly learn. There is nothing new under the Sun, nothing new except what is forgotten. The aim of education proper is the art of revealing to the ignorant the world of thought and law, of marvels and mysteries, of moral beauty and ideal truth that lies within us and about us. The aim of science proper is to trace unity in diversity and to sum up the laws that govern their manifold operations in Nature. Reasoning out the unknown from the known and vice-versa, i.e., inductive and deductive reasoning, is what meditation proper is all about. Having reasoned out the Eternal and Universal, then by purity and virtue we may begin to ascend towards the “Sacred Majesty of Truth.” Tarrying on the particulars will sink the mind in the shifting sands of doubt and despair, and any insight of the universals previously gained will be lost.

One has to take into account that many of the extant Sanskrit authorities are far from being sacred. For no truly esoteric doctrines were ever written. Many things are orally explained, and always have been. In any case, intellectual study alone is never enough, unless corroborated by application, practice, and experience. Unselfishness is likely to aid the mind and protect it from error.

Alas, too many Theosophists are content to read books and too few strive to further the interests of Brotherhood. If mastering a narrow domain of modern science requires years of unremitting study, how much longer will it take one to fathom out the world’s religions and philosophies? Only those Lovers of Truth who are self-reliant and willing to think for themselves can hope to progress by working out a conceptual structure of the Teachings which (a) stands to reason and (b) explains every mystery, and triumphantly demonstrates the nature of every phenomenon.

Key occult terms that will have to be understood by neophytes include:

- Spirit and Matter, Force and Space;
- Reality and Unreality, Formless and Form, Dream and Waking.
- Subjective and Objective, both as sensuous and as psychic perceptions.

Arguments, contentions, objections, and dissensions about the Teachings stifle intuition and are likely to sever the link between Guru and Chela. Immoral atmosphere saps siddhis.

Co-operation with Nature, diligent study, fortitude and perseverance in the face of adversity and, above all, unconditional love for humanity and all that lives, make up the right conduct.

Aspirants to the narrow and thorny Path should be deeply studying the philosophy of Occultism before entering upon the practical training. One must ascend the Golgotha of sentient life step by step unaided, by his own initiatives and exertions, ever moving onward and upward. Woe to him who, instead of studying the half-defaced landmarks, he pronounces them indecipherable. The Doctrine of Heart alone, can make of him an elect.

You cannot be one with ALL, unless all your acts, thoughts and feelings synchronise with the onward march of nature. You can only approach ALL through unconditional love of, and devotion to, Humanity and all that lives by turning away from selfishness, which is the main of sin and sorrow.

Don't even think of circumventing Karman through masterly inactivity. For inaction on the physical produces adverse effects on the spiritual planes. "Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin." The physical inactivity of a Mahatman or a Raja Yigin is quite different from the that of solitary fakirs, hermits, and Hatha Yogins. The former are working for mankind on high spiritual realms; the latter are afflicted from spiritual selfishness here, on Earth, the plane of illusion, and the greatest of all hells.

Stop pushing yourself forward. "Be restrained, be liberal, be merciful." Forget yourself in the midst of so many selves. Consider whether "turning the other cheek" may encourage offenders to re-offend. Stop abusing and tormenting animals, and eating their flesh. Desist from gossiping, for gossip fans flames! Condemn the sin, not the Sinner within.

Do not set yourself as example to others, for "the camel cannot see its own hump." But by example you can imprint upon the astral light pictures of higher aspirations and thus aid advanced souls from other spheres to descend.

Stones on the Path.

Practical Occultism is fraught with dangers. It requires total, unreserved and unswerving commitment, and loyalty to Truth. The aspirant must choose between the life of the World and the life of Occultism. After a pledge is given, any sensual or even mental self-gratification will forfeit the power of spiritual discrimination. And, regardless of motive, the renegade will retrogress and sink deeper into the mire. Only implicit faith to the Teachings and explicit service to mankind can admit the disciple to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Neither success nor safety is to be found outside self-development. Woe to those who, driven by selfishness and vanity, dissent from the aim and ideals of the Theosophical Society and its motto. Disunity is the first condition of failure; rivalry, the second.

Chelas, Disciples, Shravakas, Upasans: united in thought and deed.

The sine qua non of “Chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery.” Chelaship is a psychic resolvent, which eats away all dross and leaves only the pure gold behind. Real gurus are not simply Adepts in Occult Sciences: they are Living Men of profound knowledge and noble ethics. They are masters of human nature and of the secrets of Nature herself. Entrance to the mysteries of Inner Life requires a pledge of seven years’ probation. Unswerving faith, trust, and confidence to the Master are indispensable. But many are unworthy of the honour.

“The results have been far from encouraging so far, and it is to show these unfortunates the cause of their failure as much as to warn others against rushing heedlessly upon a similar fate, that the writing of the present article has been ordered.”

Masters normally select Chelas from natural mystics in the East. Exceptions of accepted Chelas in the West include Fludd, Thomas Vaughan, Paracelsus, Pico della Mirandola, and Count de Saint-Germain.

When you see the light, that light is from you and it is you.



You look at the stars, my star.
Would that I were the heaven,
So that I could gaze at you with my eyes.

— PLATO?¹

What was it that Leonidas, their general, said to them? “March on with courage, my Lacedæmonians. To-night, perhaps, we shall sup in the regions below.” This was a brave nation while the laws of Lycurgus were in force. One of them, when a Persian had said to him in conversation, “We shall hide the sun from your sight by the number of our arrows and darts,” replied, “We shall fight, then in the shade.” Do I talk of their men? How great was that Lacedæmonian woman, who had sent her son to battle, and when she heard that he was slain, said, “I bore him for that purpose, that you might have a man who durst die for his country!”

— MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO²

Opening thoughts

True Occultism or Theosophy is the “Great Renunciation of SELF,” unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action. It is ALTRUISM, and it throws him who practises it out of calculation of the ranks of the living altogether. “Not for himself, but for the world, he lives,” as soon as he has pledged himself to the work. Much if forgiven during the first years of probation. But, not sooner is he “accepted” that his personality must disappear, and he has to become *a mere beneficent force in Nature*. There are two poles for him after that, two paths, and no midward place of rest. He has either to ascend laboriously, step by step, often through numerous incarnations and *no Devachanic break*, the golden ladder leading to Mahatmaship (the *Arhat* or *Bodhisattva* condition), or — he will let himself slide down the ladder at the first false step, and roll down into *Dugpaship* . . .³

Mystery is the negation of *Common Sense*, and Science repels it. According to Tyn-dall, metaphysics is *fiction*, like poetry. The man of Science *takes nothing on trust*; rejects everything *that is not proven to him*, while the Theologian accepts *everything on blind faith*. The Theosophist and the Occultist, who take nothing on trust, not even *exact Science*, the Spiritualist who denies dogma but believes in Spirits and in *invisible but potential influences*, all share in the same contempt.⁴



¹ Epigram ascribed to Plato in: *Anthologia Palatina* 7.669, tr. Hunter. (Αστερες εισαθρεις, Αστηρ εμος | Ειθε γενοιμην ουρανος ως πολλοις ομηρασιν εις σε βλεπω.)

² Cicero: *Tusculan Disputations* I, xlvi; tr. Yonge

³ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (OCCULTISM VERSUS THE OCCULT ARTS) IX p. 254

⁴ *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 669

Prerequisites for aspirants

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

— ELIZABETH BISHOP¹

Take back your resignations, then, you sincere ones, who dazzled by the ideal held up to you in the Master's letter, and stung by your sense of imperfection, have adopted the wrong expedient of retiring. This is the reverse of bravery. Try to realise that progress is made step by step, and each step is gained by heroic effort. Withdrawal means despair or timidity. "No Arhan, O Lanoo, becomes one in that birth when for the first the Soul begins to long for final liberation." (*Voice of the Silence*, p. 39) Read those words and remember them. "And if he falls, e'en then he does not fall in vain; the enemies he slew in the last battle will not return to life in the next birth that will be his." (*ibid.*, p. 40) Conquered passions, like slain tigers, can no longer turn and rend you. Be hopeful, then, not despairing. With each morning's awakening try to live through the day in harmony with the *Higher Self*. "Try" is the battle-cry taught by the Teachers to each pupil. Naught else is expected of you. *One who does his best does all that can be asked*. There is a moment when even a Buddha ceases to be a sinning mortal and takes his first step towards Buddhahood.

So, then, to answer plain questions put to me in several letters by frightened Esoterists, I say that probably through not one of you may attain in this birth to this full ideal (of Buddhahood), yet each of you may attain in this birth to tread the "Aryash-tanga-Marga." Afraid of *Pāramitās*, are you? A man may be patient, kind and conscientious, without becoming at once a King Hariśchandra. "The sixteen Pāramitās are not for priests and yogis alone," as said, but stand for models for all to strive after; and neither priest nor yogi, chela nor Mahatma, ever attained all, at once. Again, the idea that *sinners* and *saints* are expected to enter the *Path* is emphatically stated in *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 40, where it is said that "not one recruit can ever be refused the right to enter on the path that leads toward the field of battle."

Read the "Voice," I say. It was written for, and dedicated to you, by Master's special orders. Therein you will find all your inquiries anticipated and answered.²

In what particular, then, have I failed to do my duty? Simply in this, as I am shown: I have begun to give out Eastern teachings to those who were unacquainted with the Eastern discipline; to Westerners, who, had they been thoroughly versed in the laws of that discipline so unfamiliar to cultured Christian-born people, would have thought twice before joining the E.S. Being taught to rely on their Saviour and scapegoat instead of themselves, they have never stopped to think that their salvation and future incarnation depend entirely on themselves, and that every transgression against the Holy Ghost (their Higher Self) will indeed become unpardonable in their present life—or *their next incarnation*: for Karma is there to watch their actions, and even thoughts. In short, I have begun to instruct them in *spelling* before I had

¹ Bishop: *One Art*, lines 1-3

² Blavatsky Collected Writings, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) XII p. 505

taught them the *letters* of the Occult alphabet. Instead of solemnly warning those who signed their pledge that, by breaking it and becoming guilty of that which they had sworn to avoid, they incurred thereby the most dangerous responsibilities, entailing sooner or later the most terrible consequences, and proving this to them by living examples from their own and other people's lives, I left them to their own devices. Instead of such warning, I have given out to them the preliminary knowledge that leads to the most hidden secrets of nature and the old Wisdom-Religion—and which but very few can appreciate. I have, finally, neglecting to *prepare them* by first placing each and all on a twelve-month's or so *probation*, given them an opportunity of going quite easily, and in most cases, unconsciously to themselves, astray. It is in consequence of this that there has been such a number of members caring for nothing but *new* instructions to amuse them, and several backsliders who have already done the greatest harm to the Theosophical Society, let alone the E.S. This is the result and consequence of my neglect to conform with and enforce the rules; and I now confess it, in all humility, to all my friends who will read this.

How true are these words in Master's letter:

"Experience but too clearly proves that any departure from the time-honoured rules for the government and instructions of the disciple to suit Western custom and prejudices, is a fatal policy."

"Before the pupil can be taught, he must learn how to conduct himself as regards the world, his teacher, the sacred science, and his INNER SELF," the letter adds, quoting the Eastern aphorism that:

"The ruffled water-surface reflects naught but broken images":

the Master meaning that so long as the learners have not mastered their world-passions and remain ignorant of the *Truth*, their unprepared minds will perceive everything in the light of their *worldly*, not of their truly spiritual, esoteric judgment.

"How can they be expected, then" it asks, *"to see aught but the broken truths, that such judgment is sure to suggest and distort the more? Violation of ancient usages is sure to result in evil."¹*



¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII pp. 584-85

Esoteric Section Preliminary Memorandum

"If thou canst not fulfil thy pledge, refuse to take it, but once thou has bound thyself to any promise, carry it out, even if thou has to die for it."

Membership in the E.S. and “pledges” sent, accepted and signed, are no warrants for a high success, nor do these pledges aim at making of every student an adept or a magician. They are simply the seeds in which lurks the potentiality of every truth, the germ of that progress which will be the heirloom of only the seventh *perfect* Race. A handful of such seeds was entrusted to me by the keepers of these truths, and it is my duty to sow them there, where I perceive a possibility of growth. It is the parable of the Sower put once more into practice, and a fresh lesson to be derived from its new application. The seeds that fall into good ground will bring forth fruit an hundredfold, and thus repay in each case the waste of those seeds which will have fallen by the wayside, on stony hearts and among the thorns of human passions. It is the duty of the Sower to choose the best soil for the future crops. But he is held responsible only so far as that ability is directly connected with the failures, and that such are solely due to it; it is the Karma of the individuals who receive the seeds by asking for them, that will repay or punish those who fail in *their* duties to their HIGHER SELF.¹

[From the “Book of Discipline” in the schools of “Dzyan”]

1. TO THE EARNEST DISCIPLE HIS TEACHER TAKES THE PLACE OF FATHER AND MOTHER. FOR, WHEREAS THEY GAVE HIM HIS BODY AND ITS FACULTIES, ITS LIFE AND CASUAL FORM, THE TEACHER SHOWS HIM HOW TO DEVELOP THE INNER FACULTIES FOR THE ACQUISITION OF THE ETERNAL WISDOM.
2. TO THE DISCIPLE EACH FELLOW-DISCIPLE BECOMES A BROTHER AND SISTER, A PORTION OF HIMSELF,² FOR HIS INTERESTS AND ASPIRATIONS ARE THEIRS, HIS WELFARE INTERWOVEN WITH THEIRS, HIS PROGRESS HELPED OR HINDERED BY THEIR INTELLIGENCE, MORALITY, AND BEHAVIOUR THROUGH THE INTIMACY BROUGHT ABOUT BY THEIR CO-DISCIPLESHIP.
3. A CO-DISCIPLE OR ASSOCIATE CANNOT BACKSLIDE OR FALL OUT OF THE LINE WITHOUT AFFECTING THOSE WHO STAND FIRM THROUGH THE SYMPATHETIC TIE BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THE PSYCHICAL CURRENTS BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR TEACHER.
4. WOE TO THE DESERTER, WOE ALSO TO ALL WHO HELP TO BRING HIS SOUL TO THE POINT WHERE DESERTION FIRST PRESENTS ITSELF BEFORE HIS MIND'S EYE, AS THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS. GOLD IN THE CRUCIBLE IS HE WHO STANDS THE MELTING HEAT OF TRIAL, AND LETS ONLY THE DROSS BE BURNT OUT OF HIS HEART; ACCURSED BY KARMIC ACTION WILL FIND HIMSELF HE WHO THROWS DROSS INTO THE MELTING-POT OF DISCIPLESHIP FOR THE DEBASEMENT OF HIS FELLOW-PUPIL. AS THE MEMBERS TO THE BODY, SO ARE THE DISCIPLES TO EACH OTHER, AND TO THE HEAD AND HEART WHICH TEACH AND NOURISH THEM WITH THE LIFE-STREAM OF TRUTH.

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) XII pp. 501-2

² “So shalt thou be in full accord with all that lives; bear love to men as though they were thy brother-pupils, disciples of one Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.” Vide Fragment III, in: *Voice of the Silence*, p. 49

5. AS THE LIMBS DEFEND THE HEAD AND THE HEART OF THE BODY THEY BELONG TO, SO HAVE THE DISCIPLES TO DEFEND THE HEAD AND THE HEART OF THE BODY THEY BELONG TO (*in this case Theosophy*) FROM INJURY.¹

[From the Letter of a Master]

AND IF THE LIMBS HAVE TO DEFEND THE HEAD AND THE HEART OF THEIR BODY, THEN WHY NOT SO, ALSO, THE DISCIPLES THEIR TEACHERS AS REPRESENTING THE SCIENCE OF THEOSOPHY WHICH CONTAINS AND INCLUDES THE 'HEAD' OF THEIR PRIVILEGE, THE 'HEART' OF THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH? SAITH THE SCRIPTURE:

HE WHO WIPETH NOT AWAY THE FILTH WITH WHICH THE PARENT'S BODY MAY HAVE BEEN DEFILED BY AN ENEMY, NEITHER LOVES THE PARENT NOR HONOURS HIMSELF. HE WHO DEFENDETH NOT THE PERSECUTED AND THE HELPLESS, WHO GIVETH NOT OF HIS FOOD TO THE STARVING NOR DRAWETH WATER FROM HIS WELL FOR THE THIRSTY, HATH BEEN BORN TOO SOON IN HUMAN SHAPE.

BEHOLD THE TRUTH BEFORE YOU: A CLEAN LIFE, AN OPEN MIND, A PURE HEART, AN EAGER INTELLECT, AN UNVEILED SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION, A BROTH-ERLINESS FOR ONE'S CO-DISCIPLE, A READINESS TO GIVE AND RECEIVE ADVICE AND INSTRUCTION, A LOYAL SENSE OF DUTY TO THE TEACHER, A WILLING OBEDIENCE TO THE BEHESTS OF *TRUTH*, ONCE WE HAVE PLACED OUR CONFIDENCE IN, AND BELIEVE THAT TEACHER TO BE IN POSSESSION OF IT; A COURAGEOUS ENDURANCE OF PERSONAL INJUSTICE, A BRAVE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, A VALIANT DEFENCE OF THOSE WHO ARE UNJUSTLY ATTACHED, AND A CONSTANT EYE TO THE IDEAL OF HUMAN PROGRESSION AND PERFECTION WHICH THE SECRET SCIENCE (*Gupta-Vidyā*) DEPICTS —

THESE ARE THE GOLDEN STAIRS UP THE STEPS OF WHICH THE LEARNER MAY CLIMB TO THE TEMPLE OF DIVINE WISDOM.²

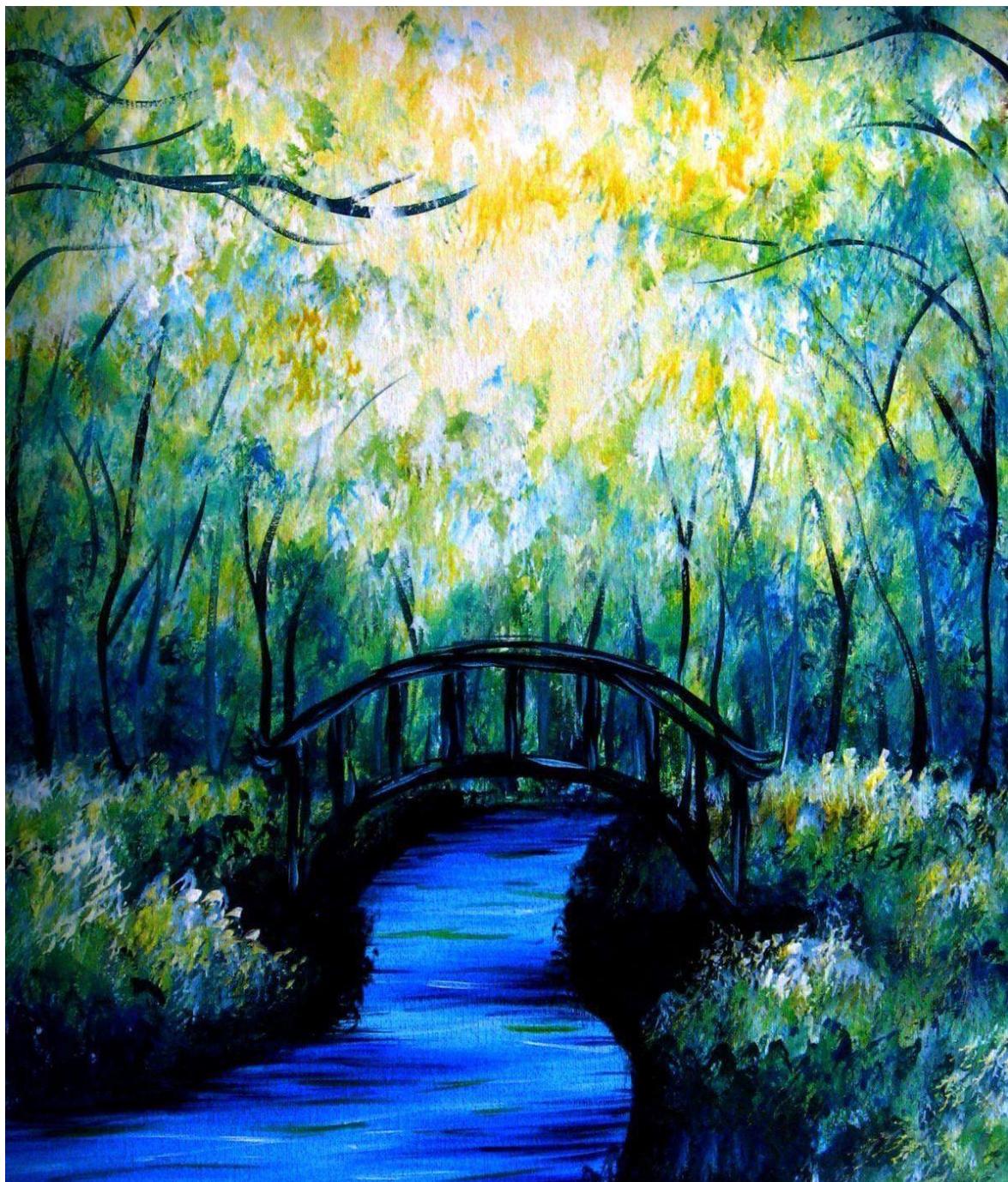
[From No. III of the Instructions]

Good and evil are relative, and are intensified or lessened according to the conditions by which man is surrounded. One who belongs to that which we call the "useless portion of mankind," *i.e.*, the lay majority, is in many cases irresponsible. Crimes committed in *Avidyā* (ignorance) involve physical but not moral responsibilities or Karma. Take, for example, the case of idiots, children, savages, and other people who know no better. But the case of each of you, pledged to the HIGHER SELF, is quite another matter. You cannot invoke this divine Witness with impunity, and once that you have put yourselves under its tutelage, you have asked the Radiant Light to shine into and search through all the dark corners of your being; consciously you have invoked the divine justice of Karma to take note of your motives, to scrutinize your actions, and to enter up all in your account. The step is as irrevocable as that of the infant taking birth. Never again can you force yourself back into the *Matrix* of *Avidyā* and irresponsibility. Resignation and return of your pledges will not help you. Though you flee to the uttermost parts of the earth, and hide yourselves from the sight of men, or seek oblivion in the tumult of the social whirl, that Light will find you out and lighten your every thought, word, and deed. Are any of you so foolish as to suppose that it is to poor, miserable H.P.B. you are giving your pledge? All she can do is

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) XII p. 502

² ibid., XII pp. 502-3

to send to each earnest one among you a most sincerely fraternal sympathy and hope for a good outcome to your endeavours. Nevertheless, be not discouraged, but try, ever keep trying;¹ twenty failures are not irremediable if followed by as many undaunted struggles upward: is it not so that mountains are climbed? And know further that if Karma relentlessly records in the Esotericist's account bad deeds that in the ignorant would be overlooked, yet equally true is it that each of his good deeds is, by reason of his association with the Higher Self, an hundredfold intensified as a potentiality for good.²



¹ Read pages 40 and 63 in: *The Voice of the Silence*

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) XII pp. 503-4

1. Loyalty and devotion to Truth make up the right attitude

The aspirant must unlearn all that he knows, prepare himself for martyrdom, and begin to learn a new alphabet on the lap of Mother Nature, every letter of which will afford a new insight to him, every syllable and word, an unexpected revelation.

Nature gives up her secrets and imparts true wisdom only to Philaletheians because they love Truth for her own sake.

. . . my own principle has ever been to make the Light of Truth, the beacon of my life. The words uttered by Christ eighteen centuries ago: “Believe and you will understand,” can be applied in the present case, and repeating them with but a slight modification, I may well say: “Study and you will believe.”

If a man would follow in the steps of Hermetic Philosophers, he must prepare himself beforehand for martyrdom. He must give up personal pride and all selfish purposes, and be ready for everlasting encounters with friends and foes. He must be part, once for all, with every remembrance of his earlier ideas, on all and on everything. Existing religions, knowledge, science must rebecome a blank book for him, as in the days of his babyhood, for if he wants to succeed he must learn a new alphabet on the lap of Mother Nature, every letter of which will afford a new insight to him, every syllable and word an unexpected revelation.¹

No “wisdom from above” descends on any one save on the *sine qua non* condition of leaving at the threshold of the Occult every atom of selfishness, or desire for personal ends and benefit . . . Nature gives up her innermost secrets and imparts *true wisdom* only to him, who seeks truth for its own sake, and who craves for knowledge in order to confer benefits on others, not on his own unimportant personality. And, as it is precisely to this *personal benefit* that nearly every candidate for adeptship and magic looks, and that few are they, who consent to learn at such a heavy price and so small benefit for themselves in prospect — the really wise Occultists become with every century fewer and rarer. How many are there, indeed, who would not prefer the will-o'-the-wisp of even passing fame to the steady and ever-growing light of eternal, *divine* knowledge, if the latter has to remain, for all but oneself — a light under the bushel?²

¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (H.P. BLAVATSKY TO HER CORRESPONDENTS) I pp. 127-28; [on unlearning and re-learning.]

² *ibid.*, (THE DUAL ASPECT OF WISDOM) XII p. 315

Financial Growth.

Personal Growth.

Inner Growth?



Christianity has always put down and martyred those who have the audacity, in this time of social abasement and corruption, to live up to its ideals.

The only scientific basis of morality is to be sought for in the doctrines of Lord Buddha and Sri Shankaracharya.

Though centuries lapse and decades of ages drop out of the lap of time, great reforms take place, empires rise and fall and rise again, and even whole races disappear before the triumphant march of civilization, in his terrific selfishness the “man” that was is the “man” that is — judged by its representative element the public, and especially society. But have we the right to judge man by the utterly artificial standard of the latter? A century ago we would have answered in the negative. Today, owing to the rapid strides of mankind toward civilization generating selfishness and making it keep pace with it, we answer decidedly, yes. Today everyone, especially in England and America, is that public and that society, and exceptions but prove and reinforce the rule. The progress of mankind cannot be summed up by counting units especially on the basis of internal and not external growth. Therefore, we have the right to judge of that progress by the public standard of morality in the majority; leaving the minority to bewail the fall of its ideals. And what do we find? First of all Society — Church, State and Law — in conventional conspiracy, leagued against the public exposure of the results of the application of such a test. They wish the said minority to take Society and the rest *en bloc*, in its fine clothes, and not pry into the social rottenness beneath. By common consent, they pretend to worship an IDEAL, one at any rate, the Founder of their State Christianity; but they also combine to put down and martyrize any unit belonging to the minority who has the audacity, in this time of social abasement and corruption, to live up to it.¹

. . . The starting point of the “pantheistic” (we use the word for want of a better one) system of morality is a clear perception of the unity of the one energy operating in the manifested Cosmos, the grand ultimate result which it is incessantly striving to produce, and the affinity of the immortal human spirit and its latent powers with that energy, and its capacity to co-operate with the one life in achieving its mighty object.²

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (THE FALL OF IDEALS) XII p. 34

² *ibid.*, (MORALITY AND PANTHEISM) V pp. 336-37; [Later printings made it clear that Mohini Mohun Chatterji was the author of this article. — ED. PHIL.]

Occultism requires unflinching loyalty and devotion to Truth. Otherwise, the faint-hearted will be ridiculed and chaffed by the masses, and partake in the terrible fate of Oedipus.

Unless one is prepared to devote to it his whole life, the superficial knowledge of Occult Sciences will lead him surely to become the target for millions of ignorant scoffers to aim their blunderbusses, loaded with ridicule and chaff, against. Besides this, it is in more than one way dangerous to select this science as a mere pastime. One must bear forever in mind the impressive fable of Oedipus, and beware of the same consequences. Oedipus unriddled but one-half of the enigma offered him by the Sphinx, and caused its death; the other half of the mystery avenged the death of the symbolic monster, and forced the King of Thebes to prefer blindness and exile in his despair, rather than face what he did not feel himself pure enough to encounter. He unriddled the man, the form, and had forgotten God — the idea.¹

But Truth should not be sought for intellectual acquisitiveness, pleasure, contempt of others, profit, fame, honour, promotion, and for other inferior ends.

In sum, I would advise all in general, that they would take into serious consideration the true and genuine ends of knowledge; that they seek it not either for pleasure, or contention, or contempt of others, or for profit, or fame, or for honour and promotion, or such like adulterate or inferior ends; but for the merit and emolument of life; and that they regulate and perfect the same in charity.²

A clean life is the first step towards the Temple of Truth.

“Observe,” writes the Master, “that the first of the steps of gold which mount towards the Temple of Truth is — A CLEAN LIFE. This means a purity of body, and a still greater purity of mind, heart, and spirit.”

And the latter are found more in the poor country-classes than among the cultured and the rich. That the Master’s eye is upon you, Theosophists, is evidenced by the following lines from the same pen:

“How many of them [you] violate one or more of these conditions (of the right Path), and yet expect to be freely taught the highest Wisdom and Sciences, the Wisdom of the gods. As pure water poured into the scavenger’s bucket is befouled and unfit for use, so is divine Truth when poured into the consciousness of a sensualist, of one of selfish heart and a mind indifferent and inaccessible to justice and compassion.”³

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (H.P. BLAVATSKY TO HER CORRESPONDENTS) I p. 127; [on total commitment.]

² Bacon: *Advancement of Learning*, Preface

³ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII pp. 596-97; [quoting a Master of Wisdom.]

We should pray for a sound mind in a sound body.

An outward looking mindset, trapped in the gloom and doom of separateness, invariably gives rise to pessimism. But the abyss of despair has its advantages:

1. It encourages a mental U-turn from exterior preoccupations to interior realms of being and spirituality. It is like a chink in the dark prison walls of earth-life, through which breaks in a ray of light from the eternal home and, which, illuminating the inner senses, whispers to the prisoner in his shell of clay the origin and the dual mystery of our being.

2. It is a tacit proof of the presence in man of that which knows, without being told, i.e., that there is another and a better life, once that the curse of earth-lives is lived through.

. . . “There is a very, VERY ancient maxim, far older than the time of the Romans or the Greeks, more ancient than the Egyptians or Chaldeans. It is a maxim all of them (Theosophists) ought to remember and live accordingly. And it is that a sound and pure mind requires a sound and pure body.¹ Bodily purity every adept takes precautions to keep. . . . Most of you (Theosophists) know this.”²

Amid the early joys of existence, when we are still full of the vital energies of youth, we are yet apt, each of us, at the first pang of sorrow, after a failure, or at the sudden appearance of a black cloud, to accuse *life* of it; to feel *life* a burden, and often to curse our being. This shows pessimism in our blood, but at the same time the presence of the fruits of ignorance. As mankind multiplies, and with it suffering — which is the natural result of an increasing number of units that generate it — sorrow and pain are intensified. We live in an atmosphere of gloom and despair, but this is because our eyes are downcast and riveted to the earth, with all its physical and grossly material manifestations. If, instead of that, man proceeding on his life-journey looked — not heavenward, which is but a figure of speech — but *within himself* and centred his point of observation on the *inner man*, he would soon escape from the coils of the great serpent of illusion. From the cradle to the grave, his life would then become supportable and worth living, even in its worst phases.³

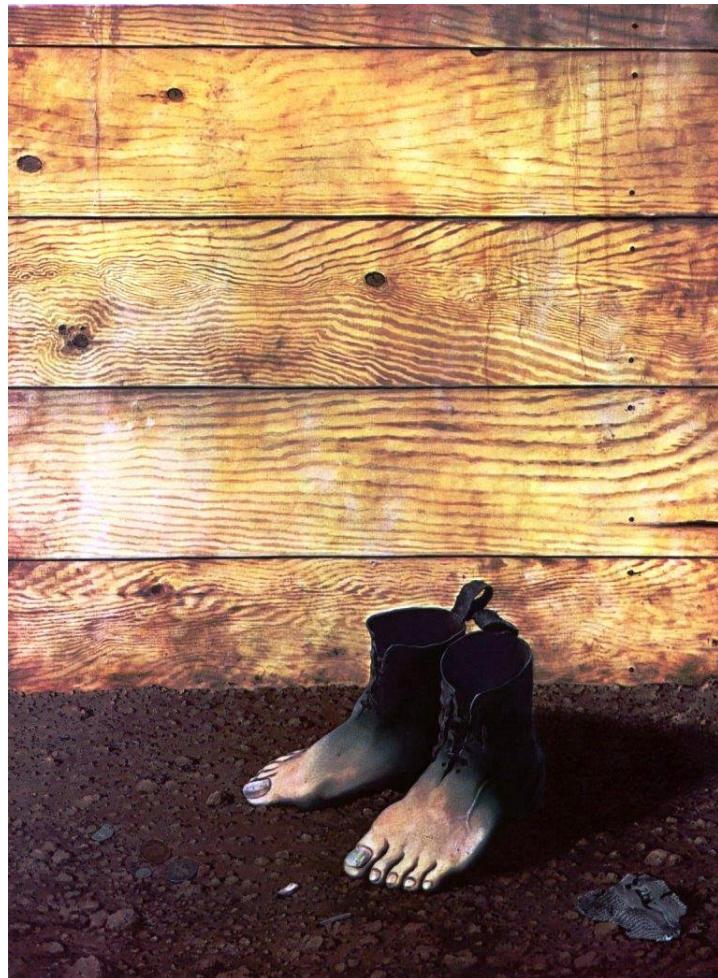
Pessimism — that chronic suspicion of lurking evil everywhere — is thus of a two-fold nature, and brings fruits of two kinds. It is a natural characteristic in physical man, and becomes a curse only to the ignorant. It is a boon to the spiritual; inasmuch as it makes the latter turn into the right path, and brings him to the discovery of another as fundamental a truth; namely, that all in this world is only *preparatory* because transitory. It is like a chink in the dark prison walls of earth-life, through which breaks in a ray of light from the eternal home, which, illuminat-

¹ [Cf. Juvenal's "Mens sana in corpore sano," *Satire X*, line 356 — Kings Quotation 3724. "Νοῦς υγείης εν σωματὶ υγειῇ" of the Greeks, i.e., "a healthy mind in a healthy body." The phrase has been taken from a longer sentence, "Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano," i.e., "We should pray for a sound mind in a sound body," which is different from the modern misinterpretation that "a healthy body can produce or sustain a healthy mind." It is the other way around! — ED. PHIL.]

² Blavatsky Collected Writings, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII p. 597; [quoting a Master of Wisdom.]

³ *ibid.*, (THE ORIGIN OF EVIL) VIII p. 116

ing the *inner* senses, whispers to the prisoner in his shell of clay of the origin and the dual mystery of our being. At the same time, it is a tacit proof of the presence in man of that *which knows, without being told, viz.*: — that there is another and a better life, once that the curse of earth-lives is lived through.¹



The Red Model (1934) René Magritte, Rotterdam

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (THE ORIGIN OF EVIL) VIII pp. 116-17; [Consult "The Origin of Good and Evil," and "The Original Sin is a Jewish invention," in our Black versus White Magic Series. — ED. PHIL.]

2. Charity and mercy, harmlessness and humbleness, kindness and gentleness, define the right approach

Give us something to admire in yourself,
Not in your belongings.

— DECIMUS JUNIUS JUVENALIS¹

Live with men as if God saw you:
Converse with God as if men heard you.
— LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA²

Socrates gave no diplomas or degrees, and would have subjected any disciple who demanded one to a disconcerting catechism on the nature of true knowledge.

— GEORGE MACAULAY TREVELYAN³

Before you even think of treading the path, purify the material self. Otherwise you will end up degrading the spiritual.

. . . “we Hindus . . . are trying to *spiritualize* our grosser material *selves* — while the American and European Spiritualists are endeavouring in the séance-rooms to *materialize* Spirits.” These words of wisdom well show the opposite tendencies of the Eastern and the Western minds: namely, that while the former are trying to purify *matter*, the latter do their best to degrade *Spirit*.⁴

You have to fathom the mysteries of the heart, before you can hope to unravel the mysteries of the soul.

He who wants to follow the working of his inner self and nature for the purpose of self-mastery, has to . . . strive to fathom the mysteries of the human heart in general, before he can hope to learn the whole truth about the mysteries of his own soul. The power of Occult self-introspection is too limited in its area if it does not go beyond the Self, and the investigation of isolated instances will remain forever fruitless if we fail to work it out on firmly established principles. We cannot do good to ourselves — on a higher plane — without doing good to others, because each nature reacts upon other natures; nor can we help others without this help benefiting ourselves.⁵

Superhuman powers are stones on the path.

Siddhis, superhuman powers and accomplishments, are only so many obstacles in the way of the jīva, which longs for moksha.⁶

¹ Juvenal 8, 68; [Miremur te non tua]

² Seneca: *Epistolæ Ad Lucilium* — Mead's Quotations

³ Trevelyan: *History of England*, Bk. 2, ch. 4

⁴ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (IS IT IDLE TO ARGUE FURTHER?) III pp. 392-93; [quoting Babu Nobin Krishna Banerjee, President of the Adhi Bhoutic Bhratru Theosophical Society.]

⁵ *ibid.*, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) XII p. 491

⁶ *Science of the Emotions*, p. 519

Faculties and abilities will come naturally to those who are mentally and ethically fit to use them for the common good. Mere desire for powers is a form of selfishness, and receives no encouragement from our Teachers.

. . . When persons without a large preliminary training in the real Wisdom-Religion seek knowledge on the Occult plane, they are very apt, from inexperience and inadequate culture, to drift into black magic. I have no power to put you into communication with any adept to guide you in a course of Occult study, nor would it be a service to you if the thing were possible. The Theosophical Society was not established for any such purpose, nor could anyone receive instructions from an adept until he was ripe for it. In other words, he must undergo a long preliminary training in knowledge, self-control, and the subjugation of the lower nature before he would be in any way fit for instruction on the higher planes. What I recommend you to do is to study the elementary principles of Theosophy, and gain some idea of your own nature as a human being and as an individual, but drop entirely all ambition for knowledge of powers which would be inappropriate to your present stage . . . ¹

If aroused prematurely, they will hinder rather than help.

. . . *every member of our [theosophical] society* who earnestly makes researches in every lawful branch of occult science, has the chance of help from not only "chelas" but those who are higher than they. Provided always that they are themselves "living the life" described in *Hints on Esoteric Theosophy*.²

Self-interest can neither reveal the powers latent in man, nor can it alleviate the woes of the "Great Orphan."

"It may be stated, however, that even those natural forces cannot be discovered by any man who has not obtained the power of getting rid of his personality in some degree. That an emotional desire to help others does not imply this freedom from personality may be seen by the fact that, if you were now perfected in unselfishness in the *real* sense, you would have a conscious existence separate from that of the body and would be able to quit the body at will: in other words, to be free from all sense of self is to be an Adept, for the limitations of self inhibit progress."³

¹ *Judge Letters*, II (EXTRACTS ON THEOSOPHY AND THE T.S.) p. 110. When was asked to comment upon methods for carrying out T.S.' second object, HP Blavatsky explained: "To collect for the library at our headquarters of Adyar, Madras, (and by the Fellows of their Branches for their local libraries), all the good works upon the world's religions that we can. To put into written form correct information upon the various ancient philosophies, traditions, and legends, and disseminate the same in such practicable ways as the translation and publication of original works of value, and extracts from and commentaries upon the same, or the oral instructions of persons learned in their respective departments." — *Key to Theosophy*, p. 47

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENT ON "AN EXCELLENT MAGIC MIRROR") IV p. 356; [*Hints on Esoteric Theosophy*, No. I, was published anonymously by Allan O. Hume in April, 1882.]

³ *Judge Letters*, I (xiv) p. 54; [quoting Blavatsky's "Practical Occultism."]

**Take heed of the words
of a Master of Wisdom.**

“Hear also the words of the Master, taken from Sinnett’s *The Occult World*. ‘Perhaps you will better appreciate our meaning when told that in our view the highest aspirations for the welfare of humanity become tainted with selfishness if, in the mind of the philanthropist, there lurks the shadow of a desire for self-benefit or a tendency to do injustice, even when these exist unconsciously to himself.’”

“While setting forth these facts, as well as the dangers and difficulties — both those set ones appointed by the laws of the Lodge and the more innumerable ones adjudged by Karma and hastened by the efforts of the neophyte — it should also be stated that the Masters desire to deter no man from entering the path. They are well aware, however, from the repeated trials and records of centuries, and from their knowledge of our racial difficulties, how few are the persons who have any clue to their own real nature, which is the foe they attempt to conquer the moment they become pupils of the occult. Hence They endeavour, so far as Karma permits, to hold unfit individuals back from rash ventures, the results of which would recoil upon their unbalanced lives and drive them to despair. The powers of evil, inadequately defied by the ignorant man, revenge themselves upon him as well as upon his friends, and not upon those who are above their reach. Although these powers are not hideous objective shapes coming in tangible ways, they are none the less real and dangerous. Their descent in such instances cannot be prevented: it is *Karma*.¹”

**Even virtues can be vices in
the eyes of the beholder.**

“The duty of the servant is difficult for even a perfect yogi to discharge successfully. If he speaks little, he is a deaf-mute; if he talks freely, he is a flatterer or a chatter-box; if he keeps near, he is impertinent; if he keeps at a distance, he is a shy clown; if he is quiet and forgiving, he is cowardly; if he does not endure quietly but answers back high-spiritedly, he is ill-bred and low-bred and lacking in manners” (Bhartrhari: *Niti Shataka*, 8) Vices and virtues correspond and go in pairs, and are apt to change into each other according as the angle of vision, or rather the quality of the vision, of the beholder changes. The Persian proverb says, “har kamalé ra zavalé,” i.e., every merit goes with a defect, every virtue goes with a

¹ Judge Letters, I (xiv) pp. 54-55; [quoting Blavatsky’s “Practical Occultism.”]

fault. The grand myth of the Churning of the Ocean symbolises the metaphysical truth about the World-process being made up of pairs of opposites, by describing how venom and ambrosia both came out from that churning.¹

**Here is some practical advice
for aspirants from Lords
Buddha and Christ:**

Since happiness is but a dream on earth, let us be resigned, at least. To do this, we have but to follow the precepts of our respective great and noble Masters on earth. The East had her Shakyamuni Buddha, "the light of Asia"; the West her Teacher, and the Sermon on the Mount; both uttered the same great, because universal and immortal, truths. Listen to them:



"Crush out your pride," saith the One. "Speak evil of no one, but be thankful to him who blames thee, for he renders thee service by showing thee thy faults. Kill thine arrogance. Be kind and gentle to all; merciful to every living creature. Forgive those who harm thee, help those who need thy help, resist not thine enemies. Destroy thy passions, for they are the armies of Mara (Death), and scatter them as the elephant scatters a bamboo hut. Lust not, desire nothing; all the objects thou pinest for, the world over, could no more satisfy thy lust, than all the sea water could quench thy thirst. That which alone satisfies man is Wisdom — be wise. Be ye without hatred, without selfishness, and without hypocrisy. Be tolerant with the intolerant, charitable and compassionate with the hard-hearted, gentle with the violent, detached from everything amidst those who are attached to all, in this world of illusion. Harm no mortal creature. Do that which thou wouldest like to see done by all others."

"Be humble," saith the Other. Resist not evil, "judge not that ye be not judged." Be merciful, forgive them who wrong thee, love thine enemies. Lust not; not even in the secrecy of thy heart. Give to him that asketh thee. Be wise and perfect. Do not as the hypocrites do; but, "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

Noble words these.²

¹ *Science of the Emotions*, pp. 515-16 fn. et seq.

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FORLORN HOPES) XII p. 392; [& quoting Luke vi, 31.]

And from William Quan Judge:

"There is never any need to worry" if you surrender yourself to the Law. The good law looks out for all things, and all we have to do is our duty as it comes along from day to day. Nothing is gained by worrying about matters and about the way people do not respond. In the first place, you do not alter people, and in the second, by being anxious as to things, you put an occult obstacle in the way of what you want done. It is better to acquire a lot of what is called carelessness by the world, but is in reality a calm reliance on the law, and a doing of one's own duty, satisfied that the results must be right, no matter what they may be. Think that over, and try to make it a part of your inner mind that it is no use to worry; that things will be all right, no matter what comes, and that you are resolved to do what you see before you, and trust to Karma for all the rest.¹

**Silently and quietly endure
what life brings,**

Silentio, my dear, is almost as good as patience. He laughs best who does it last, and time is a devil for grinding things. . . . Use the time in getting calmness and solid strength, for a big river is not so because it has a deep bed, but because it has VOLUME.²

**Without expecting neither
plaudits nor feedback.**

It is not necessary to be conscious of the progress one has made. . . . We make a good deal of progress in our inner, hidden life of which we are not at all conscious. We do not know of it until some later life. So, in this case, many may be quite beyond the obstacles and not be conscious of it. It is best to go on with duty, and to refrain from this trying to take stock and measuring of progress. All of our progress is in the inner nature, and not in the physical where lives the brain . . . The apparent physical progress is evanescent. It is ended when the body dies, at which time, if the inner man has not been allowed to guide us, the natural record against us will be a cipher, or failure." Now, as the great Adepts live in the plane of our inner nature, it must follow that they might be actively helping every one of us after the date referred to, and we, as physical brain men, not be conscious of it on this plane.³

¹ *Judge Letters*, II (ON WISDOM IN ACTION) p. 125

² *ibid.*, II p. 129

³ *ibid.*, II (ON OCCULT PHILOSOPHY) pp. 114-15

For, “Brave soldiers need neither orders” nor constant encouragement. Pursue the lines laid down long ago and “we will look out for results.”¹

Pristine efforts cannot be thwarted by criticism and apathy. The efforts of those members who benefit the Cause should never be impeded by criticism on the part of others who do nothing, but all should be encouraged and as much help given as is possible, even if that assistance be limited through circumstances to mere encouragement. Every sincerely based work for theosophy will bear good fruit, no matter how inappropriate it may appear in the eyes of those members who have set to themselves and everybody else only one definite plan of action.²

Nor can anyone hide from the all-seeing Law. But in the presence of Virtue men do many evil and ugly things, supposing that they are not regarded by her because they do not see her. Yet she is present everywhere because she is immortal, and she honours those who are good to her, but casts off the bad. Therefore, if men knew that she is watching them, they would be impatient to undergo the toils and the discipline by which she is hardly to be captured, and would achieve her.³

“Are you willing to have great honour? I will give you a great empire: obtain dominion over yourself.”⁴

Woe to those who live without suffering. . . . Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage? Is it not those only who have learnt the deceptive value of earthly hopes and the illusive allurements of external nature who are destined to solve the great problems of life, pain, and death? . . . If our modern philosophers — preceded by the mediaeval scholars — have helped themselves to more than one fundamental idea of antiquity, theologians have built their God and his Archangels, their Satan and his Angels, along with the Logos and his staff, entirely out of the *dramatis personae* of the old heathen Pantheons.⁵

¹ *Echoes of the Orient*, I p. lvi; [quoting Master Morya.]

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) XII p. 498

³ Xenophon: *Kynegetiké* (On Hunting), 12.18-19, 21-1; tr. Marchant

⁴ Plotinus quoting Seneca in: *Ennead* I, ii; tr. Taylor

⁵ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 475

3. Prerequisites for study and self-knowledge

Philosophy is a matter in which it is difficult to acquire a little knowledge without acquainting yourself with many, or all its branches, nor can you well take a few subjects without selecting them out of a great number; nor can anyone, who has acquired the knowledge of a few points, avoid endeavouring with the same eagerness to understand more.

— MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO¹

1. Awareness of the ignorance and deception of the world we live in.

The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fibre of the heart that one is *ceaselessly* self-deceived.

2. Conviction that self-knowledge can be obtained by personal effort.

The second requisite is the still deeper conviction that such knowledge — such intuitive and certain knowledge — can be obtained by effort.

3. Determination to obtain and face that knowledge.

The third and most important is an indomitable determination to obtain and face that knowledge.

Self-knowledge of this kind is unattainable by what men usually call “self-analysis.” It is not reached by reasoning or any brain process; for it is the awakening to consciousness of the Divine nature of man. To obtain this knowledge is a greater achievement than to command the elements or to know the future.²

Eastern Occultism is the origin and fount of all we know and can possibly learn.

And thus it is that all we know of what we profess and live upon, comes to us from the scorned, despised Occultism of the East. Religion and sciences, laws and customs — all of these, are closely related to Occultism, and are but its result, its direct products, disguised by the hand of time, and palmed upon us under new pseudonyms. If people ask me for the proof, I will answer that it does not enter my province to teach others what they can learn themselves with very little difficulty, provided they give themselves the trouble to read and think over what they read. Besides, the time is near when all the old superstitions and the errors of centuries must be swept away by the hurricane of Truth.³

¹ Cicero: *Tusculan Disputations* II, I; tr. Yonge

² Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (SELF-KNOWLEDGE) VIII p. 108; [authorship presumed by Blavatsky.]

³ *ibid.*, (A FEW QUESTIONS TO “HIRAF”) I p. 116

There is nothing new under the Sun,¹ nothing new except what is forgotten.²

. . . modern sciences and speculations are but the *réchauffé* dishes of antiquity; the dead bones (served with a *sauce piquante* of crass materialism, to disguise them) of the intellectual repasts of the gods. Ragon was right in saying in his *Maçonnerie Occulue*, that “Humanity only *seems* to progress in achieving one discovery after the other, whereas in truth it only finds that which it had lost. . . . And now modern thinkers begin to *rediscover* them once more.”³

The aim of education proper is the art of revealing to the ignorant the world of thought and law, of marvels and mysteries, of moral beauty and ideal truth that lies within us and about us.

. . . the art of revealing to the young or ignorant the existence of an atmosphere above them and about them of which they do not, or but dimly, dream; of teaching them to desire and aspire to it; of unlocking for them one or more of all its myriad gates — a world of thought and law, of marvels and of mysteries, of moral beauty and ideal truth, beginning haply where they had hoped all need of effort ended; a glorious region, out of which conceit or sloth may keep them, but which besets them always and on every side, and yet soars far above the foggy belt of highest man’s attainment. To give them the upward glance, the initiated eye; to let in “the light that never was on sea or land”; to show that “heaven lies about us,” not only “in our infancy”; to help dispel those “shades of the prison-house” which never ought to “close about the growing boy.”⁴

The aim of science proper is to trace unity in diversity and to sum up the laws that govern their manifold operations in Nature.⁵

Michael Polanyi showed that “the Modern distinction between objective and subjective knowing was an illusion. For Polanyi, all knowing was best categorized as ‘personal’; that is, being dependent upon the commitment of the knower within a community of shared values. Further, he showed how all explicit or articulate knowledge (*i.e.*, knowledge that could be expressed in a language) inherently depends upon knowledge that is tacit, either as unexpressed or inexpressible.”

¹ Cf. *Ecclesiastes* i, 9

² Attributed to Mlle Bertin, Milliner to Marie-Antoinette; (Il n'y a de nouveau que ce qui est oublié.) — *King's Quotations*

³ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (THE BABEL OF MODERN THOUGHT) XIII p. 85. Cf. “The learned Belgian Mason would be nearer the mark by adding a few more ciphers to his four thousand years.” *ibid.*, fn.

⁴ Rhoades J. *The Training of the Imagination*. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head & New York: John Lane Co, 1908; [& paraphrasing Wordsworth. See full text in our “Down to Earth” series — ED. PHIL.]

⁵ Cf. W. Stanley Jevon’s *Principles of Science* (1874) and Karl Pearson’s *Grammar of Science* (1892).

The Theosophical Society's methods are those of the ancient Rishis,

Reasoning out the unknown from the known and vice-versa, i.e., inductive and deductive reasoning, is what meditation proper is all about.

Having reasoned out the Eternal and Universal, then by purity and virtue we may begin to ascend towards the "Sacred Majesty of Truth." Tarrying on the particulars will sink the mind in the shifting sands of doubt and despair, and any insight of the universals previously gained will be lost.

. . . its tenets those of the oldest Esotericism; it is no dispenser of patent nostrums composed of violent remedies which no honest healer would dare to use.¹

What the student has first to do is to *comprehend* these [general] axioms and, by employing the deductive method, to proceed from universals to particulars. He has then to reason from the "known to the unknown," and see if the inductive method of proceeding from particulars to universals supports those axioms. This process forms the primary stage of true contemplation. The student must first grasp the subject intellectually before he can hope to realise his aspirations. When this is accomplished, then comes the next stage of meditation which is "the inexpressible yearning of the inner man to 'go out towards the infinite.'"²

. . . by the series of causes and of real beings I do not here understand the series of singular, changeable things, but only the series of fixed and eternal things. For it would be impossible for human weakness to grasp the series of singular, changeable things, not only because there are innumerably many of them, but also because of the infinite circumstances in one and the same thing, any of which can be the cause of its existence or non-existence. For their existence has no connection with their essence, or (as we have already said) it not an eternal truth. . . . That essence is to be sought only from the fixed and eternal things, and at the same time from the laws inscribed in these things, as in their true codes, according to which all singular things come to be, and are ordered. Indeed these singular, changeable things depend so intimately, as (so to speak) essentially, on the fixed things that they can neither be nor be conceived without them. So, although these fixed and eternal things are singular, nevertheless, because of their presence everywhere, and most extensive power, they will be to us like universals, or genera of the definitions of singular, changeable things, and the proximate causes of all things.³

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (SPIRITUAL PROGRESS) VI p. 334

² Mavalankar D.K. Contemplation (III), in: *The Theosophist*, Vol. V (11), August, 1884, pp. 267-68. Repr. in: Eek S. Dāmodar and the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1965; p. 399

³ Spinoza: *The Emendation of the Intellect*, etc., In: Curley E (Ed. & tr.) *The Collected Works of Spinoza*. Vol. I, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985; pp. 100-1

**One has to take into account
that many of the extant
Sanskrit authorities are far
from being sacred.**

One habit of these second-class producers [of the vast literature of Hindu religion and philosophy] is particularly deceptive. They sometimes ascribe their production to some well-known sage and thus try to gain for it a status which it could not otherwise acquire. . . . Many ordinary literary productions which would have soon died a natural death and would have been completely forgotten have been kept alive by their association with a name of hallowed memory. The real difficulty in all such cases is that many people are either put on the wrong scent or attach an importance to what is written in these books which they would not otherwise do. So let the reader be wary in accepting the authorship of the books which have come down under high-sounding names. And let him not make the mistake of believing that everything which is written in Sanskrit is God's own truth.¹

**For no truly esoteric doctrines
were ever written. Many things
are orally explained, and
always have been.**

. . . outside of the few places where secret MSS. are stored for ages, no *esoteric* doctrines *were ever written and plainly explained*; otherwise they would have lost long ago their very name. There is such a thing as an “unwritten” Kabbala, as well as a written one, even in the West. Many things are *orally* explained, and always have been.²

**In any case, intellectual study
alone is never enough, unless
corroborated by application,
practice, and experience.**

But book learning — and here I refer only to the subject of Occultism — vast as it may be, will always prove insufficient even to the analytical mind, the most accustomed to extract the quintessence of truth, disseminated throughout thousands of contradictory statements, unless supported by personal experience and practice.³

**Which are the best safeguards
likely to aid the mind and
protect it from error?**

Unselfishness, Altruism in theory and practice, desire to do the will of the Higher Self which is the “Father in Heaven,” devotion to the human race. Subsidiary to these are discipline, correct thinking, and good education.⁴

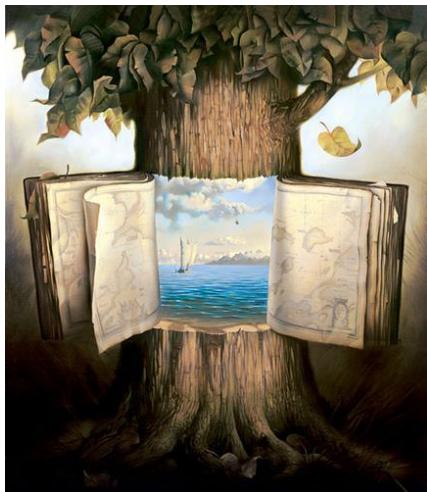
¹ Taimni I.K. *Gāyatrī*. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978; p. 10

² Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (TETRAGRAMMATON) VIII p. 158

³ *ibid.*, (A FEW QUESTIONS TO “HIRAF”) I p. 103; [cf. “He who has no personal knowledge but has only heard of many things cannot understand the meaning of scriptures even as a spoon has no idea of the taste of the soup.” — *Mahabharata* II, 55, I; also cf. “This book is not long, one sees that at a glance. And shortness does always a folly enhance.” From the frontispiece of a collection of *Joyeux épigrammes* of La Giraudière, 1633. (Ce livre n'est pas long, on le voit en une heure; La plus courte folie est toujours la meilleure.) King's Quotation 635

⁴ *ibid.*, (CONVERSATIONS ON OCCULTISM) IX pp. 400L-400M; [on “What mental attitude and aspiration are the best safeguards . . . likely to aid the mind in the[se] searches to reject error and not let it fly into the brain?”]

**Alas, too many Theosophists
are content to read books and
too few strive to further the
interests of Brotherhood.**



Atlas of Wonder by Vladimir Kush

**If mastering a narrow domain
of modern science requires
years of unremitting study,
how much longer will it take
one to fathom out the world's
religions and philosophies?**

**Only those Lovers of Truth who
are self-reliant and willing to
think for themselves can hope
to progress by working out a
conceptual structure of the
Teachings which stands to
reason and explains every
mystery, and triumphantly
demonstrates the nature
of every phenomenon.³**

In too many cases the members of the Theosophical Society content themselves with a somewhat superficial study of its books, without making any real contribution to its active work. If the Society is to be a power for the good in this and other lands, it can only bring about this result by the active co-operation of every one of its members, and we would earnestly appeal to each of them to consider carefully what possibilities of work are within his power, and then to *earnestly set about carrying them into effect*. Right thought is a good thing, but thought alone does not count for much unless it is translated into action. There is not a single member in the Society who is not able to do *something* to aid the cause of truth and universal brotherhood; it only depends on his own will, to make that *something* an accomplished fact.¹

Even one system of philosophy at a time, whether that of Kant or of Herbert Spencer, of Spinoza or of Hartmann, requires more than a study of several years. Does it not therefore, stand to reason that a work which compares several dozens of philosophies and over half-a-dozen of world-religions, a work which has to unveil the roots with the greatest precautions, as it can only *hint* at the secret blossoms here and there — cannot be comprehended at a first reading, nor even after several, unless the reader elaborates for himself a system for it?²

There are several ways of acquiring knowledge: (a) by accepting blindly the dicta of the church or modern science; (b) by rejecting both and starting to find the truth for one-self. The first method is easy and leads to social respectability and the praise of men; the other is difficult and requires more than ordinary devotion to truth, a disregard for direct personal benefits and an unwavering perseverance. Thus it was in the days of old and so it is now, except perhaps, that such devotion to truth has been more rare in our day than it was of yore.⁴

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (SPIRITUAL PROGRESS) VI p. 336

² ibid., (MISTAKEN NOTIONS ON THE SECRET DOCTRINE) XII p. 235

³ Cf. ibid., (ECHOES FROM INDIA – WHAT IS HINDU SPIRITUALISM?) II p. 79

⁴ ibid., (MISTAKEN NOTIONS ON THE SECRET DOCTRINE) XII p. 236

Key occult terms that will have to be understood by neophytes include:

**1. Spirit and Matter,
Force and Space;**

**2. Reality and Unreality,
Formless and Form,
Dream and Waking.**

**3. Subjective and Objective,
both as sensuous and as
psychic perceptions.**

**Arguments, contentions,
objections, and dissensions
about the Teachings stifle
intuition and are likely to
sever the link between
Guru and Chela.**

The alternative of moving for ever in a vicious circle faces the European student of Occult philosophy, who begins his study before having made himself familiar with the technical mode of thought and peculiarity of expression of its teachers. His first necessity is, to know the esoteric views of the ultimate nature of Spirit, of Matter, Force and Space; the fundamental and axiomatic theories as to the Reality and Unreality, Form and the Formless (*rūpa* and *a-rūpa*), dream and waking. Especially should he master — at least approximately — the distinction between the “objective” and the “subjective” in the living man’s sensuous perceptions and the same as they appear to the psychic perceptions entity.¹

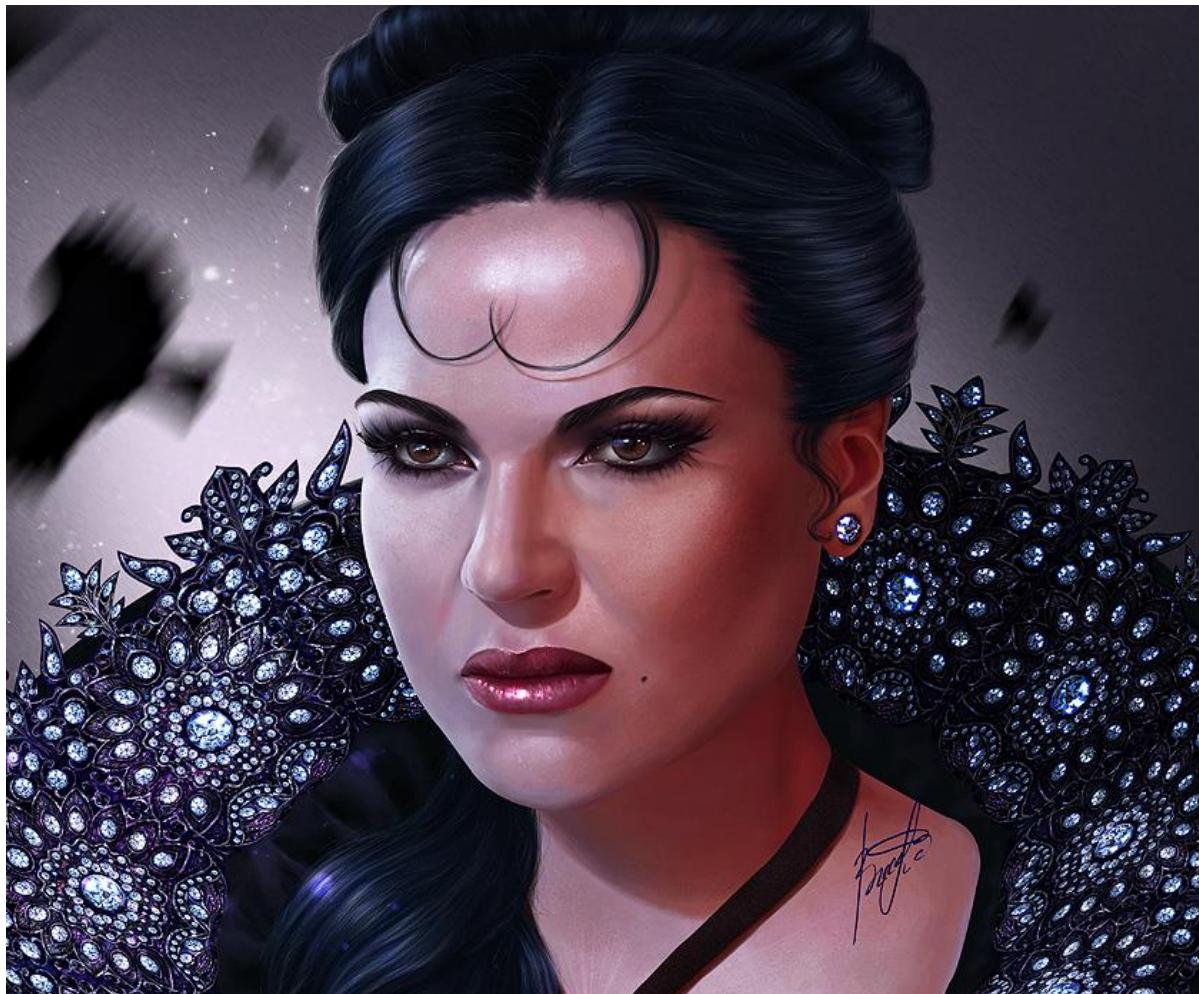
. . . the attitude of mind in which the teachings given are to be received is that which shall tend to develop the faculty of intuition. The duty of members in this respect is to refrain from arguing that the statements made are not in accordance with what other people have said or written, or with their own ideas upon the subject, or that, again, they are apparently contrary to any accepted system of thought or philosophy. Practical esoteric science is altogether *sui generis*. It requires all the mental and psychic powers of the student to be used in examining what is given, to the end that the real meaning of the Teacher may be discovered, as far as the student can understand it. He must endeavour as much as possible to free his mind, while studying or trying to carry out that which is given him, from all the ideas which he may have derived by heredity, from education, from surroundings, or from other teachers. His mind should be made perfectly free from all other thoughts, so that the inner meaning of the instructions may be impressed upon him apart from the words in which they are clothed. Otherwise, there is constant risk of his ideas becoming as coloured with preconceived notions as those of the writers of certain otherwise excellent works upon esoteric subjects who have made the occult tenets more subservient to modern Science than to occult truth.²

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (THE REAL AND THE UNREAL – REPLY I: DEVACHAN) V p. 74; [on a misunderstanding arising “from a natural misconception of the sense in which certain terms are made use of rather from any ‘inconsistent language’ used.”]

² ibid., (E.S. INTRODUCTION) XII pp. 492-93; [cf. “. . . additional help, instruction, and enlightenment, will come from the inner planes of being, and will, as said, always be given when deserved.” ibid., p. 492.]

**Immoral atmosphere
saps siddhis.**

Yoga exacts certain conditions . . . One of these conditions is seclusion in a place where the Yogi is free from all impurities — whether physical or moral. In short, he must get away from the immoral atmosphere of the world. If anyone has by such study gained powers, he cannot remain long in the world without losing the greater part of his powers — and that the higher and nobler part. So that, if any such person is seen for many consecutive years labouring in public, and neither for money nor fame, it should be known that he is sacrificing himself for the good of his fellowmen. Someday such men seem to suddenly die, and their supposed remains are disposed of; but yet they may not be dead. “Appearances are deceitful”¹ — the proverb says.²



¹ [Cf. “If appearances are deceitful, then they do not deserve any confidence when they assert what appears to them to be true.” Diogenes — ED. PHIL.]

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (QUESTIONS ANSWERED ABOUT YOGA-VIDYA) III pp. 29-30; [“Is asceticism necessary for Yoga?”]

4. Co-operation with Nature, diligent study, fortitude and perseverance in the face of adversity and, above all, unconditional love for humanity and all that lives, make up the right conduct

Conduct is three-fourths of our life and its largest concern.

— MATTHEW ARNOLD¹

Why number years? His years man oft outstrips.
'Tis deeds give age: let these be on your lips.

— PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO²

A useless life is an early death.

— Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe³

Act by everyone, in the same manner as if you supposed yourself to be him, and him to be you.

— HIEROCLES OF ALEXANDRIA⁴

Aspirants to the narrow and thorny Path should be deeply studying the philosophy of Occultism before entering upon the practical training.

The first and most important step in occultism is to learn how to adapt your thoughts and ideas to your plastic potency. . . .

No one should go into occultism or even touch it before he is perfectly acquainted with his own powers, and that he knows how to commensurate it with his actions. And this he can do only by deeply studying the philosophy of Occultism before entering upon the *practical* training. Otherwise, as sure as fate — HE WILL FALL INTO BLACK MAGIC.⁵

One must ascend the Golgotha of sentient life step by step unaided, by his own initiatives and exertions, ever moving onward and upward.

The real “Path” to esoteric knowledge is very different.⁶ Its entrance is overgrown with the brambles of neglect, the travesties of truth during long ages block the way, and it is obscured by the proud contempt of self-sufficiency and with every verity distorted out of all focus. To push over the threshold alone, demands an incessant, often unrequited labour of years, and once on the other side of the entrance, the weary pilgrim has to toil up on foot, for the narrow way leads to forbidding mountain

¹ Arnold: *Literature and Dogma*, I, 31

² Ovid: *In Liviam* 447; [Quid numeras annos? vixi maturior annis | Acta senem faciunt; hæc numeranda tibi.]

³ Goethe: *Iphigenie* I, ii; [Ein unnütz Leben ist ein früher Tod.]

⁴ *Ethical fragments of Hierocles Preserved by Stobaeus*. [Fraternal Love 420 & note 7, pp. 440-41; tr. Guthrie?]

⁵ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO EDITORS) X p. 226

⁶ [As opposed to that preferred by the modern student who “demands and expects that his ‘Path’ shall be engineered with all the selfish craft of modern comfort, macadamized, laid out with swift railways and telegraphs, and even telescopes, through which he may, while sitting at his ease, survey the works of other people; and while criticising them, look out for the easiest, in order to play at the Occultist and Amateur Student of Theosophy.” — v.s., ED.]

Woe to him, who instead of studying the half-defaced landmarks, he pronounces them indecipherable. The Doctrine of Heart alone, can make of him an elect.

You cannot be one with ALL, unless all your acts, thoughts and feelings synchronise with the onward march of nature.²

You can only approach ALL through unconditional love of, and devotion to, Humanity and all that lives by turning away from selfishness, which is the main cause of sin and sorrow.



Doubt by Misha Gordin

heights, unmeasured and unknown, save for those who have reached the cloud-capped summit before. Thus must he mount, step by step, having to conquer every inch of ground before him by his own exertions; moving onward, guided by strange landmarks of nature of which he can ascertain only by deciphering the weather-beaten, half-defaced inscriptions as he treads along, for woe to him, if, instead of studying them, he sits by coolly pronouncing them "indecipherable." The "Doctrine of the Eye" is *māyā*; that of the "Heart" alone, can make of him an elect.¹

As to the sincere believers, they will be rewarded by seeing their faith transformed into knowledge. True knowledge is of True knowledge is of Spirit and in Spirit alone, and cannot be acquired in any other way except through the reign of the higher mind, the only plane from which we can penetrate the depths of the all-pervading Absoluteness. He who carries out only those laws established by human minds, who lives that life which is prescribed by the code of mortals and their fallible legislation, chooses as his guiding star a beacon which shines on the ocean of Maya, or temporary delusions, and lasts for but one incarnation. These laws are necessary for the life and welfare of physical man alone. He has chosen a pilot who directs him through the shoals of one existence, a master who parts with him, however, on the threshold of death. How much happier that man who, while strictly performing on the temporary objective plane the duties of daily life, carrying out each and every law of his country, and rendering, in short, to Caesar what is Caesar's, leads in reality a spiritual and permanent existence, a life with no breaks of continuity, no gaps, no interludes, not even those periods which are the halting places of the long pilgrimage of purely spiritual life. All the phenomena of the lower human mind disappear like the curtain of a proscenium, allowing him to live in the region beyond it, the plane of the noumenal, the one reality. If man by suppressing, if not destroying, his selfishness and personality, only succeeds in knowing himself as he is behind the veil of physical

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (MISTAKEN NOTIONS ON THE SECRET DOCTRINE) XII p. 236

² ibid., (MORALITY AND PANTHEISM) V p. 337; [Later printings made it clear that Mohini Mohun Chatterji was the author of this article. — ED. PHIL.]

Maya, he will soon stand beyond all pain, all misery, and beyond all the wear and tear of change, which is the chief originator of pain. Such a man will be physically of matter, he will move surrounded by matter, and yet will live beyond and outside it.¹ His body will be subject to change, but he himself will be entirely without it, and will experience everlasting life even while in temporary bodies of short duration. All this may be achieved by the development of unselfish universal love of Humanity, and the suppression of personality, or *selfishness*, which is the cause of all sin, and consequently of all human sorrow.²

Don't even think of circumventing Karman through masterly inactivity. For inaction on the physical produces adverse effects on the spiritual planes.

"Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin."³

Not only European Sanskritists but also exoteric Yogis, fall into the grievous mistake of supposing that, in the opinion of our sacred writers, a human being can escape the operation of the law of *Karma* by adopting a condition of masterly inactivity, entirely losing sight of the fact that even a rigid abstinence from physical acts does not produce inactivity on the higher astral and spiritual planes. Sri Śamkara has very conclusively proved, in his Commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*, such a sup-position is nothing short of a delusion. The great teacher shows there that forcibly repressing the physical body from working does not free one from *vasana* or *vritti* — the inherent inclination of the mind to work. There is a tendency, in every department of nature, of an act to repeat itself; so the Karma acquired in the last preceding birth is always trying to forge fresh links in the chain and thereby lead to continued material existence; and that this tendency can only be counteracted by unselfishly performing all the duties appertaining to the sphere in which a person is born — that alone can produce *chitta suddhi*, without which the capacity of perceiving spiritual truths can never be acquired.⁴

¹ ["In the world but not of the world" . . . happens to be a convenient para-scripture (we have quite a few of them today), invented by a third-century Sophist (Diogenes), to the great satisfaction of the church members, who were rapidly becoming very worldly. The passage as it appears in the scriptures says quite the opposite: "For [whatsoever] that is in the world . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world" (*I John ii, 16*). See "Hermes & John on the Father of things in the World" in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. I) XII pp. 537-38

³ *Voice of the Silence*, frag. II vs. 135, p. 31

⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (MORALITY AND PANTHEISM) V p. 338; [Later printings made it clear that Mohini Mohun Chatterji was the author of this article. — ED. PHIL.]

The physical inactivity of a Mahatman or a Raja Yogi is quite different from the that of solitary fakirs, hermits, and Hatha Yogins.

The former are working for mankind on higher spiritual realms; the latter are afflicted from spiritual selfishness here, on Earth, the plane of illusion, and the greatest of all hells.

Stop pushing yourself forward.



A few words must here be said about the physical inactivity of the Yogi or the Mahatma. Inactivity of the physical body (*sthūla śarīra*) does not indicate a condition of inactivity either on the astral or the spiritual plane of action. The human spirit is in its highest state of activity in *samādhi*, and not, as is generally supposed, in a dormant quiescent condition.

. . . the initiatory training of a true Vedantīn Raja Yogi must be nourishing of a sleepless and ardent desire of doing all in his power for the good of mankind on the ordinary physical plane, his activity being transferred, however, to the higher astral plane and spiritual planes as his development proceeds. In course of time as the Truth becomes realized, the situation is rendered quite clear to the Yogi and he is placed beyond the criticism of any ordinary man. . . “For one, walking beyond the three *gunas* — *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* — what duty or what restriction is there?” — in the consideration of men, walled in on all sides by the objective plane of existence.¹

Begin by trying to conquer the habit, almost universal, of pushing yourself forward. This arises from personality. Do not monopolize the conversation. Keep in the background. If someone begins to tell you about himself and his doings, do not take first chance to tell him about yourself, but listen to him and talk solely to bring him out. And when he has finished, suppress in yourself the desire to tell about yourself, your opinions and experiences. Do not ask a question unless you intend to listen to the answer and inquire into its value. Try to recollect that you are a very small affair in the world, and that the people around do not value you at all and grieve not when you are absent. Your only true greatness lies in your inner true self and it is not desirous of obtaining the applause of others. If you will follow these directions for one week you will find they will take considerable effort, and you will begin to discover a part of the meaning of the saying, “Man, know thyself.”²

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (MORALITY AND PANTHEISM) V pp. 338, 339; [quoting & translating Mahanirvana Tantra’s “Charanti trigunatate ko vidhir ko nishedhova.”]

² Judge Letters, II (ON OCCULT PHILOSOPHY) p. 114

**“Be restrained, be liberal,
be merciful.”**

“We appeal, therefore, to all who wish to raise themselves and their fellow creatures — man and beast — out of the thoughtless jog trot of selfish everyday life. It is not thought that Utopia can be established in a day; but, through the spreading of the idea of Universal Brotherhood, the truth in all things may be discovered. What is wanted is true knowledge of the spiritual condition of man, his aim, and destiny. Such a study leads us to accept the utterance of Prajāpati to his sons: ‘Be restrained, be liberal, be merciful; it is the death of selfishness.’”¹

**Forget yourself in the midst
of so many selves.**

Forgetfulness of the *personal* Self and sincere altruism are the first and indispensable requisites in the training of those who are to become “White Adepts” either in this or a future incarnation.²

**Consider whether “turning the
other cheek” may encourage
offenders to re-offend.**

The Sermon of the Mount, which is the very embodiment of Christ’s teachings — Christianity in a nutshell, so to say — is a code of pre-eminently *practical* as also impracticable rules of life, of daily observances, yet all on the plane of matter-of-fact earth-life. When you are told to turn your left cheek to him who smites you on the right, you are not commanded to *deny* the blow, but on the contrary to assert it by meekly bearing the offence; and in order not to *resist evil*, to turn (whether metaphorically or otherwise) your other cheek — *i.e.*, to invite your offender to repeat the action.³

Forgive and Forget?

“We should freely forgive, but forget rarely,” says Colton.

“I will not be revenged, and this I owe to my enemy; but I will *remember*, and this I owe to myself.”

This is real practical wisdom. It stands between the ferocious

“Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth”

of the Mosaic Law, and the command to turn the left cheek to the enemy when he has smitten you on the right. Is not the latter a direct encouraging of sin?⁴

¹ *Judge Letters*, II (xxii) p. 105; [quoting from the opening volume of *The Path*.]

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) XII p. 491

³ *ibid.*, (CHRISTIAN SCIENCE) X p. 37

⁴ *ibid.*, (FROM THE NOTE BOOK OF AN UNPOPULAR PHILOSOPHER) VIII p. 138; [cf. “Forgive your enemies, but never forget their names” — J.F. Kennedy]

Stop abusing and tormenting animals, and eating their flesh.

Very properly, therefore, will the philosopher, and who is also the priest of the God that is above all things, abstain from all animal food, in consequence of earnestly endeavouring to approach through himself alone to the alone God,¹ without being disturbed by any attendants.²

**Desist from gossiping.
Gossip fans flames!**

No one should be taking information to another, for it fans a flame . . . Retire into your own silence and let all others be in the hands of Karma, as we all are. “Karma takes care of its own.” It is better to have no side, for it is all for the Master and He will look out for all if each does just right, even if, to their view, another seems not to do so. By our not looking at their errors too closely, the Master will be able to clear it all off and make it work well.³

**Condemn the sin,
not the Sinner within.**

To mete one measure for all, is holier and more divine than to help one’s country in its private ambition of aggrandizement, strife or bloody wars in the name of GREEDINESS and SELFISHNESS. “Severe denunciation is a duty to truth.” It is; on condition, however, that one should denounce and fight against the *root* of evil and not expend one’s fury by knocking down the irresponsible blossoms of its plant. The wise horticulturist uproots the parasitic herbs, and will hardly lose time in using his garden shears to cut off the heads of the poisonous weeds.⁴

Capital punishment is nothing but a relic of Jewish barbarity.⁵

Do not set yourself as example to others, for “the camel cannot see its own hump.”

. . . if not all of us live up to our highest ideal of wisdom, it is only because we are *men*, not gods, after all. But there is one thing, however, we never do (those in the esoteric circle, at any rate): *we set ourselves as examples to no men*, for we remember well that precept in *Amagandha Sutta* that says: “Self-praise, disparaging others, conceit, evil communications (denunciations), these constitute (moral) uncleanness”; and again, as in the *Dhammapada* (verse

¹ Conformably to this, the Pythagorean Demophilus beautifully observes, *Γυμνος αποσταλεις σοφος, γυμνιτευων καλεσι του πεμψαντα μονου γαρ του μη τοις αλλοτριοις πεφορτιαμενου επικοσ ο θεος.* i.e., “The wise man being sent hither naked, should naked invoke him by whom he was sent. For he alone is heard by divinity, who is not burdened with things of a foreign nature.”

² Taylor T. (tr. & Comm.). *Select Works of Porphyry: On the Abstinence from Animal Food.* (1st ed. 1823); Frome: The Prometheus Trust, 1999 (2nd ed.); bk. 2 ¶ 49, p. 73

³ *Judge Letters*, II (ON WISDOM IN ACTION) p. 124

⁴ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (IS DENUNCIATION A DUTY?) X p. 200

⁵ *ibid.*, (CAPITAL PUNISHMENT) XII p. 238

252), “The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of oneself is difficult to perceive; the faults of others one lays open as much as possible, but one’s own fault one hides, as a cheat hides the bad die from the gambler.”¹

**But by example you can
imprint upon the astral light
pictures of higher aspirations
and thus aid advanced souls
from other spheres to descend.**

The spread of the knowledge of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation and of a belief in the absolute spiritual unity of all beings will alone prevent this drift [towards materialism]. The cycle must, however, run its course, and until that is ended all beneficial causes will of necessity act slowly and not to the extent they would in a brighter age. As each student *lives* a better life and by his example imprints upon the astral light the picture of a higher aspiration acted in the world, he *thus aids souls of advanced development to descend from other spheres* where the cycles are so dark that they can no longer stay there.²

. . . Heaven and earth are plunged in sleep, but their souls are awake, and they confabulate, whispering one to the other mysteries unspeakable. It is then that the occult side of Nature lifts her dark veils for us, and reveals secrets we would vainly seek to extort from her during the day. The firmament, so distant, so far away from earth, now seems to approach and bend over her. The sidereal meadows exchange embraces with their more humble sisters of the earth — the daisy-decked valleys and the green slumbering fields. The heavenly dome falls prostrate into the arms of the great quiet sea; and the millions of stars that stud the former peep into and bathe in every lakelet and pool. To the grief-furrowed soul those twinkling orbs are the eyes of angels. They look down with ineffable pity on the suffering of mankind. It is not the night dew that falls on the sleeping flowers, but sympathetic tears that drop from those orbs, at the sight of the Great HUMAN SORROW. . . . ”³

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR OUR FELLOW-MEN?) XI p. 471

² *ibid.*, (CONVERSATIONS ON OCCULTISM) IX pp. 103-4. [Sage answering a Student’s question: Are there any causes, other than the spread of Theosophy, which may operate to reverse the present drift towards materialism?]

³ *ibid.*, (KARMIC VISIONS) IX p. 330. First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. II, No. 10, June 1888, pp. 311-322 (Part 6 of 11) signed SAÑJĀ, nom de plume of H.P. Blavatsky.

5. Stones on the Path

Practical Occultism is fraught with dangers. It requires total, unreserved and unwavering commitment, and loyalty to Truth.

The aspirant must choose between the life of the World and the life of Occultism. After a pledge is given, any sensual or even mental self-gratification will forfeit the power of spiritual discrimination.



Bailarina na barra by Fernando Botero

The beginning is half of the whole.

— PYTHAGORAS

Small means are best:
Nature puts happiness in each man's way,
Could he the secret guess.

— CLAUDIUS CLAUDIANUS¹

As a rule, Occultism is a dangerous, double-edged weapon for one to handle, who is unprepared to devote his whole life to it. The theory of it, unaided by serious practice, will ever remain in the eyes of those prejudiced against such an unpopular cause, an idle, crazy speculation, fit only to charm the ears of ignorant old women.²

. . . It is useless and vain to endeavour to unite the two, for no one can serve two masters and satisfy both. No one can serve his body and the higher Soul, and do his family duty and his universal duty, without depriving either one or the other of its rights; for he will either lend his ear to the "still small voice" and fail to hear the cries of his little ones, or, he will listen but to the wants of the latter and remain deaf to the voice of Humanity. It would be a ceaseless, a maddening struggle for almost any married man, who would pursue *true* practical Occultism, instead of its *theoretical* philosophy. For he would find himself ever hesitating between the voice of the impersonal divine love of Humanity, and that of the personal, terrestrial love. And this could only lead him to fail in one or the other, or perhaps in both his duties. Worse than this. For, *whoever indulges after having pledged himself to OCCULTISM in the gratification of a terrestrial love or lust*, must feel an almost immediate result; that of being irresistibly dragged from the impersonal divine state down to the lower plane of matter. Sensual, or even mental self-gratification, involves the immediate loss of the powers of spiritual discernment; the voice of the MASTER can no longer be distinguished from that of one's passions *or even that of Dugpa*; the right from wrong; sound morality from mere casuistry.³

¹ In Rufinum I, 215. (Vivitur exiguo melius: | natura beatis omnibus esse dedit, | si quis cognoverit uti.)

² Blavatsky Collected Writings, (A FEW QUESTIONS TO "HIRAF") I p. 101

³ *ibid.*, (OCCULTISM VERSUS THE OCCULT ARTS) IX pp. 258-59

And, regardless of motive, the renegade will retrogress and sink deeper into the mire.

And once being mistaken and having acted on their mistakes, most men shrink from realising their error, and thus descend deeper and deeper into the mire. And, although it is the intention that decides primarily whether *white* or *black* magic is exercised, yet the results even of involuntary, unconscious sorcery cannot fail to be productive of bad Karma. Enough has been said to show that *sorcery is any kind of evil influence exercised upon other persons, who suffer, or make other persons suffer, in consequence*. Karma is a heavy stone splashed in the quiet waters of Life; and it must produce ever widening circles of ripples, carried wider and wider, almost *ad infinitum*. Such causes produced have to call forth effects, and these are evidenced in the just laws of Retribution.¹

Only implicit faith to the Teachings and explicit service to mankind can admit the disciple to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Besides the danger expressed above, the difficulties to becoming a practical Occultist in this country, are next to insurmountable. Barrier upon barrier, obstacles in every form and shape will present themselves to the student; for the Keys of the Golden Gate leading to the Infinite Truth, lie buried deep, and the gate itself is enclosed in a mist which clears up only before the ardent rays of implicit Faith. Faith alone, one grain of which as large as a mustard-seed, according to the words of Christ, can lift a mountain, is able to find out how simple becomes the Cabala to the initiate, once that he has succeeded in conquering the first abstruse difficulties.²

“Paradox would seem to be the natural language of occultism. . . . And the paradox is one not in words only, but in action, in the very conduct of life. . . .”

. . . The paradoxes of occultism must be lived, not uttered only. Herein lies a great danger, for it is only too easy to become lost in the intellectual contemplation of the path, and so to forget that the road can only be known by treading it.³

Neither success nor safety is to be found outside self-development.

It is this pernicious doctrine of ever relying upon extraneous help that leads to the collapse — physical, mental, moral, and spiritual — of well-meaning, but weak and unbalanced minds. It slays the patient of the mesmeriser and the mental healer, the neophyte of the sorcerer, and the *dilettante* of Reform.⁴

¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (OCCULTISM VERSUS THE OCCULT ARTS) IX p. 259

² *ibid.*,

³ *ibid.*, (THE GREAT PARADOX) VIII p. 125

⁴ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (CHRISTIAN OR MENTAL SCIENCE) X p. 96

**Woe to those who, driven by
selfishness and vanity, dissent
from the aim and ideals of
the Theosophical Society.**

It is certainly not the fault of the minority of *true* Theosophists, who do try to follow *the path* and who make desperate efforts to reach it, if the majority of their fellow members do not. It is not to them therefore that this¹ is addressed, but to those who, in their fierce love of Self and their vanity, instead of trying to carry out the original programme to the best of their ability, sow broadcast amongst the members the seeds of dissension; to those whose personal vanity, discontentment and love of power, often ending in ostentation, give the lie to the original programme and to the Society's motto.²

**Disunity is the first condition
of failure; rivalry, the second.**

Those who desire to succeed in abstract or practical Theosophy, must remember that disunity is the first condition of failure. Let a dozen determined and united Theosophists get together. Let them work together, each one according to his taste, along this or another line of universal science, if he so prefers, just as long as each is in sympathy with his neighbour. This will be beneficial even to ordinary members who do not care for philosophical research. If such a group, selected on the basis of esoteric rules, were formed amongst mystics alone; if they pursued truth, helping each other with whatever light they may have, we guarantee that each member of such a group would make more progress in the sacred science in one year, than he would make in ten years on his own. In Theosophy, what is required is emulation and not rivalry; otherwise, he who boasts of being the first, will be the last. In true Theosophy, it is the least who becomes the greatest.³



¹ [Article on "The Theosophical Society: Its Mission and Its Future."]

² Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY) X p. 77

³ *ibid.*, (THE BEACON OF THE UNKNOWN) XI p. 275

6. Chelas, Disciples, Shravakas, Upasans: united in thought and deed

Tatius Have I any (revengers or) tormentors in myself, Father?
Hermes Yea, and those not a few, but many, and fearful ones.
Tatius I do not know them, Father.
Hermes One Torment, Son, is *Ignorance*; a second, *Sorrow*; a third, *Intemperance*; a fourth *Concupiscence*; a fifth, *Injustice*; a sixth, *Covetousness*; a seventh, *Deceit*; an eighth, *Envy*; a ninth, *Fraud or Guile*; a tenth, *Wrath*; an eleventh, *Rashness*; a twelfth, *Maliciousness*.
— HERMES MERCURIUS TRISMEGISTUS¹

The sine qua non of “Chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery.”

Chelaship is a psychic resolvent, which eats away all dross and leaves only the pure gold behind.

Real gurus are not simply Adepts in Occult Sciences: they are Living Men of profound knowledge and noble ethics. They are masters of human nature and of the secrets of Nature herself.

It should never be forgotten that Occultism is concerned with the *inner man* who must be strengthened and freed from the dominion of the physical body and its surroundings, which must become his servants. Hence the *first* and chief necessity of Chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery. These are all-important; while outward observance of fixed rules of life is a matter of secondary moment.²

Chelaship was defined, the other day, by a Mahatma as a “psychic resolvent, which eats away all dross and leaves only the pure gold behind.” If the candidate has the latent lust for money, or political chicanery, or materialistic scepticism, or vain display, or false speaking, or cruelty, or sensual gratification of any kind, the germ is almost sure to sprout; and so, on the other hand, as regards the noble qualities of human nature. The real man comes out.³

A “Chela” then, is one who has offered himself or herself as a pupil to learn practically the “hidden mysteries of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.” The spiritual teacher to whom he proposes his candidature is called in India a *Guru*; and the real Guru is always an Adept in the Occult Science. A man of profound knowledge, exoteric and esoteric, especially the latter; and one who has brought his carnal nature under the subjection of the WILL; who has developed in himself both the power (*Siddhi*) to control the forces of nature, and the capacity to

¹ Everard J. (tr.). *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*. (1st ed. 1650); San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1994. (Secret Doctrine Reference Series); bk. 7 ¶ 28-31, p. 44

² Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (A FEW QUERIES) XI p. 301

³ *ibid.*, (CHELAS AND LAY CHELAS) IV p. 613

probe her secrets by the help of the formerly latent but now active powers of his being — this is the real Guru.¹

Entrance to the mysteries of Inner Life requires a pledge of seven years' probation.

Once that a theosophist would become a candidate for either *chelaship* or favours, he must be aware of the mutual pledge, tacitly, if not formally offered and accepted between the two parties, and, *that such a pledge is sacred*. It is a bond of *seven years* of probation.²

Unswerving faith, trust, and confidence to the Master are indispensable.

Thus, the chief and only indispensable condition required in the candidate or chela on probation, is simply unswerving fidelity to the chosen Master and his purposes. This is a condition *sine qua non*; not as I have said, on account of any jealous feeling, but simply because *the magnetic rapport between the two once broken, it becomes at each time doubly difficult to re-establish it again*; and that it is neither just nor fair, that the Masters should strain their powers for those whose future course and final desertion they very often can plainly foresee.³

But many are unworthy of the honour.

“ . . . though they have been repeatedly told of this sine qua non rule on the Path of Theosophy and chelaship, how few of them have given attention to it. Behold, how many of them are sluggards in the morning and time-wasters at night; GLUTTONS, eating and drinking for the sensual pleasure they give; indolent in business; selfish as to the keeping of their neighbours’ (brothers’) interests in view; borrowing from brother-Theosophists, making money out of the loan and failing to return it; lazy in study and waiting for others to think for and teach them; denying themselves nothing, EVEN OF LUXURIES, for the sake of helping poorer brothers; forgetting the Cause in general and its volunteer, hard workers, — and even debauchees, GUILTY OF SECRET IMMORALITY in more than one form. And yet all call themselves Theosophists; all talk with outsiders about ‘Theosophical ethics’ and things, with a puffed up, vain conceit in their hearts.”⁴



¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (CHELAS AND LAY CHELAS) IV p. 607

² ibid., (“THE THEOSOPHICAL MAHATMAS”) VII pp. 242-43

³ ibid., p. 243

⁴ ibid., (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII p. 597; [quoting a Master of Wisdom. Illustration by Bela Borsodi.]

“The results have been far from encouraging so far, and it is to show these unfortunates the cause of their failure as much as to warn others against rushing heedlessly upon a similar fate, that the writing of the present article has been ordered.”

Masters normally select Chelas from natural mystics in the East. Exceptions of accepted Chelas in the West include Fludd, Thomas Vaughan, Paracelsus, Pico della Mirándola, and Count de Saint-Germain.

Is there any other Path for those who, though driven outwardly by passions, still yearn for the Eternal in their Heart?

But since the advent of the Theosophical Society, one of whose arduous tasks it was to reawaken in the Aryan mind the dormant memory of the existence of this science and of those transcendent human capabilities, the rules of Chela selection have become slightly relaxed in one respect.¹ Many members of the Society becoming convinced by practical proof upon the above points, and rightly enough thinking that if other men had hitherto reached the goal, they too if inherently fitted, might reach it by following the same path, pressed to be taken as candidates. And as it would be an interference with Karma to deny them the chance of at least beginning — since they were so importunate, they were given it.²

For centuries the selection of Chelas — outside the hereditary group within the *gon-pa* (temple) — has been made by the Himalayan Mahatmas themselves from among the class — in Tibet, a considerable one as to number — of natural mystics. The only exceptions have been in the cases of Western men like Fludd, Thomas Vaughan, Paracelsus, Pico della Mirándola, Count de Saint-Germain, etc., whose temperamental affinity to this celestial science more or less forced the distant Adepts to come into personal relations with them, and enabled them to get such small (or large) proportion of the whole truth as was possible under their social surroundings.³

But the interest of our readers will probably centre on those who are invincibly attracted towards the “Occult,” yet who neither realise the true nature of what they aspire towards, nor have they become passion-proof, far less truly unselfish.

How about these unfortunates, we shall be asked, who are thus rent in twain by conflicting forces? For it has been said too often to need repetition, and the fact itself is patent to any observer, that when once the desire for Occultism has really awakened in a man’s heart, there remains for him no hope of peace, no place of rest and comfort in all the world. He is driven out into wild and desolate spaces of life by an ever-gnawing unrest he cannot quell. His heart is

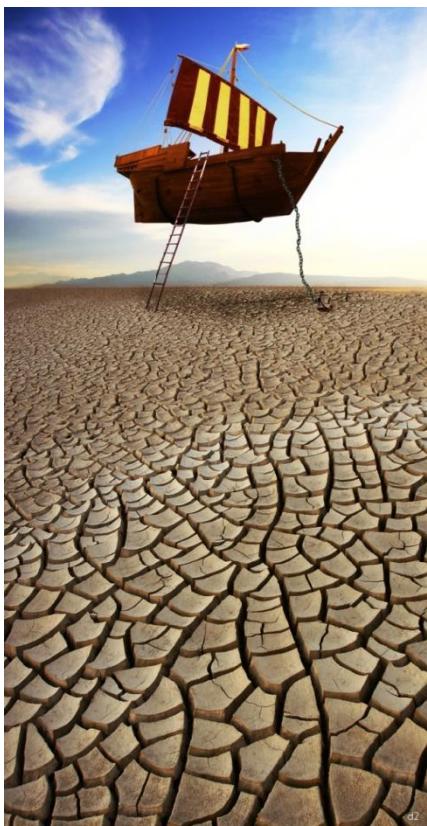
¹ [“Perfect physical health . . . which in rare and exceptional cases might have been modified.” *v.s. p. 608.*]

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings, (CHELAS AND LAY CHELAS) IV p. 609*

³ *ibid. p. 607*

too full of passion and selfish desire to permit him to pass the Golden Gate; he cannot find rest or peace in ordinary life. Must he then inevitably fall into sorcery and black magic, and through many incarnations heap up for himself a terrible Karma? Is there no other road for him?

Indeed there is, we answer. Let him aspire to no higher than he feels able to accomplish. Let him not take a burden upon himself too heavy for him to carry. Without ever becoming a "Mahatma," a Buddha or a Great Saint, let him study the philosophy and the "Science of Soul," and he can become one of the modest benefactors of humanity, without any "superhuman" powers. *Siddhis* (or the Arhat powers) are only for those who are able to "lead the life," to comply with the terrible sacrifices required for such a training, and to comply with them *to the very letter*. Let them know at once and remember always, that *true Occultism or Theosophy* is the "Great Renunciation of SELF," unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action. It is ALTRUISM, and it throws him who practises it out of calculation of the ranks of the living altogether. "Not for himself, but for the world, he lives," as soon as he has pledged himself to the work. Much is forgiven during the first years of probation. But, no sooner is he "accepted" than his personality must disappear, and he has to become *a mere beneficent force in Nature*. There are two poles for him after that, two paths, and no midward place of rest. He has either to ascend laboriously, step by step, often through numerous incarnations and *no Devachanic break*, the golden ladder leading to Mahatmaship (the *Arhat* or *Bodhisattva* condition), or — he will let himself slide down the ladder at the first false step, and roll down into *Dugpaship*. . . .¹



¹ Blavatsky Collected Writings, (OCCULTISM VERSUS THE OCCULT ARTS) IX pp. 253-54

7. When you see the light, that light is from you and it is you

Hast thou attuned thy being to Humanity's great pain, O candidate for light?

— *The Voice of the Silence*¹



For the charm which runs above all realities, and above the truths which we participate, immediately flies away from him who wishes to speak of and energize discursively about *The One*; since it is necessary that the dianoetic power, in order that it may speak of anything, should assume another and another thing. For thus there will be a discursive energy. In that, however, which is perfectly simple, there is nothing discursive; but it is sufficient to come into contact with it intellectually. That,

however, which comes into contact with it, when it is in contact, is neither able to say anything, nor has leisure to speak; but afterwards [when it falls off from this contact] reasons about it. Then also it is requisite to believe that we have seen it, when the soul receives a sudden light. For this light is from him, and is him. And then it is proper to think that he is present, when like another God entering into the house of someone who invokes him, he fills it with splendour.² For unless he entered, he would not illuminate it. And thus the soul would be without light, and without the possession of this God. But when illuminated, it has that which it sought for. This likewise is the true end to the soul, to come into contact with his light, and to behold him through it; not by the light of another thing; but to perceive that very thing itself through which it sees. For that through which it is illuminated, is the very thing which it is necessary to behold. For neither do we see the sun through any other than the solar light. How, therefore, can this be accomplished? By an ablation of all things.³

¹ *Voice of the Silence*, frag. III vs. 228, p. 51

² Plotinus, in what he here says, doubtless alludes to the following lines in the 19th book of the *Odyssey* when Ulysses and Telemachus remove the weapons out of the armoury:

"Minerva preceded them, having a golden lamp, with which she produced a very beautiful light; on perceiving which, Telemachus thus immediately addressed his father: O father, this is certainly a most admirable thing which presents itself to my eyes. For the walls of the house, the beautiful spaces between the rafters, the fir beams, and the columns, appear to me to rise in radiance, as if on fire. Certainly some one of the Gods is present who inhabit the extended heaven. But the wise Ulysses thus answered him: Be silent, repress your intellect and do not speak. For this is the custom of the Gods who dwell in Olympus."

Homer, therefore, indicates by this, that to the reception of divine illumination, silence, and cessation of all mental energy, are requisite.

³ Taylor T. (tr. & Annot.). *Collected Writings of Plotinus*. (Vol. III of The Thomas Taylor Series) Frome: The Prometheus Trust, 2000; [Ennead V, iii ¶ 17, pp. 388-89]

A comparison of two sets of prerequisites for chelas

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*,
(CHELAS AND LAY CHELAS) IV, pp. 607-8

From the Book IV of *Kiu-te*, chapter on “the LAWS of Upāsana,” we learn that the qualifications expected in a Chela were:

1. Perfect physical health;
2. Absolute mental and physical purity;
3. Unselfishness of purpose; universal charity; pity for all animate beings;
4. Truthfulness and unswerving faith in the law of Karma, independent of any power in nature that could interfere: a law whose course is not to be obstructed by any agency, not to be caused to deviate by prayer or propitiatory exoteric ceremonies;
5. A courage undaunted in every emergency, even by peril to life;
6. An intuitional perception of one’s being the vehicle of the manifested Avālokiśvara or Divine Atman (Spirit);
7. Clam indifference for, but a just appreciation of everything that constitutes the objective and transitory world, in its relation with, and to, the invisible regions.

Such, at the least, must have been the recommendations of one aspiring to perfect Chelaship. With the sole exception of the first, which in rare and exceptional cases might have been modified, each one of these points has been invariably insisted upon, and all must have been more or less developed in the inner nature by the Chela’s UNHELPED EXERTIONS, before he could be actually put to the test.

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*,
(ANSWERS TO QUERIES) VIII, p. 294

In Book IV of *Kiu-te*, in the chapter on “the Laws of Upasans” (disciples), the qualifications expected in a “regular che-la” are

- (1) Perfect physical health.¹
- (2) Absolute mental and physical purity.
- (3) Unselfishness of purpose; universal charity; pity for all animate beings.
- (4) Truthfulness and unswerving faith in the laws of Karma.
- (5) A courage undaunted in the support of truth, even in the face of peril to life.
- (6) An intuitive perception of one’s being the vehicle of the manifested divine *Atman* (spirit).
- (7) Calm indifference for, but a just appreciation of, everything that constitutes the objective and transitory world.
- (8) Blessings of both parents² and their permission to become an Upāsana (chela); and
- (9) Celibacy, and freedom from any obligatory duty.”

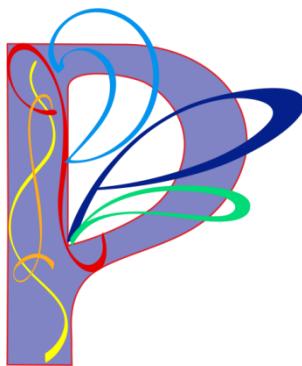
The two last rules are most strictly enforced. No man *convicted of disrespect to his father or mother, or unjust abandonment of his wife*, can ever be accepted even as a *lay chela*.

¹ This rule I applies only to the “temple chelas,” who must be *perfect*.

² Or one, if the other is dead.



- *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (OCCULTISM VERSUS THE OCCULT ARTS) IX pp. 249-61
- *ibid.*, (PRACTICAL OCCULTISM: IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS) IX pp. 155-62
- Correspondence of main facts of human life and organisation in: *Science of the Emotions*, p. 477 fn.
- Examples of conflicts between “head” and “heart,” and between the “conscious” wish and “unconscious wish” in: *Science of the Emotions*, p. 278 fn.
- Practicalities and hard-headed advice on personal development in: C.A. Bartzokas (*Comp. & Ed.*). *Compassion: the Spirit of Truth* (2009); Chapter 8, “Tips for Pilgrim Souls,” pp. 239-313
- Manu on family life and economics in: *Science of Social Organisation*, pp. 226-27
- Mīmāmsā rules, the science of exegesis, in all matters of duty in: *Science of Social Organisation*, p. 115





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