"*THE BHAGAVAD GÎTÂ*" IN PRACTICAL LIFE

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JULIA KEIGHTLEY

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PREFACE

This series of articles was originally published *in The Irish Theosophist,* beginning shortly after the death of William Q. Judge. Judge had written a recension of the *Bhagavad Gîtâ,* along with essays on the first seven chapters. This series of articles by Julia Keightley only covered the first 3 chapters of the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* before it was ended — even though the last article says "To be continued," a continuation was never found.

Julia Wharton Lewis Campbell Ver Planck Keightley, attributed here simply as Julia Keightley, also known under the pseudonym of Jasper Niemand (and several others) was a prolific writer during the last years of the Nineteenth century and first few of the Twentieth century. She wrote two books for children of a theosophical nature, and compiled two books of William Q. Judge's answers to letters, besides authoring around 300 articles for various theosophical magazines and publications. More information on Julia, and most all of her articles can be found in the book *The Collected Writings of Julia Keightley*.

Theosophy literally means "divine wisdom," and is today's name for the Archaic Wisdom or Perennial Philosophy. Ageless thought that has come down to us through the ages and is the starting point of all the major world religions. The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by Helena P. Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, and William Q. Judge. For more information on it and its publications, see theosociety.org.

While only covering the first three chapters of the *Bhagavad Gîtâ,* these articles do capture Chapter 2, which is characterized by some to be a sort of synopsis of the entire work. You will have to be the judge of that for yourself, and, in any case, hopefully you find this series of articles helpful on your path.

Scott J. Osterhage
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Tucson, Arizona

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JULIA KEIGHTLEY

The Irish Theosophist – October 1896, Vol. 5, pp. 1-4.

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In giving the thoughts of a western thinker upon this great spiritual poem of the past, no learned disquisition will be attempted. The writer is not versed in Sanskrit, has no historical equipment and has but begun to browse in the fields of philosophy. For readers requiring these things there are many other works upon the subject, of which the most helpful are probably the translation of the *Gîtâ* by J. Cockburn Thomson (said to have been preferred to other translations by H.P.B.), the translation edited by William Q. Judge, the invaluable Notes by Subba Row, and those admirable and clear-cut essays on Karma, by Charles Johnston, which have recently appeared in *The Metaphysical Magazine* under the title, "Karma in the *Upanishads*." To all of these the writer, like many another student, owes a lasting debt.

But the aspect of the Book of Devotion[1] with which it is here proposed to deal, is quite other. It is remote from learning and history: and yet it has to do with the object of all history, the human heart.

All over the world to-day is felt a great stress and strain. Everywhere a cry goes up for light, for hope, for freedom. Among the thousands starving for want of bread are hundreds in each land starving for spiritual food. This deep-seated want has brought to the Theosophical Society the larger part of its

members, and among these a great, an increasing proportion, have found in this Book of Devotion that food long sought for mind and heart and soul. Among those who have such cause to bless the inspired work is the writer, and just because this hunger was felt and was here assuaged, the thought has come to offer to comrades of like mind, perhaps, those thoughts which the reading of the *Gîtâ* has evoked. The articles profess naught, and are only the fragmentary rays which one mind has caught of the divine reflection: are what one heart has heard, has leaned upon and offers to all hearts inclined to pause a moment over these echoes of a distant, an eternal song.

What we most need to-day is a practical religion. A something we can carry about with us all day long, and carry very close to the heart. A something to rise with and to lie down with: a something to work and live and buy and sell and act and think and finally die by: a plain, practicable, enduring rule which has the assent of the mind and the fervor of the heart to its mandates; a something which has such a quality of the Eternal Light that it illumines all the dark corners at any time, place or season, reaching from hell to heaven, embracing yet transcending both. Such a religion must indeed become the binding power in a life and be followed, because to follow is a necessity of the nature. Such an intimate friend and helper should a man's religion be to him. It is the most priceless thing in the world — because it leads to an ideal which in time becomes the Self — and being so costly, it is to be had only for a price: that price is the whole man. Yes; the whole man must be set upon this point — that he will obtain this spiritual knowledge — and being so set, he obtains it in exchange for himself: but the two become one in the Self.

In the first chapter of the *Gîtâ* we have a portrayal of our own condition when first we set upon our task, self-imposed, of search for spiritual light. We have material existence (Dhritarâshtra) blind and ruled by contention and ambition in the person of its offspring, Duryodhana, who is the leader of the Kurus, the earlier and more material faculties of man, those first evolved, while Arjuna leads the Pandavas, the later (younger) and more spiritual princes. Arjuna himself being

mystically begotten by the Fire-God, Indra, through a virgin mother, Kuntî. Taking Arjuna as the human monad, it appears not a little significant that this Arjuna of divine origin is still a younger relative of the material Kurus, is allied to them by a birth tie, and that his means of combatting these passions and earth qualities consist in his bow, Gândîva (that tense "bow" which is the Aum), a gift of the fiery Indra, and his chariot vehicle of motion, which is conducted by Krishna as the charioteer, Krishna being an incarnation of Vishnu the Preserver. I have somewhere read that it was customary for such charioteers to sing to those whom they conducted to battle; Krishna is then plainly the Logos with the ever-resounding song, and that which really fights with Arjuna, as with each one of us, is "the army of the Voice."

So passing along the same arc of existence we find ourselves, like the man Arjuna, confronted with our material connections and desires, with all related things of that line which, pressing upon us, demand the sacrifice of our nobler nature. For mark that Arjuna had not called down this war. The hosts of materiality threatened his existence in the land of his birthright: embodied ambition and contention demanded his exile and arose to compel it. Arjuna must then either fly from that land where the Law has placed him, that land where his heirship and his duty lie, or he must fight. Of tender heart, as becomes a youth and one desirous of spiritual enlightenment. Arjuna shrinks from opening the fight. Open it he must, for the hosts which threaten his expulsion still do not make bold attack upon the field. Is it not ever the same? At once, when man desires to become in very truth a man and lay aside the animal forever, has he not to combat, not only his own lower traits, but also those of all about him and all the forms of established material existence? Every condition makes against him. Were the appeal to his reason alone, or were threats alone employed, either or both combined he can endure. But listen to the arguments; relationship, caste, tribal and national duty, the "sin of oppression of friends," of enjoyment of a form of pleasure which those friends cannot share — have we not now and again heard some of these? Have we not now and again, like Arjuna,

let fall the tense and God-given bow, and sat down in the chariot with tremor and fever in every vein? The flying of arrows had begun; the divine bow was strung and ready; the array of enemies was drawn in firm line and horrid uproar filled the air; the conditions of warfare on a material plane were all present. Arjuna was ready, his very bow was raised: why did he, so firmly bent upon looking his antagonists in the face, why did he fall back and give way? Was it not because he paused to argue the matter? It would seem so. He did not go steadily forward into the fight, but moved by the fact that his relatives (and his lower nature, of which these are the type in the poem) opposed his course, he allowed his compassion to weaken him, his firm resolve gave place to a temporizing policy and to argument with his inner self. Is it not thus that the first objection comes upon us all? Even his religion condemned him, and closing his objections with this painful thought, Arjuna longed for death — himself unresisting — at the hands of his beloved enemies, rather than endure the deeper mental pain. Have we not known this hour? "Would that they would themselves put an end to me rather than force on me this dreadful war." Has not such been our selfish cry? Rather than endure the pain we would that theirs were the sin — that they should slay us while we resisted not. Oh, human vanity, thou well-nigh eternal tempter, how closely art thou coiled within the heart! Taking the form of virtue, pleasing man with an image of himself as innocent of attack, as full of compassion and love, too kind, too true to fight those near and dear even for the preservation of his manhood's heirship — who has not tasted the sweet temptation of this hour and in virtuous self-appreciation found a solace and an excuse? Who has not, like Arjuna, let fall the bow, a victim to self-righteousness, self-esteem and disguised vanity? Who has not forgotten, in the whirl of conflicting emotions, that if we rise, we raise all others with us, that it is not our part to help others to prolong a life of materiality and selfishness — not even when those others are our nearest and our dearest? Who has not forgotten, in floods of selfish sorrow, that in all Nature there is but one thing worth doing: that thing — to find our own Self or to help others to

find theirs, and it is the same? Yet it is well for us if, like Arjuna, even while we grieve, we still hold converse with Krishna, the divine charioteer.

O Arjuna, thou of human birth and divine conception; thou man, thou brother, thou very self of me; O thou, myself, when once resolve toward the holy war is thine, take no long survey of the field, give over the interior debate, cozen thyself with specious pleas no more, forbid that foolish grieving shall slacken the tense bow which is thy concentrated soul, but stand and looking to Krishna plunge into the battle: thy God is with thee.

NOTE

1. {The "Book of Devotion" is a subtitle to the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*.}

The Irish Theosophist – November 1896, Vol. 5, pp. 21-24.

The despondency of Arjuna has, however, another aspect, if we take Arjuna as a type of man in all ages and periods. We come at last to the same human complexion, but it varies at different times and under the action of various karmic agencies. Where one laments, another is found rejoicing, and the obstacle which crushes the one is a zest and a stimulus to his fellow. The *Gîtâ,* dealing as it does with the human unit, applies to every type, exhibits human nature in all phases of action and evolution, moved by every motive known to the human heart. In the pages of the sacred book each one may find himself, and not only his transitory self, but the wider interpretation thereof, a clue to something more divine, to a more interior nature. We expect — if the book be sacred in any true sense — to be met by a suggestion of that in ourselves of which we are dimly conscious, the radiant shape of our hopes and dreams. The *Gîtâ* should not merely exhibit man facing his destiny with despair in his eyes. Any writer of moderate eloquence can move us at this point, and we ourselves have shed luxurious tears for ourselves. The *Gîtâ* fulfils our expectations. It meets us, as it were, at the bridge of our nature and even while showing it as it now is, shows it also in transit to a diviner life. Man evolving, man in actual movement, and not man crystallized, is the subject of its song.

Over and above those numerous aspects into which we may read ourselves and the common lot of our especial type, will always be found an aspect applicable to all men, one universal, one dealing with the higher possibilities, the more interior nature, and it is in this aspect that we find the clue to our own wider field of Being. This aspect is paramount in the despondency of Arjuna. Above everything else, when all else is done, all other meanings found by each and applied to his individual case, in final analysis Arjuna stands for man at the

bridge, man about to pass from very human to very human-divine.

At this point there is one respect in which mankind never varies. When the human mind, weary at last of the unending material phantasmagoria, turns from the seen and the senses, from the tireless oscillations of pleasure and pain to seek something deeper, something more quiet, some peace a hint of which has flown past upon the air, there is then one step which all must take alike, one mental attitude into which all must fall. That soul which turns irrevocably to the interior paths of life does so because the pain of the world has moved it to the depths of its being. Before this point is reached the minds of men play to and fro before the small old path; they come and go: they play at becoming occultists, at entering the hidden ways of the soul. But not after this point; that, once reached, is final, because it has been reached, not by the mind, but by the soul. The inner heart has awakened, its beat is established. The soul has faced its own deeps and at the profoundest point has learned that the Whole is itself; that it feels pain or pleasure because it is bound up in the common human heritage; a man left for a lifetime to complete solitude would neither seek for joy nor flee from sorrow. Living among his fellows, life after life, he finds that his every act and thought are related to some other human being; he comes at last to cease to suffer as an animal, unheeding the pain of others, knowing nothing of the ethical bearings of pleasure and grief. We find the nobler animals, the more highly evolved, and some which have had close contact with man for several generations, showing sympathy with the pain of their own kind and even dumbly entreating the aid of man for that pain. Sympathy, in its essence, is the memory — or the experience through the imagination — of a similar suffering. When the human mind has worked through all the forms of joy and sorrow, there comes a life and a moment when the pain of the manifested world is massed before its view. Moved to an infinite compassion, forgetful of its personal lot, it goes out in a flood of tenderness and sorrow for the pain which no man can assuage or end. It is unable to endure the sight; it cries out for

power to aid, for understanding of the problem, for right knowledge of right action. Then, and then only, the man resolves to become more than a man, for in that becoming lies his only means of helping. The anguish of a world in travail has torn him out of himself. His tears are given to the great sum of sorrow; his mind acknowledges its own inadequacy; the great heart of pity wakes within him; he feels, rather than knows, that to abide in that pitiful yearning is to give some help, he knows not what, he only knows that this is Love, and Love is all too rarely given. Even while he sinks in grief and in his despondency thinks he can do no more, yet the impersonality of his lament has called the attention of the spirit; the Divine stoops to him, It communes with his awakened soul in that unspoken language which alone upholds the heart.

There is that of the higher life in the despondency of Arjuna, that he grieves but little for himself. Yet is he still unwise, still purely human, in that he grieves at all. But grief for all that lives is of another pole of force from that enfeebling, enervating emission of self-pity which renders slack (in time to paralyze) the sphere of man. Pity for another's woe tends not downward, is not inactive nor unfruitful; there is hope at the heart of it; will is the core of it; it seeks to help, it *yearns,* even while no means of helping are descried; it calls aloud to Life and Time: it has a voice that heavens must hear and answer. Such pity, tense and vibrant, hath power to summon that sacred order of Being which is the consecrated ministrant of the world. Its hierarchs hear and answer, pointing the way from helpless sorrow to an ever-increasing helpfulness and joy in service.

The man who has once reached this point enters the holy war never to draw back again. He may fail. He may hesitate. He may receive a mortal wound within the heart and life after life may find him the prisoner of that wound, weakened or stunned by it, fearing to venture into the combat or indulging in foolish strife which is not the holy war; but still, in one or another way, he gives battle. He must do so; aspiration has become a law of his nature; he cannot free himself from that upward tendency; he has entered the stream and must pass

onward with its current into that wider life whose trend is to the shoreless sea.

It is in this sense, I take it, that a wise writer has said that the "abyss" lay behind Arjuna. It is that abyss which separates man, the animal, from godlike man. It would seem to be a mental abyss. The mind would appear to have undergone some alchemy, some mysterious melting and fusing and recombining which has thrown out the most personal dross. Once this has happened, the man *cannot* return to the animal, just as he cannot return to the vegetable or the mineral; the gates of a kingdom, of a realm of Nature, have closed behind him; he must onward in the eternal procession of soul. Only the soul, only that divine spark whose very essence is harmony, can thus respond to the pain of the material world, a pain which is the absence of harmony, a responsive sorrow which is compassion's self. We should not always be the thralls of pain could we but realize that it has no real existence; pain is only the absence of harmony.

This point of compassion is one to which all minds must come at last — *at last*. It is a far cry for some of us. In eastern writings it is typified as the loosing of the knot of the heart, and it is spoken of as a secret very difficult to know. Difficult though it be, it is yet to be done, and as everyone can hasten (or retard) his own evolution, we can bring about this point for ourselves. Each time a personal pang is felt we can ask ourselves: "To what does this suffering correspond in the wider experience of the world? Hath anyone suffered thus before me? Have any tears been shed here by another?" Soon there rises before us the unestimated, the awful sum of misery. We are appalled at its greatness. Before this flood our puny griefs go down and in their stead we come to see the world freighted with anguish, Nature herself in horrid travail, the Mind of the world giving birth to false conceptions, all stages of the universe awaiting man as saviour and deliverer; that man, son of gods, which all men may become. It is a manhood truly divine in that no one is shut out from it except by his own conscious determination. No trap is laid; all Nature lisps the secret; every age hints at it; an inner harmony incessantly

repeats it; every silence is broken by the song of it and the bibles of every race cry out:

"Arise, Arjuna! Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, when once thou shalt have said, 'Thy will be done.'"

The Irish Theosophist – December 1896, Vol. 5, pp. 41-44.

To dwell yet a moment more upon the despondency of Arjuna would not appear to be unprofitable, since mankind at the present day stands at just this point which the opening chapter of the *Gîtâ* depicts, whether consciously or unconsciously to the mind. Not all are prepared to enter the holy war. Not all, but comparatively few, have heard of that war for man's redemption from himself; fewer still are they who feel Compassion's tide beating within the breast. And yet the race as a whole is being forced forward to this point by the resistless sweep of cyclic energy and cyclic law. The race, as a whole, is upon its trial; it is, as a whole, involving Manas or mind from the soul of the world, and mark that the true mind-principle comes from the *World-Soul,* not from itself; it is not intellect; it is *soul-mind,* born of the harmonious aether; it is a heart-force, is Compassion's youngest, sweetest child. When man has drawn this force into himself, when his sphere has taken it up, he then proceeds to evolve it, to express it himself in mental action, and as his desire and his will are, so is that expression; he evolves the mind-energy as materialistic intellect, the hardened offspring of Matter and Time; or he evolves it again as the tender mind-soul still, enriched and developed by its passage through human experience. Selfless, it was involved by him; selfless or selfish will he evolve it; pure it entered, in what state shall it go forth?

Now the race knows, as a whole, the struggle with material existence in one or another form; not one who tries to look even a little way beyond materiality but feels its hosts arise to veil his sight, to bar his way, to contend with him for the right of individual self-conscious and masterful existence. They or his awakening mind-soul must go; space is not wide or deep enough for both.

Although Arjuna sunk in his chariot, letting fall his bow, saying that he should not fight, none the less was his reaction sure. We all feel, at the first reading of this chapter, that Arjuna's declaration goes for naught, that he will arise and carry on the war. Whence this interior assurance? It breathes through the spirit of the tale with an inimitable skill, but many of us might miss an aroma so delicate as this. We feel, beneath the despair of Arjuna, an under-current of fixed intention; we recognize the advent of the hour of destiny. Is it not because we see ourselves in Arjuna? The hero nears the point whence he must onward, and we, nearing that point with the whole of our race, have a prescience of it; we know that we cannot evade the onward march of life. The learned Subba Row has indicated that one of the names of Arjuna — the name Nara — signifies man at the present period of evolution. This accounts for our instinctive comprehension of Arjuna's attitude; like germs are in our own minds. How wonderful this book, which, written so long ago, still prophesies as of old and keeps step with us on the daily march, whispering ever an immortal hope.

The chariot appears to typify the mind, rather than the body of man. The body is indeed the field of war, the arena wherein contending forces drive, where man, the Thinker, wrestles with materialistic hosts. But mind is that which moves abroad over life, testing all experience and meeting all opposition. Yes, mind is the vehicle by means of which man rides on to meet the ancient, the familiar foe; it is in that fount of action that he rejoices, or sinks him in despair. And as it is in the very nature of mental action that it shall react, we have the secret of our belief that Arjuna will arise. It is a belief really rooted in our own experience, which allows us to tenderly smile with Krishna at the temporary dejection of man, whether another or ourselves.

Thus patience with our own reactions is by implication shown to be supremely necessary. Why meet with less than patience an evanescent mood? Impatience will but prolong, irritation will but inflame it; wait on with patient time; the driven mind will inevitably turn upon its course. These reactions of ours may be treated, not as drawbacks, but as a

means to a more interior communion. It was only when Arjuna's body ceased from action and when mental action had, through despondency, a temporary lull, that the man's heart turned to Krishna for advice and consolation. It is a precious yet a daily truth, and one which daily escapes us, that back of brain-energy lies heart-force, and that when the former is exhausted the still fine voice of the latter makes its music heard. Action and reaction have equal place in Nature and hence in ourselves; we, spirits plunged in Nature, garbed in her essences, girt with her powers, able, yet oft reluctant, to be free. The despondency which to some extent falls upon us when we cease from action need not be a hindrance. It is weary Nature's hint that her allotted task is done, that the moment for a more intense, interior action has come. In the life of a man this is typified when middle age sets in, when the man should act less and think the more. Up to then body was growing by means of external activity: the hour of mind has come and, naturally, the activities of the body are lessened. If we yield readily to this pause of the mind no despondency is felt. We imagine that mind finds rest in sleep, and needs that rest alone. Not so; *brain* rests in sleep, not mind; that the thinker still thinks on a thousand proofs have shown. There is a limit to mental action; brain limits it in man; in cosmos there is a limit to the field of mental energy; "thus far and no further shalt thou come and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,"[1] is written of it also; only under a change of energy, only as mind-soul, can it pass to higher regions, to pause again before the mysterious portals of Spirit. So we find mind seeking the rest it requires, and dejection is its hint to us that we should suffer the mind to repose, while we enter upon meditation, however briefly, using thus a silent power greater than that which flows through the brain, bringing it to the refreshment of the mind. This divine power has its climax with a Master-Spirit; these, thus — *"indrawn,"* gather in an instant of time the deep refreshment of a silent century.

Why should not the brain-mind feel dejection? It believes only in the efficacy of material action. It sees the enemies arrayed, the difficulties surging nearer; the "sin of oppression

of friends" is plain in sight; no external way opens outward, and it abandons hope. Arjuna then retreats within. His brain-mind gives pause, and in the lull the silent Thinker speaks.

The war must first of all be waged with that brain-mind, that thing which we cannot exterminate for it is ourselves — as Arjuna truly saw, calling all these difficulties family and his race: it is all kinds of Karma; it is a congeries of lower selves held in concrete form by the brain-mind under the false title of "Myself." This foe within the gates we cannot abandon, we must uplift it. Wherefore let us be patient with this part of our nature in daily life, gently leading its poor aspirations above the things of self, pointing out to it the beauty of deathless things, the joys of the Eternal. Patience then. Patience with thyself first of all; not sloth, not complacency, but patience that sees the folly and unwisdom, yet consoles and waits. Patience such as this with thyself first of all, there where impatience is often but a wounded vanity that thou art not a stronger thing than this thou suddenly seest. If thou hast not such compassion for that which thou seest and knowest, how canst thou have patience with the brother thou knowest not? Uplift thy mind, feed it with hopes.

Inspire thyself. What man can inspire thee? Draw the diviner breaths deep within thyself, and poising thy soul upon these, all Nature stilled within thee, that soul shall plume her wings — the wings of meditation — for the flight into still holier airs.

NOTE

1. {Job 38:10-11.}

The Irish Theosophist – January 1897, Vol. 5, pp. 62-65.

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The second chapter of *The Bhagavad Gîtâ* is approached with a feeling of impotence on the part of the individual who would fain portray it, epitome of wondrous wisdom and help to mankind. It is not to be spoken about, but to be felt; above all, to be lived. It is better so; everyone finds himself in it and himself drinks as he can at the spring. The science of the soul is there; the science of right living; there, too, the heart of all faiths. From whatever standpoint we approach it, we are presently lifted out of ourselves by its harmonious grandeur, and yet there is a dear note of homelike things, a remembered touch from out those heavenly mansions of the soul where once we journeyed with gods. Krishna, we are shown, "tenderly smiles" at the dejection of Arjuna. What depth of love and trust serene are here displayed. Nothing of so-called cold philosophy; only the tenderness which knows our better self to be steadfast in triumph, which smiles, in the name of that deeper insight, above our dejection. Krishna has both the seeing eye and the calling heart. It must be true — so cries our human heart responsive — it must be very truth that the crucified Light yearns over me, longs to manifest in me, waits, asking for my love.

What, then, holds us back from giving that love in measure so ample that every thought is permeated with its sunshine? What restrains us from unbarring the door of the heart to that Light? Why send we not forth streams of devotion to call down the waiting Radiance? What impedes the union of the Light and the heart? Arjuna gives the names of our jailers: they are Fear and Grief. Fear for all our lower selves and interests, for just as each one of us has his lower and his higher self, so can each love in others the lesser or the greater. It is for us to choose what we will contact in one another, and we have touch with the lower phase of our friends only when we fear,

just as that which fears is the weaker and the lower in man. The high soul knows no fear of loss, disaster, death, ruin of the world, for well it knows that it can never lose its own. Many a thought of the brain-mind, due to education, custom, or the thought-vibrations about us, come between our hearts and this clearer vision of the Soul. When we begin to argue, to marshal images of loss and sorrow within the mind, we may know that we are doing the Dweller's work for it. The powers of darkness have found an ally and a helper in us and cease from troubling that we may the better do their destructive work in ourselves. This interior process by which we produce an interior result which we call fear — or grief — is one both curious and occult. The images of desolation are evoked by us, pictures of supposed future losses to ensue upon some given action, and then their long array defiles before the soul. Now that soul, spectator of Matter, and Life-in-Matter, from which it seeks to learn, that it may recognize itself — that soul has a mirror, the mind. It looks into the mind for a clear, true reflect of life. But man steps in and by the deliberate action of his will throws false images upon the mirror: these false images bewilder the soul. A numbness comes over the heart; its interaction with the soul is paralyzed.

"When the perfect man employs his mind, it is a mirror. It conducts nothing and anticipates nothing; it responds to what is before it but does not retain it. Thus he is able to deal successfully with all things and injures none."[1]

Arjuna graphically describes the action of grief upon the nature in the words, "grief, which drieth up my faculties."[2] The action of that diffusive force which we call grief is similar to that which follows upon the over-watering of plants. The natural nourishment of the earth and water is flooded away from the roots and the plant rots and dies. In another edition the idea is given as "this anguish which withers up thy senses,"[2] and Arjuna says "my heart is weighed down with the vice of faintness,"[2] as hearts will be when not buoyed up by the energies of faith and courage. A world of instruction regarding man's use of his own mental forces is conveyed by these simple words, to which meditation discovers many a helpful

meaning. These energies, all powerful in their action, are not to be frittered away. The evolution of energy is a spiritual act; misuse or waste of energy a sin against the spirit. Wherefore let it be our endeavor to follow the course outlined by Kwang-Sze:

"When we rest in what the time requires and manifest that submission, neither joy nor sorrow can find entrance to the mind."[3]

"No selfish joy or sorrow," is the meaning of the Sage. When we rest in Truth we are that Truth itself. We are at peace, a peace higher than joy, deeper than sorrow; it is a bliss above our fondest dreams. To this exalted condition Krishna has reference when he tells Arjuna that his dejection is "Svarga closing," literally, "non-Svargam:" it shuts the door of heaven; the celestial joys are assembled, but man, deploring, weeps without and will not lift the bars. How abject are such tears!

In *Light on the Path* the same truth is alluded to:

"Before the eye can see, it must be incapable of tears."

It puts in poetical language the occult truism that an outburst of personal grief disturbs for a time the interior conditions, so that we can neither employ sight or hearing uncolored and unshaken. What an output of energy goes to our tears. In the mere physical plane all may feel the contraction in the nervous and astral centers, the explosion following; the very moisture of life bursts forth and runs to waste. Nor can the mind use clear discernment in life when that life is shaken and distorted by personal grief. Such grief contracts the whole of life to the one center — I — and looks within that microscopic eddy, exaggerating all it sees. For mind is indeed the retina of the soul, upon which images of life are cast, and, like the physical eye, may make an elusive report. Or it may report truly, qualifying what it sees and relating that to the vast Whole. Yet, just as Wisdom hath a higher eye in man, so there is that which is higher than the mental view, and that, the vision of faith and love, is at the very bottom of the heart always. Deny the tender presences. They are there, nestling close, often weighed down by care and doubt, but to be discovered by the

man who desires to discover them. Does anyone disbelieve this? Let him ask himself why we remember best the joys of life. Were we to remember the details of past sorrows as keenly we could not go on, despair would destroy our powers. That mysterious thing which we call our past, smiles more or less to our remembrance; the edge of sorrow is blunted in memory, but that of joy is ever more keen. Krishna, the "warrior eternal and sure,"[4] discerns these presences, and, tenderly smiling upon downcast man, prepares to send a heaven-born voice which shall summon them forth. Man is made for joy!

Why are they ever in the heart of man, these potencies which he names Hope, Trust, Love, because he does not know their god-like names? Is it not because that heart is a spark of the Mother-Heart, great Nature's pulsing sun, and thus shares in all her gifts and potencies? Ah! study thine own nature; thou shalt find them ever recurrent no matter how oft thou hast denied them. Hate! a sudden instant blots it out and it is Love. Doubt! some swift revulsion overturns the mind and Hope, the immortal, smiles thine anguish down. Fear, if thou canst; thy swelling heart forbids, and in an unexpected hour its tides of strength uprise, thy puny mind-erections are level with the dust that stirs about thy feet, and the world sings, for thee. Thou canst not wholly bar thy heart. It hears the Mother calling to all her children and every heart-spark leaps in answer. Give o'er denial. Confine the rebel mind. Seek! seek! The heart wills to be heard — and it *is* heard.

Arise, ye magic powers! Ye sun-breaths, warm our hearts and lend them on to conquest over self. The universe is Love, for it awaits all beings. All, all are summoned home, to be at one with Life and Light; to end the day of separation. The "day Be-With-Us"[5] is ever at hand, when man, in the dawn of the divine reunion, shall see mankind as the manifested Self, and in that Self — the All.

Whatever may be apprehended by the mind, whatever may be perceived by the senses, whatever may be discerned by the intellect, all is but a form of Thee. I am of Thee, upheld by Thee. Thou art my creator and to Thee I fly for refuge.[6]

NOTES

1. {*The Writings of Kwang-Dze,* Book VII, Part I, Section VII, Verse 6.}
2. {*Bhagavad Gîtâ,* Chapter 2.}
3. {*The Writings of Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi, Kwang-tse)* translated by Legge) Chapter 6, Verse 9.}
4. {"The Warrior Eternal and Sure," Che-Yew Tsang, *The Path,* Vol. X, 1895-1896.}
5. {Day-Be-With-Us = This refers to the time when humans have transcended the realm of phenomena and have attained oneness with the universal ego. "…in the East it was called the Day after Mahamanvantara, or the "Day-Be-With-Us." Then everything becomes one, all individualities are merged into one, yet each knowing itself, a mysterious teaching indeed" *The Collected Writings of H. P. Blavatsky,* H. P. Blavatsky, Vol. X, p. 405.}
6. {*The Vishnu Purana,* Horace Hayman Wilson, Trans., Chapter IV, p. 29.}

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Krishna, as we have seen, desires to aid and encourage Arjuna. He therefore proceeds to instruct his ward in the art of Thought, which is the art of Living. In the book the fact is set forth as the art of Warfare, but that and to live are one and the same thing when Man, standing between the hosts of Spirit and those of Material Desire, decides to advance towards the Eternal.

It is worthy of more than passing consideration, this fact that Krishna at once begins to tell Arjuna how to think, and hence how to live. The Lord does not bid Man to become an ascetic; nor to separate himself from his fellows; nor to evade or set aside the duties of his immediate place; nor to mortify the flesh by any system of food or of life. No; He inculcates right thinking, a system of thought based upon the real nature of the Universe, for such interior attention and thinking will in time affect the very brain, will alter — not its substance, but the mode, the convolutions of that substance, making it the vehicle of finer forces, the radiator of higher powers.

Broadly stated, the whole sum of this {second} chapter is the method of storing and using the spiritual thought energies. Read the chapter with care, and it is evident that a mere man of business would do his work better, would save wear and tear, coming always freshly to the daily problems, if he had his mind under the perfect control described, so that he could turn it away from every deed once done, taking no further care for the result once he had done his best in any point of detail, never wasting energy in doubt, anxiety, or nervous dread, sure of himself and calm in woe or weal. There have been such men, and one or two names occur now to the writer's mind, veritable Colossi among their fellows, who only failed when age fretted through the splendid armor of their calm. When the motive for such mental training is set higher, when the leakages of energy are avoided in order to store that Life force for diviner uses,

then the results take effect on more interior planes of Being, and the results are more swift and more powerful, because they do take effect in Substance more dynamic.

The result of too great brain wear and tear, perpetual debate, worry, anxiety, anger, fear, and — subtle pigmy — the small but deadly foe, "FUSS," is to depress the Life currents by persistently applied lower vibrations, and this devitalizes the inner man as well. In Will and Hope arise, as from a fontal source, the true springs of our Being, and flesh, blood, nerve fluid, brain, as well as life currents and mind, are invigorated by those heavenly streams.

It may be well to compare editions in dealing with this chapter in detail, for often two translators throw more light upon the subject than one alone.

Arjuna is told that: "Thou grievest for those that may not be lamented while thy sentiments are those of the expounders of the letter of the law." Another edition puts this more clearly: "Thou hast grieved for those who need not be grieved for, but thou utterest words of wisdom." Arjuna has used judgment, he has also uttered partial truths, as when he says his ancestors should be respected by him, or when he says that he cannot destroy his friends. But his seeming wisdom has missed the more profound wisdom, for he shows most respect and more true helpfulness to his ancestors in endeavoring himself to perfect his nature; he cannot kill his friends, for his kinship is with the immortal souls, not with the outer bodies. This does not mean that a man shall go forth to kill, for while he is in the body as well as when he is out of it he has a duty towards the Deity, not to consciously, deliberately destroy a vehicle of the human, intelligent soul. The "war" and the "killing" are typical, and also we find that Arjuna is instructed to fight, but nothing is said as to killing, beyond the broad fact that the Soul is all, that it kills not nor is it killed.

In one edition at hand it says:— "As the lord of this mortal frame experienceth therein infancy, childhood, and old age, so in future incarnations will it meet the same." Here we have the doctrine of Re-incarnation put forward at the very opening as affecting the entire argument. It certainly changed the whole

point of view. Given that teaching, and we must unravel the entire fabric of our Thought, weaving another of closer texture, fashioning a garment direct from Mother-Substance. The man who determines to study Life, to rely upon and to learn of that unapproachable teacher, cannot read the first letter of Nature's alphabet until he knows that he, the man himself, is a Soul; and a Soul whose very being is freedom; not a thing of matter, but a beam of the sun, a meteor that comes and goes, a law that chooses and rejects, that experiences and assimilates turn-about, and whose starry essence is compounded of Love and Will.

Another edition has: "As the soul *in* this body undergoes the changes of childhood, prime and age…." This is a useful gloss, for whereas we had the soul as "Lord of the mortal frame," a ruler and maker, we now find that this Lord is also seated within the bodily frame itself; still a third edition confirms this: "As the Dweller in the body seeketh in the body childhood, youth, and old age, so passeth he on to another body; the well-balanced grieveth not thereat." This brings out clearly the point of balance. A later verse repeats that point: "Balanced in pain and pleasure — tranquil."

It is a point of deepest value, for Balance or Harmony is the true nature, the true life of the Soul. In the *Voice of the Silence* we have "Charity and love immortal" as the first key, and "Harmony in word and act" (*i.e.,* harmony with the Law, acceptance of the whole Karmic sound of Life) as the second key, and also we are told that Harmony is Alaya's self. Little by little light shines in upon the mind, and we find that to tread the path is to sink down, down within the turbid mind and life's perturbed waters to the deeper, the essential nature of the Soul. It *is* Love; it *is* Charity; it *is* Harmony; it *is* Freedom. Why? Because that star which we call the Soul is still a thing of substance, the starry essence has its attributes, and these are they. It is Love because it goeth forth, expanding with the light of the spiritual sun towards the entire universe. It is Charity because it knoweth the three energies or principles that are in Nature, and that these act, often blindly, and not the liberated human Soul. It is Harmony because every atom of that starry

essence moves with and in the Great Breath — there where no dissonance can be heard. It is Freedom, unbound by delusion, able to fulfil its own high nature, able to choose the Above or the Below because of that energy by which it is "self-loved from within." It is Justice because it cannot act contrary — in its purest state — to the universal spiritual action nor against the law of the acting and re-acting Breath. This spark, this flame that is thyself, oh man! Wilt thou choose or depart from that? "The unreal hath no being; the real never ceaseth to be; the truth about both has been perceived by the Seers of the Essence of things." This gloss reminds us of those lines of the *Secret Doctrine:* "The Initial Existence in the first twilight of the Maha-Manvantara (after the Maha-Pralaya that follows every age of Brahmâ) is a CONSCIOUS SPIRITUAL QUALITY. In the manifested WORLDS (solar systems) it is, in its OBJECTIVE SUBJECTIVITY, like the film from a Divine Breath to the gaze of the entranced seer…. It is Substance to our spiritual sight. It cannot be called so by men in their WAKING STATE; therefore they have named it in their ignorance "God-Spirit.' " (Vol. I, p. 288, old edition.) The entire extract should be studied with care. The Soul is an Energy, a Breath; but it is also a Substance, a Light. The endeavor to realize that man is that Soul will bring in time a wider, truer concept of the whole scheme of Being. We cannot live wisely or well upon false postulates.

Other glosses are:— "Those who discern the truth discern the true end" (of the existent and non-existent).

"By those who see the truth and look into the principles of things the ultimate characteristic of these both is seen." (Truth, the ultimate Essence and ultimate characteristic, are shown to be the same thing — viz., "a conscious Spiritual quality" an essence of the Breath; the ultimate Soul.)

A wise hint this. Be not governed by the apparent nature of things. Look at the ultimate nature. As — this Joy; is it born of the Eternal; hath it root in the spiritual; or is it a passing gladness for an ephemeral thing? This Grief — does it sorrow divinely as for some obscuration of the Self, some loss of hold upon the Divine by some bewildered human heart? This Anger; what a harsh constrictive energy; this Perturbation, how its

chopping, fretting tide drives back the large harmonious vibrations of the Mother Soul. Let us look at these things, analyze them, and gently put them back from us, not thralls of Pain or Pleasure, but artificers of divine things, creators by will of the universal gladness, pilgrims of the path of heavenly Joy. Fear not, oh! fear not to rejoice divinely. Life is a song. The Path is only sorrow to the man of flesh and desire, who struggles as he goes. To the pure in heart that path is one of profound delight. See the joy of a good and happy child; what innocent mirth; what merry trust; what whole-souled generosity what spontaneous love. In that candid eye, that clear brow, see as in a dim mirror that greater thing which the pure Soul in thyself is — and shall be — a Joy Incarnate.

The Irish Theosophist – March 189{7}, Vol. 5, pp. 101-105.

The Holy Lord then continues to exhort Arjuna to remain steadfast in the belief that the re-incarnating Ego is the only real man, incorruptible and inexhaustible. The splendid imagery and profound reasoning flow on in stately measure, yet are simple as the simple truth itself. The duty of man is to this indwelling Spirit; he is a favored warrior called to war at this period of his destiny. Should he fail in this, his universal duty, mankind will know him as one who deserted his post and his trust in the human army; the hosts of spiritual being, "generals of the army," will know that the base fear of material results drove him back. He will be one who came down the stream of human life to a certain point of evolution, and then, refusing the duty to which the law and life had brought him, neglectful and oblivious of that spiritual help which has been his, which has brought him thus far, ungrateful, undutiful, afraid to lose his little self, too timorous to trust life itself, he will have retired, an affrighted animal-man, into the background of human progress. He is Man. He is Spirit. The Lord is himself; he is That; *let him trust!*

The paramount necessity of trust is thus set forth at the very outset. Can man not trust to life in its full flowing, its love, its law? Can he not resign the phantasms of the mind for the wider experience of actual living? The ample opportunity, the timely changes, the onward course of the eternal stream; can he not trust these? The inner Lord; can he not trust that prompting? The indestructible, the indivisible, the universal, the immovable; can he not for these resign his little fragment of mind? That pigmy mind which hawks about its merits; which niggles for results and rewards; debates, barters, wrangles — and for what? For its own place and precedence in Nature. Will he, for that inconsiderable place, resign his share in the Universal Mind? Will he prefer the drop to the stream?

Does he perchance say that he knows naught of these things? That no assurance of their reality is his, and such assurance he must have before he parts with that firm hold which he now has upon the visible, the actual and real? Then let him endeavor to touch or define this so-called actual and real, and it melts from his grasp; it dissolves before the gaze of the mind. To its minutest sub-division, matter is proved shifting and unstable. Far within his own consciousness is the only stable reality. Bid him go in search of that before the sliding sands on which he builds shall have swallowed him and his despair.

Do we say that there are none whom we can trust? No friend? No teacher? No guide? Accept the fact. Bereft of these all, are we yet bereft? See life in ruins at our feet, and shall the heart's high courage crumble too? Not so! The heart of man deceived, betrayed, outraged, abandoned, self-immolated even, is still a god-like thing and has a god's own power to fall back upon itself, building a newer and a better world. These cheats are well away! These idols, once so loved, what have they not swallowed up; what finer essences of our hearts have not been expressed before them in wasted blood and tears? But the true love we gave — that has gone forth to the margins of the world, to bless somewhat, somewhere. In the world of souls we can never lose our own. And that which was not ours; that fickle cheat we garlanded and praised; that child of time, that image of the dust; is it not well away, oh, grieving heart? Is it not well away; and what is not well with thee? Thou hast thyself, whose might thou dost not grasp. Yet is it dimly felt, seeing, as thou dost, those vernal returns of the heart's hope; seeing its buoyant reaction, its upward trend, its lift and lilt and love. There, deep within, inaudible as a sound, but as a power most audible to the mind, is that consciousness which is its own and only proof. Trust that and go forth into the universe living and working, careless of gathering, careless of garnering, as ready to go as to come, as ready to loose as to bind, as ready to resign as to take, and over all the star of thy strong heart. Know that great Nature does not love a whiner and a trembler, but to

him who is careless of getting and holding, *there* do her endless bounties thickly fall.

Do we know what trust is? I think not. Some fashion of believing we take it to be, and a thing which we may have or may not have. We do not know this power. It is an energy to be engendered by the will, and is then a force so compelling that it lifts its possessor beyond mere mountains and day stars to a place of knowledge and peace. In our poor terms we say we have, or have not, trust. It comes not so. No powers come to the timid, the reluctant, and the doubtful. Powers are things of light and fire. They must be sought, pursued, taken by assault, and held. Do we think Nature, who loves to have her thralls, will suffer us to hold undisturbed a power so great and so occult as trust? Having that, we are in time her master; all her hosts conspire to steal our trust away. But listening to the low call of intuition, let us grasp this power called trust, and, wrestling greatly, let us keep it for our own. Oh, trust; *trust;* TRUST; thou art mover of the world.

Side by side with this necessary quality is that other, which immovably regards both pleasure and pain. Call it calm, balance, even-mindedness, what we will; it is an interior adjustment to all circumstance, and permits the maintenance of harmony within.

It is possible to misunderstand the teaching at this point. Unless the mortal dross be utterly purged away and states unimagined by us be attained, it does not seem possible to regard pleasure and pain, as they present themselves to our consciousness, as being the same. Hence it seems that we are to meet either or both with equal heart. We are not, it would seem, expected to feel them alike; we are expected to meet them without moving from our course. It is evident, to take even one step away from mere gross selfishness, that the pain of a fellow-being cannot be the same to us as his happiness — however brief — may be; and especially if we are to "feel for all that lives." So that it must be, in the first place, the personal aspect of pain and pleasure, our own pain and pleasure, toward which we are to exercise equal-mindedness. In the second place, while to our present consciousness a great difference

between them presents itself, it is at the same time possible to disregard them as influences, as results, not seeking or avoiding either, using both and abandoning both, becoming, each in his own degree, like that host "which foresaw, yet chose."

In a later chapter of the book we find Krishna saying:

"The pleasures which arise from the feelings are the wombs of future pains." This is so self-evident that the loss or departure of a pleasure causes pain, that probably everyone will grant the fact. If we love a pleasure for itself, as sensation, or as final result, the truism is apparent. But if we take it as so much experience; if we test it as a gift of life, as somewhat to be wisely used and having an inner meaning, then, indeed, it becomes evident that the departure of the pleasure causes no pain. We shall have foreseen this; we shall have found that thorn, and, being forewarned, we shall have plucked it out. What is left is pure experience — a thornless rose if we offer it upon the altar of the Lord of Life.

It is a fact in human nature that we are loath to analyze either pain or pleasure, yet we do not shrink from them equally. We go but a short way in the test of pain, and, behold! we have conjured up the monster and it bears us away. The imagination is paralyzed, the energies undermined by the mere contemplation of pain. Need this be so? Why not give it another name, another aspect? Call it experience; hath it then no fruit? If we have harvested anything at all from it, is it not also a fitting gift for the altar? Candidly, I do not believe that one *thinking* human being can be found who would willingly relinquish at his life's end all that he has learned from his sorrows, or those sorrows themselves, if he had the power to live his life over again without them. There are sorrows dearer than pleasure, it is true, springing from the loss of deeper joys, and to obliterate the one would bring oblivion to the other. But there is more than this to the question. The imagination recoils from the image of a life wherein pleasure was the only chord, the unique light. Instinctively we perceive that here is something grotesque; something lower than the pure animal, to whom some forms of pain are known. If we look deeper, shall

we not find in this recoil of the soul a clear pointing to the fact that we are sharers of the universal life, while to know pleasure only must perforce cut us off from the whole of that life and its advance? Think of a life bereft of toil, effort, the spur of necessity, the travail of thought, the share in the dear common human life. What manner of grotesque monster is this? It is unthinkable.

Since pain, then, is necessary, we must re-adjust our ideas of it. Is it not, perhaps, true that what we call pain is really only *effort,* is the condition of life and growth in any direction; a condition which is only made discordant and painful by that selfishness which resists, which would refuse to share the world-experience, and would cling to a known and pleasurable state? Well for us it is that we are not taken at our word and left to starve amid a monotony of pleasure, like the king's son covered with beaten gold who died — as we should — from obstructed circulation. Gladly embrace the noble truth that life takes but to give, gives but to take, and each substitution is more ample than the last. If I lose a friend, I come nearer to the true ideal of friendship; but when I abandon that personal ideal and pine only to befriend all beings, I fall back upon myself and go by leaps and bounds towards that Self which brooks no half lover, but will have a man's whole soul in order to give that back to the universe in wise and wide work. Life never robs us. In that exchange man is always the gainer. But it demands the heart of trust.

It is incredible that we — each one of us — should with one accord demand as by right divine to be the exempts of pain. Some deeper meaning must exist. Is it that the joyful soul within sings of that right divine of gods on godlike planes of being, and the false self-appropriates the tune? This is true, but is there no more to it? Can it be that this self really clings to pain and the idea of pain with its attendant train of self-pity, self-relaxation, self-distrust, self-perception — luxurious wantons, all? How if there be this morbid strain of liking to feel one's self exceptional, ill-used; to be preoccupied with one's self; in fine, to feel and feel and feel? How if we cling to the well-known note, the accustomed image of martyr and saint,

and how if we love to gaze upon ourselves and must find ourselves worthy of attention as Knights of the Order of Pain? "No man ever stated his griefs as lightly as he might." Were we to be without this panorama of personal pain, could our attention be long withheld from the living spectacle of universal anguish? By my faith in nature humanized by compassion I believe we could not long be diverted from the suffering of the world, and that the false self, striving to block up the many avenues to the universal consciousness, throws out these sustained lures of personal pain. Put the image by! It is not by isolation, but by gladly sharing the common destiny that thou shalt become a molder of fate herself.

A friend has reminded me that we take our pain too timidly. Let us freely admit that. Where lies the dormant hero-impulse to do, to dare, and to bear? The specter of pain appears, and man turns away his gaze as from some ghastly specter. Or he sinks plaintive and unnerved upon the grim form, embracing it as a something all his own. In either case he accepts this strange visitant as *pain*. Was it thus self-announced? How if it be not that, but a herald of some royal advent? Call the bright roll of patience, courage, trust, serenity, resignation, hope, and all the lovely progeny of heroic pain! Who would not father these? Yet thy patience slept the sleep of the unborn until pain called it forth and tried its strength. Thy courage was a thing of dreams until the instant a danger called it, full armed, from thy brain. The accost of pain demands a hero. Take thou his arméd hand; smile boldly in his eyes, give him brave cheer within thy tented heart, for thou shalt find in him thy wisest Counsellor, thy world-wide Comrade, the great Revealer, whose final name is peace.

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At first sight the statement that peace is a resultant of pain may appear strange, even revolting, to some minds. To such, the idea may seem to savor of the pernicious attractions of self-martyrdom and self-immolation: that torture of the self which is one of the strangest of the many forms of personal vanity. To desire martyrdom for its own sake; to intoxicate the brain with the subtle image of one's moral heroism — this is but one step from that fanaticism which rushes towards suffering and burdens which form no part of our own duty and which were never awarded to us by that destiny which we call the Law. To a mind thus rendered drunk by its own greatness no distinction of duty is possible. It embraces hard and distasteful tasks for the sake of embracing them, and in the hope of thus demonstrating its own heroism to itself. Self-torment, self-immolation, are often but other names for self-intrusion into places and conditions where we had no business to go: a thrusting of one's self, led by the most insidious form of vanity into a path where Karma never intended we should tread: a path of pain we have forced and made our own.

Such pain does not bring peace. It is a state of war. It is as necessary to be just to one's self as to any other, for all are equal in the balance of that Law which "is no respecter of persons." In the pursuance of our duty; we shall need no pain; and this is just and right, for Karma brought us there. Such pain is outweighed by a keen and ever-increasing delight, the pure joy of service, and is indeed the swiftest of the peace-bringers. Upon the points of motive and duty then the whole question turns.

Our motives are obscure. To us as much — and sometimes more — as to any other. We can only endeavor to fathom them, reading them often by the future light thrown upon them by our reactions. That is, we imagine ourselves to be acting

unselfishly in some work. The work is a success, but does not turn out as we intended. Or someone else has the credit and we are set aside. Or the work fails. We then feel pain, annoyance, disappointment, and, as by a search-light, the soul reveals to us that our motive was not pure. Or we imagine it to be our duty to expose some wrong, and to do it at the cost of some pain to ourselves. We do expose it, and the wrong is found to be no wrong. Or the world believes us not. Or we fail and instead of turning then to other work we persist in striving to get a verdict against the offence or the offender. Failing still, we harden into a place and a state of being where we persist in the futile effort, and it has now become an effort to vindicate our own judgment, to demonstrate our own rightful courage, our martyr stand. Well indeed is it for us then if the Law permits that our heart shall shine out and show us our own error. It costs much pain. Yet hath the contrary course a greater anguish still. Our motives are indeed obscure. But a high courage, a sincere desire to serve, may bring light to the riddle little by little and in due season.

The pain that ends in peace is that which the Law appoints, and the peace is to be seized and confirmed at any moment.

If we look but a little way into this subject we see that physical pain, for example, when it is removed, leaves with the sufferer a sense of peace. Such a sense of peace is lacking in the presence of actual joy. The peace results from contrast. This is only another way of saying that Nature then works with us, pointing out that the removal of discord brings peace, and not the mere presence of pleasure. In other words, discordant conditions of mind or of body are productive of pain because they are opposed to the main course of universal Nature. When they are removed, Nature takes her unobstructed way and peace prevails.

Turning now to the mental and moral sources of pain, we find them to be identical. I sin against the inner light and my moral being is torn. I cling to my forms of belief, whether in religion, in friendship, in love, in what not else; the false erection crumbles and I grieve. Why? Is it not because “I” have lost something? But I have not. Nothing is lost. The false

mirage has vanished, that is all. I may arise and pursue my journey unimpeded by the cheat.

Or I lose, apparently the true and truly loved. Have I lost them? Are they not mine ever in the realm of soul? Would I keep them back from the well-earned rest, the deep arcana of spiritual assimilation? The heart, convicted once again of the sin of self-seeking, even in the purest love, sighs as it makes its answer. Well, in that sigh it is nearer the Real than it perhaps thinks.

"If I suffer, it is self that suffers, not I. That is an awful doctrine and too hard except for the few. But it is God's truth. By asserting it as true, with or without the acceptance of the brain; by affirming with quiet persistence that this is fact whether one cares to accept it or not, the mind in time becomes impressed with the idea, works on it, digests it. That done, one rises superior to the suffering. An old story! And with it goes another, that those who suffer would do well to wander through the streets of their own city and find those who suffer with them from the same cause. They would soon find that their compassion for the pain of others, and their efforts to relieve it, would melt their own grief into a fame of love of a universal and divine nature — once they forgot themselves in the greater pain around them."

These words indicate still another facet of the shining truth that pain brings peace. For see what deep peace comes when once we merge ourselves into the endless compassion which reaches out to the whole world and yearns to serve those agents of the Law who only live by it and their compassion for the worlds where pain is known. It is the pain inseparable from life and from our lives as we have fashioned them, which, rightly borne, brings peace. Shall we either fear or love it? Need it be either sought, as by the fanatic, or avoided, as by the epicure? Not so, standing upon that middle ground which is our own duty, we, masters of ourselves, need not fear the accost of pain. Looking steadfastly upon it, we find it in every instance to arise from some concept of our own possessions, our own rights, something sequestrated from Nature. We yield up these mental possessions, and no longer shut out from the Boundless,

we enter its tides in their flowing and the sweetness of peace is ours. It may not last. Again and again we enter the state of war. But the peace is within us, we remember it, we acclaim it, we, heirs of hope, we expect it; its leaven works within us; again and again we enter the state of peace also, until we learn that it is always to be found there where we lay down the personal will and the personal image. And then indeed we know that this pain we have met, accosted, accepted, have calmly housed awhile, was indeed the peace-bringer because it was the truth-bearer: it ceased to be pain to our sight and became a great white peace when we yielded up our self-will to Divine Will, and ceased to oppose at heart the onward march of Nature and Soul.

The Irish Theosophist – May 1897, Vol. 5, pp. 141-144.

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We have seen that pain and pleasure are reactions, one of another, and we now find Krishna emphasizing that fact in this sentence:

"Be free from the pairs of opposites."

It is advice greatly needed by every student of life. Not one in a thousand is able to tread a middle path. We fly from pole to pole; extremists for the most part, we hate or love; we desire or repel; we act or react. There is all too little of sitting calmly by; too little moderation of mind; too rarely do we attain an attitude of suspended judgment: we are all too prone to crystallize. With us, brotherhood degenerates into sentimentality; avoidance of condemnation into direct encouragement to the evil-doer; our hope is so impetuous that it becomes a fear; our calm degenerates into indifference, our unselfishness into a blatant and self-advertised charity. We are not "constant in the quality of Sattva;" we are not content with knowing the truth.

How, then, shall we avoid these extremes, which we are led into by the very nature of mind itself? For the human mind has that tangential quality which only the "quality of Sattva," the knowledge of the True, can control.

The answer is given in a few brief words of a potency so marvelous, so wide-reaching, that could we at once attain to their full meaning and realization, we should transcend the higher heavens and stand, godlike, above.

"Let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to actions by the hope of their reward, nor let thy life be spent in inaction. Firmly persisting in Yoga perform thy duty, oh, despiser of wealth, and laying aside all desire for any benefit to thyself from inaction, make the event equal to thee, whether it be success or failure. Equal-mindedness is called Yoga."

Here is the final recipe for wisdom and happiness. Do we even approach to the faintest realization of its meaning? Have we any conception of what it would be, to-day, in the very marrow of practical life, to ask ourselves, before every action, before every thought, even: "Is it my duty thus to act? Is it my duty thus to think?" Can we imagine what it would be to put every deed, every idea, to this touch-stone, and never to let the image of possible *result* enter the mind at all? What a blessed relief even an hour of such living and thinking would be! How life would be simplified, the congested mind relieved, the engorged faculties released and intuition set free. He who is thus "mentally devoted dismisses alike successful and unsuccessful results, being beyond them." He is out of the region in which Karma operates, and is one with the vast sweep of Nature's laws. Action and reaction have no bonds for him who never acts for self; he goes to that "eternal blissful abode which is free from all disease and untouched by troubles;" that abode which is the peace that passes all understanding. He is indifferent there to doctrines, past or to come; he contemplates all, desiring none, appropriating naught. The endless panorama of life defiles before his gaze: he sees life soundly for he sees it whole: he is at rest.

The tendency of the mind to crystallize, to attach itself to forms and formulae, is the source of most of our woes. We begin a work, for example, something praiseworthy in itself. Little by little we identify ourselves with the work; the next step is soon taken and we identify the work with ourselves. Our methods, our department, our plans, soon become of paramount importance; we manifest zeal, competition, rivalry; we struggle to make our department the best, or to carry out our own methods; or we dread the rivalry of someone else; or we shrink from new methods, from change, from taking up some new detail, place or plan. We have gradually — and in most instances unconsciously — formulated a creed in regard to our work, and we are happy in proportion as we lose ourselves in that work, its excitement, its absorption of our minds. Take the work away. Deprived of that, are we still contented, happy? We are not. We long to do, to do, and it

becomes clear to the candid mind that what we loved most about our work was that it deadened self-consciousness. It narcotised for a time that terrible and unsettled mental condition, that pressure of a dual consciousness which drives many to drink or to narcotics. It was not our duty that we loved in our work, nor the work for its own sake, but only the relief from our own mental hells, the one-pointedness which this work afforded to our restless brains. Why, then, should we not seek this one-pointedness in all things and for its own sake, and by seeing the Self in all things and all as the Self and offering up all results to the Lord of Life, escape from the eternal unrest of our present mental conditions? Even the wise man can be carried away, we are told, by the forces of personal desire when these invade his heart. By remaining in the fixed attitude of mental devotion to the true Self we attain to the possession of spiritual knowledge. We then find a statement which compels attention:

"He who attendeth to the inclination of the senses, in them hath a concern; from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of the memory, from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination loss of all!"

That is where we stand to-day. We have lost all.

Many students ask why we do not remember our past incarnations. The answer is here. We have desired to hear, to see, to touch, to taste, on all the planes, until deprivation of any of our objects has at first concerned, then tried, annoyed, determined us, and the fancy has become a passion; we have conjured up Will, the great motor, and now the fancy is a passion, a bent of the mind and nature, the will to attain, to possess. Great Nature thwarts this will at some point where it crosses her larger purposes, and anger results. We do not necessarily fly into a rage. By "anger" it appears that the obstinate determination to carry our personal point is meant, as well as the interior irritation which opposition perforce engenders. For if one will be crossed by another current of will, friction must result. This friction, this struggle of force against force, produces a harsh, strident, disruptive vibration which

corresponds, on the plane of force, to that explosive action upon the mental plane which is known as anger. Such a force rends the mental atmosphere of man: it confuses, irritates, congests and confounds; the soul no longer looks upon a clear and mirror-like mind, but that mind reflects distorted images; shapes of bewilderment and folly flit across the magic glass; delusion results, false mental concepts, false memories, false recollections, and now we no longer remember our high origin, our diviner life; and now we judge falsely because we remember wrongly; the faculty of discrimination has no longer an abode with us, and all, all is lost of our diviner heritage. Repeat this process from life to life, and the wonder is that we aspire and yearn at all. If anyone doubts the reality of this process, he has but to watch the natural growth and progress of any desire in himself, and, provided it be thwarted persistently, he will see in little that which, on a larger scale, has robbed and orphaned the race.

"He who sees Krishna everywhere equally dwelling, he seeth." How calmly fall these words upon the fevered brain! How gracious their benediction! We thirst for peace. It is here, within our reach, knocking at the door of the heart, pleading to enter. Only live the life; only say "thy will be done;" only resist not the Law but be reconciled with thy brother-man and lay thy gift upon the altar; only take duty for thy guiding-star and heed not any result — *is it too hard for thee?* It is without doubt too hard for *thee,* but THOU ART THAT. IT is ever there, conscious and wise; calm, patient and compassionate. Oh, believe that thou art indeed and in very truth that eternal boundless One — and what is too hard for thee? On Krishna call, and fight on, fight out the field! There is not an hour, not an act of daily life, to which this counsel does not apply.

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The third chapter of *The Bhagavad Gîtâ* deals with the right performance of action, this right performance being looked upon as true devotion. Arjuna, being at the point where a man desires to do his duty, asks whether knowledge is indeed "superior to the practice of deeds," as he has understood Krishna to say. No mistake more natural than this. The idea of knowledge at first absorbs the mind of the student of spiritual things, and most come but slowly to a realization of the fact that true knowledge is being, that we can never truly be said to know a truth until we have thoroughly lived it. The truth must be manifest in us, realized in our own persons. Krishna then replies that there are indeed two modes of devotion, the one being the "exercise of reason in contemplation," and the other Yoga, or "devotion in the performance of action." Here the key-note is struck; devotion is shown to be practical action.

It is noteworthy that in the very beginning of his statement to Arjuna, the blessed Lord strikes the most human of all chords — he refers to man's need of happiness. For at once we are shown that man cannot find happiness in inaction. The reason is given. Nature is against it. The "qualities which spring from Nature" impel to action. Only when man has penetrated behind the veil of Nature does he rise above the influence of the qualities: he then sees these qualities, these three great orders or divisions of force, moving in the ocean of being above which his supreme consciousness has soared.

We can, to some extent, picture the qualities to ourselves as three great orders of vibration and consciousness, of which one, Tamas, is inertia; the second, Rajas, the driving force; and the third, Sattva, equilibrium or balance, the other pole of inertia. Between these two poles plays Rajas, the driving energy, in one sense a path from one to the other. Inertia may be converted to equilibrium by means of the action of energy.

Balance would become stagnation were it not for that same energic action. The three, interacting, compel to action the universe composed of Nature's substance. But the Self being "distinct from them" (the qualities) and above Nature, man may find eternal peace in the harborage of the Self.

Another reason, an ethical one, is given in favor of devotion through the right performance of action. "The journey of thy mortal frame cannot be accomplished by inaction." To those who regard the body as dust to be cast aside, this teaching must sound strange. But the man who knows that the physical and astral bodies are built up of elemental lives — or life atoms, if the term be preferred — recognizes a duty towards those lives upon which his thoughts leave an impress, a stamp almost indelible, lives which mirror his acts. They are the monads of Leibnitz, "every monad a mirror of the universe," and in the case of man that universe is the sphere to which they belong. They are the skandhas, the bearers of Karma. Under the play of human energy they give up the pictures of the past, the forces locked within them, and are, in short, agents of Karma, bearers of the destiny man has provided for himself. To evolve every atom of his chosen habitation, to transmute these locked-up forces into higher energies, is a part of the duty of man. Inaction would inhibit the interaction of these life atoms, and the choice of good or evil continually offered by that interaction would be lost to "the lives" and to man.

We next find the comprehensive statement that "actions performed other than as sacrifice unto God make the actor bound by action." Why is this?

We have just seen that action, in regard to the three qualities, proceeds in a never-ending circle. At first sight man would appear to be bound in that, as Ixion was bound upon the wheel. But this is not so. He is bound while he acts from the basis of Nature. Let him act from the consciousness of the Self, the Lord above Nature, and he is no longer bound. For the Self is free, and only the Self. Nature is a secondary product and is not free from the action of her qualities. But the man who acts with the whole of Nature, that is, with Nature guided by law, already approaches freedom; he has cast aside the shackles of

the personal self. Not until he has become one with Maha-Atma — the supreme Spirit — can his freedom be called perfect; but still, the lower self once sufficiently cast aside to allow him to act with Nature, he may be said to draw near to the Self. In thus acting with Nature he sacrifices, as Nature herself does, to divine law. It should not be forgotten that Nature "exists for the purposes of soul" hence her action is sacrifice. The same is true of man; when he exists only to fulfil the law and resists not the effects of those causes which he himself set in motion, then he also fulfils the purpose of soul (which purpose is evolution), and has resigned "the whole world" to gain that purified soul which is his true Self.

Krishna then makes the statement which has puzzled so many renders of the sacred book, and in which we seem to discern a store-house of hidden occult truths. "Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice and sacrifice is performed by action. Know that action comes from the Supreme Spirit who is one; wherefore the all-pervading Spirit is at all times present in the sacrifice."

In *The Voice of the Silence* occurs a verse which throws some light upon the lines just quoted. "Desire nothing. Chafe not at Karma nor at Nature's changeless laws. But struggle only with the personal, the transitory, the evanescent and the perishable. Help Nature and work on with her …"

And then how will Nature regard the man who follows this behest? "Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance."

Not as a helper, but as *"one of her creators."* It seems strange, does it not, until we remember that "action comes from the Supreme Spirit who is one?" How if the Great Breath breathes through all action, action being a necessity for the evolution of Nature and Soul: and how if man, in abandoning all personal desire in action, in acting only as "sacrifice" to the Supreme, has really left action to that Supreme Spirit? The Karma at which he shall not chafe is the whole round of action and reaction; he accepts it all, doing only his duty in every act and resigning all possible results to Krishna, who is "present in the sacrifice" as the Mover, the Breath. That Breath is creative.

When man has thus sacrificed his personal desires to the necessary round of action, he works with that creative Breath, and being so regarded by Nature she "shows the means and the way" to him.

But the man who delights in gratifying his passions "does not cause this wheel thus already set in motion to continue revolving."

In a well-worn copy of the *Gîtâ,* used for many years by our late beloved chief, Mr. Judge, I found this note, quoted from memory: "This wheel is the Cycle of All, and it is the place and nature of man, in Cosmos, to assist in the revolution of the Cycle of All." I have heard this spoken of as "the human cycle," and have supposed this to mean that the whole of the great sub-division of time here indicated as "the Cycle of All" is the "period of choice" for the present human race. Be this as it may, we see that discord is introduced into the action of the great harmonious vibration by the sinful desires of man, whose personal energy and will introduce, as it were, a cross series of waves which mar the even sweep of the currents of the Breath.

The simile of rain and sacrifice reminds us that the emanations of the earth are cast up into the atmosphere and descend in the form of rain. In air is to be found every component of the earth, water, fire; the gases, known and unknown, the mysterious sun-force of the alchemist, all are there. We have been told that the thought of man affects these emanations, as it affects every convulsion of Nature, and all at once we see a new meaning in the simile of the rain and the sacrifice. Mr. Judge has hinted in one of his books that the Ego may be bound by certain kinds of food. Certainly the life-essence enters the human body by means of food. May we not find reason to believe that it descends in rain? Many a hint in alchemical works points in this direction. "Rain comes from sacrifice," which "sacrifice is performed by action." What kind of action? The action of thought? The action of the One Life, "at all times present in the sacrifice?" Here is matter for much meditation. Even on a cursory reading we see the interaction between Nature and man, and the fact that there is such

interaction proves to us the importance of every thought and action, when each must be for or against evolution.

Reasons are then given for action as opposed to inaction. Krishna, full of tenderness for mortals, shows the boundless scope of universal love when he declares that all these creatures would perish were he to cease to act, to breathe forth. The wise man is he who knows that "the qualities act only in the qualities," that is, that the qualities or three forces are the actors in Nature; he attributes all this action to the qualities, and by conceiving the Self as distinct from them, as a consciousness above and apart from them, even though in a mystical sense "present in the sacrifice," he comes in time to unite himself with that Self. Meanwhile he seeks "for that which is homogenous with his own nature." That is to say he recognizes that all his present surroundings are the karmic outcome of his own nature; his own desires and acts brought him where he stands, and his conditions are, in fact, what he most desired, for they are the immediate results of his desire and choice. Hence he accepts them all and tries to work them out by doing his duty in each as it rises, neither liking nor disliking them. Even if he should perish in the performance of his duty, he has fulfilled the law. His return to the scene of action will find him further on the path.

Arjuna then asks what instigates man to offend, and he is told that "lust instigates him." We must not narrow the meaning of the word "lust," for it is "passion, sprung from the quality of Rajas." That is to say, desire, the product of the driving energy of Nature. There is help to be found in the direction of a constant recollection of this truth. If man could only cease to identify himself with his desires, much sin would be at an end. *The Voice of the Silence* warns us:

"If thou wouldst cross the first hall safely, let not thy mind mistake the fires of lust that burn therein for the sunlight of life."[1]

In other words, this desire, this driving force, is not the true life-force, the universal essence. Although the fire of desire burns in the mind, that mind which is the lord ("rajah") of the senses, "the Thought-Producer," the "great Slayer of the

Real," yet man shall know that this desire is the Hall of Ignorance. Its empire is wide. It rules, when it rages, "the senses and organs, the thinking principle" even to Buddhi, here called "the discriminating principle," does its fatal power extend. "The Lord of the body," or the Lord *in* the body, the Ego, is deluded when desire "surrounds" the discriminating principle; when the "holy seat" of Buddhi, the white light of wisdom, is surrounded by the raging desire-flames and the smoke of passion and sin. That light cannot manifest at the sacred place so long as the grosser flames rage there.

It is a well-known fact in human nature that desire ends with possession, and the mind of man passes on to new conquests, new desires. This fact should be the means of liberation, for it proves that man does not *himself* desire anything; the Rajas fire burns, that is all. Once convinced of this, once satisfied that that desire is never appeased when its apparent object is attained, but continues unabated, man would surely cease to be the dupe of desire. He would grasp the fact so cunningly concealed by Nature, that he in truth does not desire, but that desire — the driving energy — operates in the substance of his sphere. Once he can begin to put an end to the mental identification of himself with this desire, this quality of Nature, he is in the position of one who, link by link, strikes off his chains. It is this identification of himself with Nature's quality which has forged and ever rivets his chain. Once let him realize that he has an antagonist; once let his mind glimpse the truth that liberation is possible, that his own real interest is not with this desire, but is on the other side, and already he has taken the first step towards freedom. Then he wonders why he did not earlier discern this truth; for instance, when he saw that the gratification of his various desires neither assuaged desire itself, nor yet contented him; that he was not happy; why did he not then find a hint of the truth? Desire never gratified any one of us; we are never permanently happy; why? We conceive the desired object strongly and singly; we give no thought to the consequences it entails. But it never comes singly; it brings in its train a throng of unimagined conditions and consequences, most of them reactions of that initial action,

desire. We have thought perhaps of the pleasing consequences, and not of their polar opposites, their shadows. We forgot what Krishna later tells Arjuna, "the pleasures which spring from the emotions are the wombs of future pain." The very nature of action implies reaction and that to its polar opposite. Why then have we been so blinded? Is it not because the personality, seeking to assure itself of its power, its life, borrowing even the hope of immortality whispered by the spirit to the soul, drives us onward to gratify its own thirst for sensation, to employ its own driving force, to accrete strength and consciousness around itself; it conceals from us, as in a blinding glare of life, that other side, that calm light which would reveal truth to the mind. It would appear, from this point of view, that the personality is an entity working for itself and opposed to the progress of the inner man. What if that be so? What if the personality be a congeries of elemental lives, all driven onward by desire, until some higher unifying force appears from above or from within to guide and train them towards a wider plan? Then the personality, under the influence of Tamas, ignorance or inertia, uses this driving force which it finds within its component parts, as a "will to live," a will for itself. Every part evolves this will, and each is "for itself." Can we wonder that man is torn asunder? But he can unify himself by the strength of the higher will, once he catches a glimpse of Sattva. In that calm radiance he contemplates the real nature of desire, and knows that he is not that; that even Sattva is but a light to be used by him, a temporary aid, and that he himself is one with that Ego which is "He, greater than Buddhi," for the divine Thinker is greater than his thought. Krishna states this truth very clearly and frequently, that the real man is the Ego, for if we look to that Light as something separate from ourselves we can never merge ourselves into it. Hence Arjuna is ever the bowman because he must never loose his hold of the bow, that saving weapon, that tense instrument which is his constant thought, "I am That." This is the never-ending thought of the manifested universe; it is the Aum, the eternal vibration chanted forth by cosmos evermore. It is the "great bird" between whose wings he shall rest when he has given up the

personal life, divided and separative as that life ever is, torn, tempest-tossed and complex as it looks to his weary mind when he comes to loose his clutch upon its lures to live the life. May thy bow, Arjuna, hit that shining mark!

(*To be continued*.)
{Continuation not found.}

NOTE

1. {*The Voice of the Silence,* H. P. Blavatsky, p. 6.}
