

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE



A STUDY COURSE BY MARIA PARISEN

BASED ON THE BOOK
TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE
BY CLARA CODD

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	COURSE OVERVIEW	1
I	INTRODUCTORY	2
II	THE PERSONALITY AND THE EGO, PART I	7
III	THE PERSONALITY AND THE EGO, PART II	14
IV	THE PREPARATION FOR THE WAY—THE WILL	21
V	THE PREPARATION FOR THE WAY—THE BODY	28
VI	THE PREPARATION FOR THE WAY—EMOTIONS	34
VII	THE PREPARATION FOR THE WAY—THE MIND	40
VIII	THE PREPARATION FOR THE WAY—SINS & VIRTUES	47
IX	THE WAY, PART I	53
X	THE WAY, PART II	62
XI	THE METHOD, PART I	70
XII	THE METHOD, PART II	77

“THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE”

A Study Course with Commentary by Maria Parisen

—The Inspiration of Clara Codd

CLARA was born in 1876 in England, the oldest of ten daughters. Even as a child, she questioned the meaning of life and felt moved into a search for “something.” As a young woman, a strong sense for freedom and justice moved her to work for the enfranchisement of women. Despite a natural shyness, she spoke passionately for women’s rights from street platforms and in crowded halls, enduring heckling, physical abuse, and imprisonment.

She joined the Theosophical Society at age 27. In her autobiography, *So Rich a Life*, Clara states, “I had come home at last after long wandering. I had found the beginning of the way.” Three years later Clara was appointed the first national lecturer for the English Section, “with only one lecture properly prepared and with my shy disposition and youthful inexperience.” Later she served as National Secretary (president) of the Australian and South African Sections. For over sixty years, she traveled the world as one of our most beloved and inspiring leaders. Clara was honored with the Subba Row gold medal for her wide range of theosophical writings. In addition to *The Technique of the Spiritual Life*, our course will draw upon some of her best-known works, including *The Ageless Wisdom of Life*, *The Way of the Disciple*, *Theosophy as the Masters See It*, *Meditation: Its Practice and Results*, and *Trust Yourself to Life*.



—Course Structure

Clara Codd begins *The Technique of the Spiritual Life* with an overview of human nature and the “field” of becoming. She then explores preparation for the Way, addressing the powers of will, body, emotions, and mind. A lengthy section on the “ancient and eternal Way,” explores elements of spiritual consciousness. Her final sections address method and include meditation instructions.

Each course lesson begins with commentary by Maria Parisen, along with study and practice suggestions. Selections from Clara Codd’s *The Technique of the Spiritual Life* follow Maria’s commentary.

—Meditative Inquiry

The Technique of the Spiritual Life is rich in meanings, unique for you, which are best discovered through meditative or prayerful study. Among the suggestions given to theosophists in 1889 (see *Practical Occultism*. Adyar: Vasanta Press, 1975, pg. 71) were these:

Do not read much. If you read for ten minutes, reflect for as many hours.

Habituate yourself to solitude, and to remaining alone with your thoughts.

The intent is to be open, spacious and attentive, grounding the study in everyday life. Rather than assembling or re-arranging ideas, a meditative approach makes a deeper connection. Desire for understanding, awareness, and effort are balanced by an inner sense of peacefulness. When prior learning and preconceptions are held lightly, fresh insights may arise.

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson One: "Introductory"¹

Power of all Powers! Oh fill and flood my being;
O Sun Eternal, whelm me in Thy Light;
Vision itself need ask no eyes for seeing,
And boundless Life no wings to mount the height.
I am Thy Light, by mortal lamp enshrouded,
Thy Bliss, beyond all shifting joys and pains;
Above their glooms and gleams is Peace unclouded;
Shatter the lamp; the Light, the Light remains.
Father of Spirits, Love for ever burning,
Burn Thou all forms that hold my life from Thee;
Lost in my selfhood, to Thyself returning,
Find Thou Thine own and my Eternity.

—From *A Hymn to Shiva*

It is a truism that the world stands today at the threshold of an entirely New Age.

Life proceeds in cycles, never in an undeviating straight line. This great principle rules everywhere. There never was an evening that did not turn again to another morning, nor a winter that did not herald the arrival of another spring. The "day" of a man's life follows exactly the same sequence. The first arc of a man's life is comprised of outgoing, growth, and adventure; the second arc consists of returning, of slowly diminishing life-forces, and of the setting-in of the peace of evening.

This is not only true of a day, a year, a life cycle, but is also true of the corporate life of each nation, civilization, planet, and solar system, even of the boundless universe itself. This is the universal cyclic law—eternal motion—the rhythmic ebb and flow of all Nature. Hence, a nation reaches extinction and ceases to be, but the souls who lived within its ranks are born once again in a new setting. For example, we can trace the colonizing, law-abiding traits of the ancient Romans in the people of the British Empire during their heyday. We see the meticulous, artistic sensibilities of the ancient Greeks reflected in the French culture of modern times. The civilizations, which the nations promote and embody, have their great Day and in time pass away; from their ashes arises a newer and a greater concept of life. The whole advancing consciousness of humanity passes through many such cycles. In the process, though forms may be destroyed, the immortal life persists, and eventually expresses itself anew.

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Idylls of the King, Tennyson

¹ Clara Codd's *Technique of the Spiritual Life* has been edited by the Department of Education.

One such cycle of approximately 2,000 years is closing now [Editor—Circa 1958]. Humanity is “a day’s march nearer home.” The signs of the close of a cycle are: universal break-up, chaos, change, and cataclysms. From these stressful events slowly emerges the outline of the new. For example, it is clear now that the age of isolation, of empires, of the domination of one nation by another, is past. The linking of the whole world by new forms of communication and travel presages a dream of the poet Tennyson: “The parliament of man, the Federation of the world.” The New Age that is dawning now will see the growth of the principle of co-operation between all nations and between all classes, and hence the end of war, and its other side, poverty, for the rest of the life of this planet.

Such mighty changes are really brought about by the growing consciousness of humanity. This is reflected in the world of religious thought even more potently than in the world of social relationships, the latter being the outcome of the former. Humanity is now passing from the idea of God Transcendent to the thought of God Immanent, and particularly, as found in the deepest heart of man. Therefore, we witness the rapid and extraordinary growth of people’s interest in mysticism, occultism, yoga, and the lives of great saints and sages. In 1882 an Adept remarked that a wave of mysticism was sweeping over Europe [Ed.—See Mahatma Letter #92]. It is now flowing over the whole world, and thousands are turning inward, feeling after God, if by chance they may find Him, seeking *within* for the Kingdom of Heaven and enduring happiness.

This is true religion. As Dean Inge [Ed.—British theologian (1860-1954)] has said, mysticism—the direct knowledge of God—is *real* religion, and without its great saints, knowers, and lovers of the Real, no exoteric religious system could endure. More and more souls are seeking inwardly, trying to find the way to divine realization. This leads us to another great principle of Nature: all things *become*. Within the acorn lies the future giant of the forest; within the seed, the lovely flower; and within the soul of man, the future God, the Perfect Man. It is man’s destiny that one day he must learn to plunge into the mysterious depths of his own glorious being, for only there is to be found true wisdom and the real power to help.

This mounting human need is being met today by numerous occult and mystical schools of thought—some of them sincere and well-grounded, others motivated by self-interest and less well-informed. It is to try to do my small part in helping this rising tide of seekers after Reality—wherever they may be, and whether they form part of some religious or mystical body or not—that I have written this book. Reality is the “naked fact” everywhere. It has no name, no label, no partisanship. On the Way to It we dress It in the garments of thought and language to which we are accustomed. But Reality is One, Simple, Lovely. It is the shining peak of the great Mount of God, and we may humbly begin to ascend from anywhere at the foot of the mountain, taking the road that, to us, seems best. But when we reach the Shining Peak, all the roads will have merged, and there will remain but that which the noble Plotinus called “the flight of the alone to the Alone.”

—End of Excerpt—

Lesson One COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

A few lines from *A Hymn to Shiva* preface the text. More than a simple prayer, the *Hymn* is a visionary recital of great beauty. The seer conveys longing, joyous affirmation, and fearless intention. The goal is union with divine reality, which to the visionary is as the Eternal Sun. Love fuels a profound self-sacrifice—culminating in a mystic death—through which life is renewed. The seer no longer desires earthly or heavenly form, but only absorption in Love.

I am Thy Light, by mortal lamp enshrouded . . .
Shatter the lamp; the Light, the Light remains . . .
Love for ever burning,
Burn Thou all forms that hold my life from Thee . . .

—A Hymn to Shiva



The seer dies to separateness—not for self, but for love of the Eternal. As the lost soul returns, an inborn, divine purpose fulfills itself, and a more radiant life begins in a spiral of infinite unfolding. *A Hymn to Shiva* sets the keynote for the text. It conveys something of the courage, devotion, joy, and enlightened self-sacrifice at the heart of a spiritual life.

The classic image of the dancing Shiva, pictured above, symbolizes elements of a supreme Reality. Clarifying its significance for human consciousness, a Master comments, “. . . the adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths—the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, SHIVA, the Creator, the Destroyer and the Regenerator . . .” He notes further that the Ideal Shiva of the Yoga Sastras is a mendicant, sage and healer, the culmination of Spiritual Wisdom (*The Mahatma Letters, Chronological Sequence*, pg. 55).

Signs of a closing evolutionary cycle—breakdown, chaos, and cataclysm—are familiar. We experience such cyclic changes in our own lives; we recognize the same patterns as communities and nations develop. Certain forms disintegrate to make way for new thought, feeling, and physical patterns. The process is not so stressful when the outcome is personally pleasing or acceptable. But our current transition demands a transformation, which many are resisting.

The threshold to a “New Age” leads to higher consciousness. Safe passage requires unity and harmony, a willingness to journey with and for others. Intention is critical, thus the importance of self-awareness and honesty as the path opens into the wholeness of life. Selfish motives are often hidden or justified by a clever imagination. But self-centered forces, which now perpetuate worldwide suffering, cannot hold sway even before simple kindness. The ancient saying, **LOVE CONQUERS ALL**, embodies cosmic and karmic law.

In communities where unity prevails among diverse families and activities, individuals find fulfillment and joy. When a brotherhood of truth-seekers bands together for a noble purpose, a wisdom community arises. These seekers are not united by race, color, creed, geography, nor even

beliefs. Their bond is a willingness to realize and serve Reality, God, Divine Life—however it may be conceived. Elements of a shared worldview, spiritual ideals and practices support the deeper purpose.

Helena Blavatsky defined Theosophy as “Divine Wisdom,” or “Wisdom of the Gods.”

The word *theos* means a god in Greek, one of the divine beings, certainly not “God” in the sense attached in our day to the term. Therefore, it is not “Wisdom of God,” as translated by some but *Divine Wisdom* such as that possessed by the gods. The term is many thousands of years old.

Blavatsky, H. P., *The Key to Theosophy*, pg. 1

Intelligence is of many kinds. Ways of knowing vary among the different kingdoms of Nature. Beings who are in advance of our common humanity have a more universal and beneficent outlook. Though they may be distinct individuals, there is no longer a sense of separateness. A refined empathy and compassion allows direct insight into the heart of things. Illumination is *knowing through participation*.

A collective of such beings is inspired through devotion to a Supreme Reality, an intuitive sense for harmony, and an unconditional love for those under their care. The self-sacrifice that sustains the hierarchy is joyous. Because the individual *is* the collective intelligence, has *become* the greater whole, wisdom communities are infinitely creative and helpful. The brotherhood of human adepts, and the hierarchies of great angels and devas, are such enlightened collectives. The Theosophical Society is intended to reflect their consciousness and ways, especially to address the “mounting human need” for direct knowledge of Truth.

The following quotes suggest some elements of mysticism, which Clara Codd suggests is the essence of true religion. Consider each one carefully in the light of suggestions made for meditative inquiry, dwelling on meaningful words or phrases.

Mysticism is the art of union with Reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in greater or less degree; or who aims at and believes in such attainment.

Underhill, Evelyn. *Practical Mysticism*, pg. 23

The central characteristic of the mystical experience—ineffable, noetic, fleeting, timeless—is the enveloping sense of oneness with a universe suddenly known and felt as luminous from within.

Mills, Joy. “The Nature of Mystical Experience,” *The Silent Encounter*, pg.7

. . . the recovery of mystical religion is a vital necessity in our civilization. Religion must once again cease to separate the divine from the human, and point to the promise—nay, the immediate possibility—of man’s intimate union with the divine, the penetration of the divine within the soul and the disappearance of personal selfhood in the divine substance. In short, God must cease to be an object and must become an experience.

Hoeller, Stephan. “The Recovery of Mystical Religion,” in *The Silent Encounter*, pg. 66

. . . there is a root or depth of thee from whence all . . . faculties come forth, as lines from a centre, or as branches from the body of a tree. This depth is called the centre,

the fund or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity—I had almost said the infinity—of thy soul; for it is so infinite that nothing can satisfy it or give it rest but the infinity of God.

Law, William. Quoted in *The Perennial Philosophy*, pg. 2

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. What does the phrase, “the immanence of God,” mean to you? In addition to the several signs mentioned, what other trends suggest that humanity is moving toward greater awareness of divine immanence in everyday life and Nature?
2. What is your understanding of the divine Reality as both *immanent* and *transcendent*?
3. Dwell on the lines from *A Hymn to Shiva* which preface the text. What is conveyed of the power of love? Consider how light and fire are experienced here, as reflections of both mortal and eternal being.
4. Share an experience or other idea you have found helpful in understanding mysticism.
5. Listen to and meditate on the following musical selections:
 - a. “Prelude to Act 1” of *Lohengrin*. [Wagner: Overture and Preludes. Karl Bohm, conductor. Deutsche Grammophon]
 - b. The “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah*. [Handel: *Messiah*. Leonard Bernstein, conductor. 1991, Sony]
 - c. “Laudate Dominum” from *Vesperae solennes de confessore* K339. [Mozart: *Vespers*. Stephen Cleobury, conductor. 1898, EMI Classics]
 - d. “Gratias Agimus Tibi” from *Gloria in D*, RV 589. [Vivaldi: *Gloria*. Robert Shaw, conductor. 1898, Telarc]
 - e. *Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major*. [Bach: *Orchestral Suites Nos. 1-4*. Neville Mariner, conductor. 1991, Decca]

Did you feel the music conveyed—however briefly—a sense of the sacred? Suggest other pieces of sacred music from Western or Eastern traditions that have brought you a feeling of oneness with the Divine.

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Two: "The Personality and the Ego" [Part I]

To understand the technique of this great road we must understand ourselves and the constitution of our souls, and also try to glimpse the Person that we really are. We can look at ourselves in a mirror and see a body—well or ill, beautiful or otherwise—and say: "This is I." However, a moment's thought will show us that this cannot be the case, for when death comes this body will break up and disappear, yet we all have an ineradicable conviction that *we* will not disappear. It is a true intuition. We are not only this body, which we see with the physical eyes. There is far more to us than just that. With this body we objectively move about and act. Yet our subjective thoughts and feelings are far more important to us. Do they originate in the brain and nerve cells of the body? If so, they will cease to exist after death.

As a matter of plain fact, a human being lives in several worlds of consciousness at once, and his vibratory powers manifest through coarser or finer states of matter. It should be noted that there is no form of consciousness that does not express itself through some form of matter. Where there is consciousness there is matter. There are multiple planes, or conditions, of consciousness and matter that interpenetrate the physical world. In one of those planes, thought and mental activities are the dominant factors. In another plane, sensation and emotion are predominant. Together, these two planes constitute the psychic world, or the "soul" world. The word *soul* derives from the Greek word *psyche*, from which we get the terms *psychic* and *psychology*. Of the modern attempts to explore the world of the soul, one is from the standpoint of matter or form, the other from the standpoint of its powers of consciousness. H. G. Wells once wrote that the great scientific advance of the future would be made in the realm of psychology, while Sir Oliver Lodge stated that it would be the future province of science to explore and to map out the world of the soul, beginning with the now well-attested fact of telepathy.

To understand this thoroughly we should study the numerous books now written by occultists. Perhaps it will suffice for our present purpose if we think of ourselves as a threefold being—*body*, *soul* and *Spirit*. The body is the instrument of action and experience. Through the events of life, which come to us in such rapid sequence, we form habits of mind, concepts, and ideas. We call these experience, and on their basis—more or less—we act. Let us not despise the body as some early mystics did. It is a very valuable instrument for our soul's growth. It is not really us, but ours to use. Through its sensory nerves we gain impressions, which we fashion into mental concepts. Through its motor nerves we act upon our surroundings.

What then is the soul? The soul *uses* the body by "osmosis," as it were, for thought and feeling originate in the inner, subtler worlds of being. In those inner worlds thought and feeling are living, creative powers of Nature, immediately setting the brain and nerve cells of the body into synchronous (but at a lower voltage) vibration, thus translating these powers into the physical consciousness.

And what is the Spirit? Some people confuse the two terms—soul and Spirit—and think of them as interchangeable, but in the original Greek they are quite different words. The word *spirit* derives from the Greek word *pneuma*, which practically has the same meaning as the Latin *spiritus*, meaning life-breath. The Eternal Life breathed into psychic and physical man the Breath of Life, and he became a living, immortal soul. This third factor within us is the eternal, undying

part, which endures forever. As Krishna said to the warrior Arjuna on the eve of battle, “He is not slain when the body is slaughtered” [Ed: Bhagavad-Gita, 2:20].

The Spirit within us is the Word of God made flesh—that which the Creative Intelligence spoke to express His Thought. While the “heaven” and “earth” of our inner and outer selves—psychic and physical, respectively—will eventually pass away only to be re-created again and again, the Word within us will never pass away or cease to be.

Theosophical literature refers to this as our “Higher Self.” The term *higher* is to be understood figuratively, not literally. The thinking, feeling, and acting selves, with their planes of being and expression, are but the instruments, or vehicles, of that Higher Self. They are the necessary means by which the Higher Self gathers experience and growth during the span of an incarnation. That higher plane of being, however, is where we are all “Sons of God.” For there is no son of man, however abandoned and degraded, who has not this spark of Beauty and Eternity within him, however deeply buried it may be. It is a heritage he cannot forego.

How shall we visualize this greater Self in us, as we cannot see, touch, or examine it with our physical senses? This is where the poetry of the religious scriptures comes in. By figure, glyph, analogy, and symbol, the scriptures indicate the indescribable, the incommensurable.

The first chapter of Genesis states that God made man in His own image. Does that mean our physical body? In one sense, to the occultist, it does; for he knows that the physical body of man is a storehouse of symbology, indicating the Cosmic Powers with which every part of it is in communion. But to the ordinary person it can be more easily read in terms of consciousness, and here we shall discover the true meaning of the Threefold Deity, which is found in more than one great religion. Wisdom, Love, and Power are aspects of the Threefold Deity. Thought aspires to Wisdom; the only creative, enduring feeling is Love; the results of action are experience, endowing us with Power. The Spirit in man, like the Source from which it came, is perfect Wisdom, Love and Power.

In so many millions of individuals it lies deeply buried. Its exquisite loveliness can hardly be detected. But it is there. The Spirit in man grows as the flowers grow—from a seed or possibility. At first, that seed must “fall” and become lost in the dark mire. But growth goes on, even in the darkness. It only becomes observable to us when one day a tiny shoot appears above the ground, and even then “it doth not yet appear what we shall be” (I John 3:2). The divine plant—nourished by the rains of heaven, the cascading tears of sorrow and loss, strengthened by the winds of adversity, and expanded by the sunshine of joy and rightness—grows upwards, until at last the flower, for which all that went before was a preparation, appears and fills the air with its beauty and scent.

So grows the Spirit in man. For many lives it germinates in the dark womb of Nature. But one day it begins to influence “human nature,” especially during our highest moments—in moments of inspiration, selfless love, or sacrifice, in ecstasies of response to beauty and truth. The Way is glimpsed, and, in one life, the soul elects to follow it until—after many lives—the Day comes when the full glory of the inner Divinity blossoms and fills that soul’s surroundings with the aroma of unutterable bliss and peace.

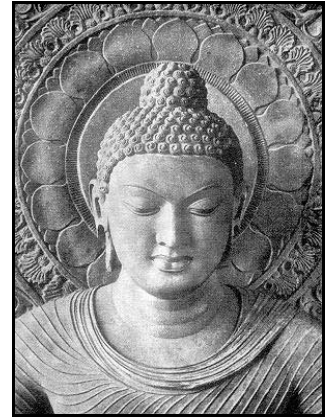
— End of Excerpt —

Lesson Two COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

We will consider Chapter Two over the next two months, as the material is an important foundation for all that follows. There is a tendency to move quickly through familiar terrain. But exploring the wholeness of life requires a different way of traveling, a pace which allows attention to detail and an appreciation for the surrounding territory. Discovering the rhythms of the inner self, healthy patterns natural to Spirit, soul, and body, brings great energy with peacefulness.

The spiritual life involves assimilation of the spirit-filled cosmos. Thus even the first steps must be guided by a sense of the radical unity everywhere present. This Supreme Reality is not an empty abstraction, but the Source and Being of a cosmos alive through and through. Discovering one's purpose and place in the whole scheme of things is dependent on deep communion, both with one's innermost self and with other beings finding their way.

Madame Blavatsky outlined four ideas to hold in the background of the mind during studies in *The Secret Doctrine*. They are a sure guide for the student immersed in the intricacies of doctrine and the challenges of everyday life.



The Fundamental Unity of All Existence. This unity is a thing altogether different from the common notion of unity—as when we say that a nation or an army is united; or that this planet is united to that by lines of magnetic force or the like. The teaching is not that. It is that existence is ONE THING, not any collection of things linked together. Fundamentally there is ONE Being... This Being is the Absolute in its primary manifestation. Being absolute there is nothing outside it. It is ALL-BEING...this fundamental ONE EXISTENCE, or Absolute Being, must be the Reality in every form there is.

The Atom, the Man, the God, are each separately, as well as all collectively, Absolute Being in their last analysis, that is their REAL INDIVIDUALITY...

There is no dead matter. Every last atom is alive. It cannot be otherwise, since every atom is itself fundamentally Absolute Being. Therefore there is no such thing as “spaces” of Ether, or Akasha, or call it what you like, in which angels and elementals disport themselves...every atom of substance, no matter of what plane, [is] in itself a LIFE.

Man is the Microcosm. As he is so, then all the Hierarchies of the Heavens exist within him. But in truth there is neither Macrocosm nor Microcosm but ONE EXISTENCE. Great and small are such only as viewed by a limited consciousness.

One Life and Law. Nothing is Inner, nothing is Outer; nothing is Great, nothing is Small; nothing is High, nothing is Low, in the Divine Economy.”

Blavatsky, H.P. *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy*, Theosophical Publishing House: Wheaton, 1980, pgs. 17-18)

Madame Blavatsky intended to challenge us. Thinking about this radical Unity will not carry the student far, unless the mind is in a state of detachment, charity and humility. But HPB realized that students know sympathetically, if not rationally, that an essential unity underlies all apparent separation. Traditional religious paths offer a code of conduct to help individuals and the wider faith community assimilate to the ways of love. But practicing surrender to the Divine and such virtues as truthfulness, patience, and forgiveness are natural for those who already care for others. An intuitive sense for oneness is beginning to guide action from within.

The model of Spirit, soul and body represents a union of three modes of Being. According to HPB, both Man and Nature are triune: there is an objective, visible physical nature; an invisible, vitalizing soul nature; and above these two are *spirit*, eternal, indestructible, unchangeable. The sovereign, immortal spirit broods over and illumines the human soul, the real human being. When the soul merges with spirit, one becomes “an immortal entity” (*Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy*, pg. 57).

Because the immanent eternal Self is one with Absolute Unity, that which HPB termed ALL-BEING, the human soul is capable of deep communion and illumination. Only when the soul or psyche merges with spirit does a fully human life begin. The conscious union of Spirit, soul and body is a holy *becoming*. Discovery of our true nature, *becoming what we are*, will radiate renewing love throughout heaven and earth.

A recent poll related to American religiosity found “a passion for an immediate, transcendent experience of God.” The poll found that spirituality, defined as an impulse to seek communion with the Divine, is thriving along with a high degree of inclusiveness. Americans not only accept “amazingly diverse” paths, but eight in ten Americans believe that more than one faith can lead to salvation. More respondents described themselves as “spiritual” than “religious.” Nearly two thirds of Americans say they pray daily, and nearly a third meditate (“In Search of the Spiritual,” *Newsweek*, Sept. 5, 2005, pgs. 49-52).

Another survey suggests some characteristics of people who are experiencing a “radical awakening” in the midst of everyday living. They live outside the context of organized religion, having many teachers or regarding all life as a teacher; rather than seeking enlightenment, they invest in the possibilities of each moment; they hold concepts and beliefs as less important than deeper knowing; they embrace life as celebration and regard embodiment as sacred. Spiritual practice is not a tidy cluster of behaviors set apart, but is being fully awake here and now. It is the action of Spirit, soul and body mutually engaged in the discovery of wholeness.



All over the world, from every imaginable background and system of belief, people report that the trance of separation is being broken...we no longer separate spiritual experience from the fabric of our day-to-day existence. Our most mundane circumstances are the very context in which realization lives and breathes. An

unattended life segregates realization into a small box called “spirituality.” A well-attended life can make a trip to the grocery store a sacred pilgrimage.

Ardagh, Arjuja.. “Cultivating Translucence,” *Shift*, Sep-Nov 05, pgs. 30-32

A search for God is emerging now as an evolutionary imperative. Individually and collectively, we are called to live in a new way. Whether the path is through traditional religious forms is less important than the orientation of heart and mind. The sense for unity is the golden key. Human beings learn through union, by uniting with what we desire to know. Alignment, attunement, absorption, and communion are sympathetic powers by which the soul matures. Seeking communion with Supreme Reality, the divine Ground, implies being attentive to the totality within and around while remembering that nothing is truly separate. Such memory allows fearless giving and a grateful receptivity for the blessing of presence.

We know a thing only by uniting with it; by assimilating it; by an interpenetration of it and ourselves. It gives itself to us, just in so far as we give ourselves to it; and it is because our outflow towards things is usually so perfunctory and so languid, that our comprehension of things is so perfunctory and languid too. The great Sufi who said that “Pilgrimage to the place of the wise is to escape the flame of separation” spoke the literal truth. Wisdom is the fruit of communion; ignorance the inevitable portion of those who “keep themselves to themselves,” and stand apart, judging, analyzing the things which they have never truly known.

Underhill, Evelyn. *Practical Mysticism*, pgs. 23-4

An individual path often appears quite clear through an experience of union. Clara Codd was invited by a friend to attend a theosophical meeting where Colonel Henry Steele Olcott, the Society’s international president, was the guest speaker. Clara was unfamiliar with theosophy, describing herself as “an atheist, agnostic and socialist,” and did not know who the Colonel was. But she listened with great interest, noting that he was “transparently genuine, honest and sincere.”

The Colonel told of a visit with Madame Blavatsky to the sacred Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Within the temple, following the Sikh tradition, a priest stepped forward and offered the Colonel a rose, with a smile and blessing. To the Colonel’s surprise and joy, he recognized the priest as one of the Adepts who inspired the founding of the Theosophical Society. It was a rare and unforgettable reunion for Colonel Olcott.

The Colonel’s story impressed Clara deeply. Especially, she felt drawn to the great Adept. “My heart gave a tremendous leap of joy and awe. Life changed miraculously for me from that moment onwards and forevermore. I knew that there were those who knew what life means, where it is going, and what is its goal. Then and there I registered a vow, that never would I rest until I had found that Blessed One ...” (Clara Codd, *So Rich a Life*, Caxton: Pretoria, 1951, pgs. 29-30).

Clara Codd was not drawn to the Sikh faith, nor did she search for the Adept-priest in Amritsar’s Golden Temple. Rather, as a woman already on a path of inquiry and social justice, Clara dedicated herself to theosophy and to Olcott’s Society. Her choice was clearly an outgrowth of the past. But Clara’s new life, which called out remarkable qualities over the next sixty years, was the natural flowering of a soul in the right place and time. For Clara, this was “the beginning of the way.”

In the context of HPB's four basic ideas, the flowering of Spirit, soul and body is a wholeness. Though an experience of clarity happens in a certain space and time, to a particular individual, all life in the worlds of body, soul and Spirit shares in the happening. The linking is especially strong when the flowering soul dedicates itself to the good of all. Then the selfless happiness and peace arise in every heart.

Clara saw life, and knew God, as simple and lovely. Her advice to us today would carry a gentle but indomitable spirit of goodwill. Meet everyone and everything in a light and trusting friendship. Take risks, go beyond your fears, see what happens. Pay attention. Ask questions that matter and keep asking, for there are no final answers in a universe of infinite life. Give all you have, and all you are, for your truth, your love. And let that be especially for humanity, for human good. Trust yourself to life. Tell your story. And above all, listen.



—Thoughts for Consideration

1. Reflect on the statement that “...when death comes this body will break up and disappear, yet we all have an ineradicable conviction that *we* will not disappear. It is a true intuition.” What is the influence of this intuition in your daily life?
2. Clara writes that “there is no form of consciousness that does not express itself through some form of matter. Where there is consciousness there is matter.” Another way of stating this important idea is that where there is matter, or form, there is consciousness. What do these ideas suggest about the nature of our physical world and the subtle “planes” of soul and Spirit which interpenetrate it?
3. Clara emphasizes often, throughout her writings, that every human being has a “spark of Beauty and Eternity within ... however deeply buried it may be.” Why is it essential for us to experience directly this reality, within ourselves and others?
4. Consider the following statement: “The Spirit in man, like the Source from which it came, is perfect Wisdom, Love and Power.” Reflect on some meanings of Source, perfection, and the triune qualities of Spirit in relation to our innermost being.
5. A similar image of divinity is found in the following meditation, abridged slightly from the original given by Annie Besant. The meditation is used worldwide, often to open or close theosophical gatherings.

O Hidden Life, vibrant in every atom;
O Hidden Light, shining in every creature;
O Hidden Love, embracing all in oneness;
May all who feel themselves as one with Thee
Know they are therefore one with every other.

Consider the underlying worldview, imagery, and intention of this mantra. What is the purpose of repeating these simple lines, either alone or in a group, with sincerity and goodwill?

6. The following view of J. Krishnamurti reveals something of the meditative mind. Explore how this “silence” may relate to unity and to comprehension.

Meditation is not an escape from the world; it is not an isolating, self-enclosing activity, but rather the comprehension of the world and its ways.

The meditative mind is seeing—watching, listening, without the word, without comment, without opinion—attentive to the movement of life in all its relationships throughout the day. To such a mind comes a silence...in which the space of division ceases.

The Second Penguin Krishnamurti Reader, 9, pgs. 18-19

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Three: "The Personality and the Ego" [Part II]

The Indian scriptures say that the soul of man is like the sacred lotus flower. Its roots lie deep in the mire of the river, but up through the water it grows until its lovely blossom opens on the surface of the water to receive the rays of the sun. This is the Real, the Eternal, in us, the "man for whom the hour will never strike," the true Source—even in the darkness of earth—of all that is beautiful, lovely, and true.

In our heart of hearts, we all "love God," insofar as we all long for beauty, truth, and the joy that comes from their realization. We think that these things are to be found without, that they can be given or taught to us by some authority. In fact, they are deep within us, forever awaiting with the patience of eternity the hour of our search for and finding of it. The Christ called it the "pearl of great price"—the Kingdom of Heaven within—and He said that if a man only knew where it was hidden, he would sell all that he had to buy that field and dig for it. Truly, it will not be found except at the price of *all* that we—the personality—have here.

The "field" is our human nature, Mother Nature, the great sea of the noumenon of matter. In the East it is called *Mulaprakriti* (Mother-Matter) in whose dark womb, the "Son of God"—our diviner Self—gestates and is one day born to full self-consciousness. Said the Lord to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:3-7). "Born again"—into the spiritual consciousness, the "twice-born" of the East; "born of water"—the symbol of matter, ever dropping downwards; and "of the Spirit"—whose symbol is fire, ever soaring upwards and never diminished, however often it lights another fire. So the spiritual nature in us is born of a human mother and a hidden, divine Father. We can draw ever nearer to Him but never finally touch His immeasurable infinitudes.

Other similes were used by the Lord Christ. He spoke of the "Angels" in men, which "do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). And uncompromisingly He proclaimed, as all the great Teachers have also taught, the Divinity of man. "Ye are gods," He once said, quoting King David who sang: "Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High" (Psalms 82:6).





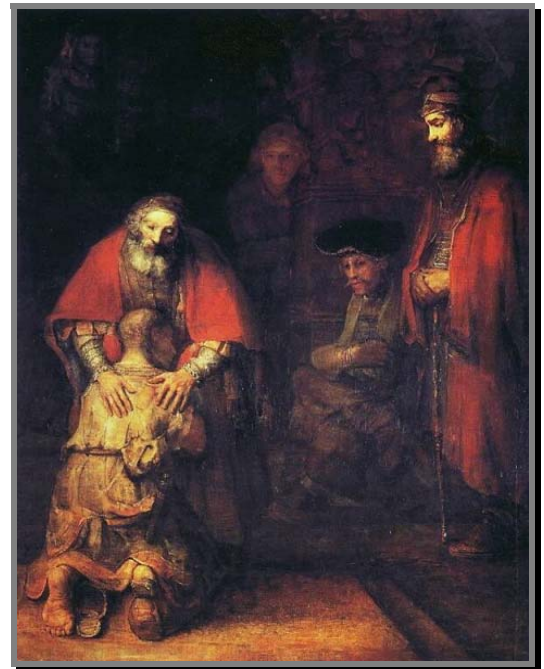
The truth of this inner Divinity was most wonderfully taught by St. Paul. Indeed the Pauline Epistles are for the most part treatises on this theme. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (I Corinthians 3:16) St. Peter speaks of “the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible” (I Peter 3:4). St. Paul calls it “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” and yearns for his people: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).

We may use another simile, and picture that Pure Divinity within us as a Living Flame of God, and our threefold self of thought, emotion, and body as the globe surrounding it. We should therefore slowly—it may take more than one lifetime—purify and make clean the globe, while searching out the Flame, that it may glow and shine more and more for the blessing and comforting of all humanity.

The Spirit in man has its own great consciousness, spiritual wisdom, and love, which are not the same as their poor reflection called human knowledge and love, though during those moments when we have contact with our Divinity it can illuminate them. We do not have to gain it. It is always there. It *is* Truth, it *is* Love, it *is* Joy. Nowhere else than in ourselves can it be found.

The Spirit in man is the prodigal son of the great allegory. For many, many lives it sinks deeper and deeper into the mire, but one thing it can *never lose*, for this is its very being: the hunger for Truth, for Loveliness, for Joy—in fact, the hunger for God. This is the true religious sense, the “homing instinct” of the human Spirit. “For we,” said St. Augustine, “were created for Thee, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee.” Like water ever striving to find its own level, the God-spirit in man ever seeks union with the God-spirit of the universe. “Man-spirit explains God-spirit, as the one drop of water proves a source from which it must have come.” (*Isis Unveiled*, p. xii)

This is the deepest, most “original” part of us. What is called “original sin” is only what the East calls *Avidya*—non-knowledge, ignorance, of Nature. Does the seed yet show its contained beauty, the child the knowledge of its father?



Rembrandt's Prodigal Son

How shall we know that we have reached a point when the search for our own Divinity can begin? The very thought of it is the beginning, for we can never find that in which we do not believe. So the first step is “faith,” which has been defined as “the soul’s unlearned knowledge.” When very pronounced, it is called a “vocation,” which means a voice is calling—the voice of our eternal Self. HPB said that numerous people in the world today are capable of finding and treading that inward path, but their brain-consciousness has not realized that fact. Once the Master K. H.² wrote to Mr. Sinnett: “What the inner man has longed to bind himself to, the outer man, the man of flesh, has not ratified.” Having ears, the outer man has not yet heard. The Lord Buddha said similar words to His monks. He told them that there were hundreds of young men in the world who would gladly take the higher road if only someone were to point it out to them.

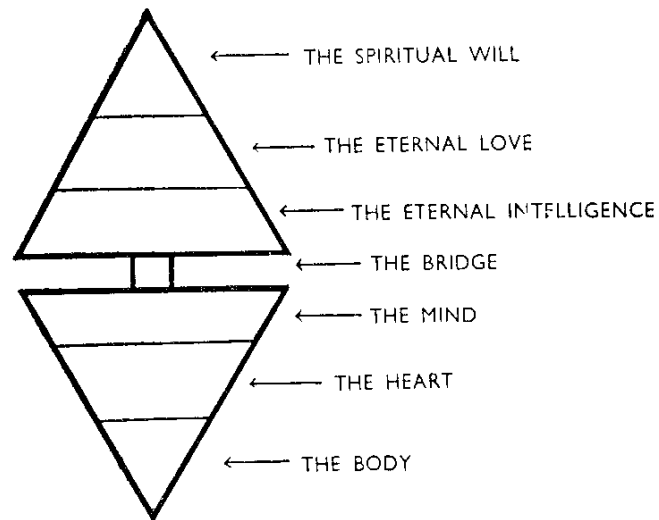
In these wonderful days this is ever-increasingly true, for the number of the “elect,” the true seekers, grows with the passage of the years. It is in the hope that it may open the eyes of some, cause some to search for and to find the path to pure happiness and the power to help, that these words are written.



Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

² One of the authors of *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*

THE PERSONALITY AND THE EGO



THE PERSONALITY (our human side)

Body—for experience and service

Heart—for response to Beauty and Love, and for radiating Beauty and Love

Mind—to observe and to understand

This threefold personality is the crystal vase, which must be cleansed and purified, for within it burns the Divine Flame—the Source of all loveliness and good.

THE EGO OR SOUL (our divine side)

The Spiritual Will—the purpose of Life

The Eternal Love—shining like the Sun of all

The Eternal Intelligence—leading to Wisdom and Spiritual Knowledge

THE ANTAHKARANA (the bridge between the personality and the soul)

The Mind and Heart purified of egotism, and aspiring steadily towards its diviner counterpart.

— End of Excerpt —

Lesson Three COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

One of the most delightful powers of the soul is to discover meaning everywhere. Mountain, river, tree and flower, moon and stars, butterfly, buffalo, nature spirit and angel are messengers of a hidden life. Each is not only a source of wonder in itself, in its appearances and often mysterious ways, but also symbolizes elements of an Infinite, Eternal One unfolding itself in space and time.

Merely analyzing something from the outside, without an intuitive sense for its inner beauty, gives knowledge of a superficial kind. Details of form and function often obscure the indwelling consciousness, the animating spirit. A carefully dried and preserved rose is lovely, but it is only a shadow of the blossom opening gradually to the summer rains and sunshine, the rosebush sending rootlets into soft soil, the thorny stems reminding predators to keep their distance.



The distracted observer, or one who desires only profit from the rose, will miss its spirit entirely. But the artistic soul, the lover of beauty, gives itself to the rose humbly, as friend and as student. When human and plant spirit merge, in a mutuality of giving and receiving, the rose petals gathered for their essence may purify and heal.

The rose, lily, and lotus are important symbols for spiritual unfoldment and attainment. Esoterically, the fully opened blossom may represent the flowering of a universe, the maturing of a solar system, or fully awakened human consciousness. Eastern deities are often depicted seated or standing upon a lotus blossom. Enlightened beings or world saviors may be shown with the flower overlaid on the heart, a sign of awakened compassion and love.

The lotus is a water lily, rooted in rich soil, which sends its slender stem through the waters to the surface, unfolding four large glossy leaves. The lotus blossom is a cluster of delicate petals, with a golden heart in which seeds ripen. When its ripened seeds are released, they descend to embed themselves in the nurturing mud. In commenting on how well the lotus typifies the awakening of consciousness, Joseph Campbell notes:



Lotuses of many colors and forms, blue, pink, yellow, and white, originating from the muddy floor of a lake, grow slowly to the surface. Those at the bottom are not yet in bud; others, rising, are beginning to show signs of opening. More, below the surface, are at the

very point of unfolding; while above, riding on the breeze-rippled waves, are those that have at last come to the light. Many are still closed, others open to the sun.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Mythic Image*. Princeton University Press, 1974, pg. 221

Madame Blavatsky comments,

The Lotus, or Padma, is ... a very ancient and favorite simile for the Kosmos itself, and also for man ... [T]he Lotus-seed carries within itself a perfect miniature of the future plant, which typifies the fact that the spiritual prototypes of all things exist in the immaterial world before those things become materialized on Earth. [Also] the Lotus plant grows up through the water, having its root in the ilus, or mud, and spreading its flower in the air above. The Lotus thus typifies the life of man and also that of the Kosmos; for the Secret Doctrine teaches that the elements of both are the same, and that both are developing in the same direction. The root of the Lotus sunk in the mud represents material life, the stalk passing up through the water typifies existence in the astral world, and the flower floating on the water and opening to the sky is emblematical of spiritual being.

Blavatsky. *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1. TPH, 1993, pgs. 57-8.

The lotus also symbolizes the human journey as a cyclic descent and ascent, an outgoing and return. Theosophical doctrine suggests human evolution occurs in a movement through many dimensions, participation in diverse “worlds,” and development over vast periods of time. The journey of intelligent existence commences in the regions of full flowering, the highest, most spiritually perfect worlds. The evolutionary cycle is a descent through states of increasing materiality until full physical embodiment is attained. Then begins a corresponding ascent, an integration of body, soul and Spirit, a gradual assimilation to universality and the mystery of self-sacrifice.

Lotus seeds drifting to the lake bottom are alive with spiritual potential. The germ, if we could only see its flashing inner life, is radiant as the sun. Each seed embeds in amenable soil. Germination takes place in nurturing organic matter instinct with life. In like manner, the human embryo embeds in mother’s womb, supported in waters that protect and nourish. Mindful of the divine ancestry, one can imagine the splendor of the child’s innermost Self: “Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.”



In Egyptian iconography ... the lotus appears as a symbol of life force. According to one tradition from Hermopolis, the highest god appeared, self-begotten, emerging from a lotus. Further, an inscription from the temple at Idfu equates the First Primeval One,

who “caused the Earth to be when he came into existence,” with the Great Lotus. Sometimes the soul is seen to emerge from the interior of the flower, at other times it is a young child or the morning sun.

Moon, Beverly. *An Encyclopedia of Archetypal Symbolism*. Shambhala, 1991, pgs. 379-80.

The human soul thrives on nourishing symbols as the body thrives on whole foods. As the body assimilates essentials by dissolving and absorption, so the soul may allow images to dissolve and release their meaning. Through empathy or meditative enquiry the indwelling, formless life is shared. What state of being does embedded seed, or embryo, convey? What of that determined downward movement, seeking earth and moisture, then the upward turn toward sunlight? What is the essence of rooting, of being grounded, of the urge to uprightness, of flowering?

There can be, beyond the natural arising of emotion and thought, a deeper knowing of these universal, creative movements. The lotus in its wholeness is all these and more. In silence, the timeless essence of lotus may be felt through and beyond its earthly rhythms and forms.

The spiritual path is an insistent, encouraging call to a perfectly aware life. The illusion of separateness fades as interdependence, divine purpose and harmony become eternal realities. It has been said truly, “In the great Assembly of the Lotus, all are present without divisions.”

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. Comment further on any aspects of the chapter which seem especially important.
2. It is said that beauty, truth and joy are “deep within us, forever awaiting with the patience of eternity” our search and finding. What does the search *within* mean in the context of your life? What are the implications for humanity as a whole?
3. Reflect on the concept of the indwelling human Spirit as “Angel” and the statement, “Ye are gods.” What associations come to mind, from your studies and experience, about the consciousness and creative activity of angels and gods?
4. In what ways are individuals and communities a “temple” of God?
5. Clara Codd states that “...the God-spirit in man ever seeks union with the God-spirit of the universe.” What does this suggest about the nature of our seeking?

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Four: "The Preparation for the Way—The Will"

The use of our will is a factor of supreme importance in all occult work and spiritual growth. The magical creative power of *Kriyashakti* is the power of "concentrated thought and will." Will power not only means the ability to choose, but also the power to persevere, to keep to the chosen path.

This power is often one of the weakest spots in the constitution of the modern man or woman. The whole trend of our soft, comfortable, modern life is liable to sap the will and the power of endurance. The intelligence to see the best path, and the sustained will to continue treading it, are absolute necessities for success in any venture—material or spiritual.

The possession of will power is not an arbitrary gift from on high. If one is in possession of it, we may assume that it has been developed in past lives—by ourselves. The vast majority of people, however, are more or less deficient in it. But it may be developed.

There is only one way to do this—by acquiring the faculty of being able to say "no" to yourself. You must be capable of facing disappointment, loss, and failure without wavering in your ultimate intention. Begin early, if some of you who read these words are young. *Will* is not the same as *desire*. It is a higher, impersonal form of desire, which is seen to be right, necessary, and altruistic. True will—in contrast to ordinary desire—does not pursue personal gratifications, momentary pleasures, or self-indulgences. The self-indulgent individual can never become the holy, illuminated, God-radiant individual.



St. Therese of Lisieux

Will power is developed by "going without," by denying the little self on every possible occasion till it ceases to beg, ask, or tussle, and obeys the intelligent ruling of the Higher Self without hesitation. Some of my readers will have read a splendid article by Dr. Cronin in the *Reader's Digest*, of February 1956, entitled "Unless You Deny Yourself." Dr. Cronin speaks of a famous physicist, Nikola Tesla, who began as a boy to learn and to practice this: "If I had something I particularly liked, a sweet, cake or chocolate, I gave it away, although I suffered in doing so. Was there some task or exercise I disliked, I did it, no matter how inclination pulled. As the years passed the conflict ceased. My wish and my will became one."

Here is the true asceticism—so much despised these days—which gives a man sovereign power. The Saints knew this well, and so we find St. Thérèse of Lisieux closing the book she was reading—even at a most interesting part, in the middle of a sentence—the moment the convent bell rang, and restraining her natural curiosity and interest until the next day. The early Christian saints denied and despised the body to such an extent that they often rendered it useless. Such extreme practices are unwise. The Middle Way of the Lord Buddha was neither to abuse nor to indulge the body, and the passions and desires which move it.

The little self of our ordinary mind, emotions and body must learn obedience to the will of the divine Self within. They will suffer bitterly until they become habituated to and at peace with the

sovereignty of the divine Self within. This battle is the first step and cannot be avoided. As the French proverb says: *C'est la première étape qui compte*. [It is the first step that counts.]

One aspect of a feeble will is the habit of indecision. No one who has that trait can be happy for long. There is only one way to cure it: *Make a decision*—even if it may be the wrong one (you will learn from its results)—and *stick to it*, no matter how your mind and emotions nag, urge, advance reasons against, and torture you. I know it seems like torture, for I had that trait myself. As soon as one decision is taken, the lower self begins to think it should have taken the other one! Do not listen.

Again, the undecided person is always seeking advice, which for the most part he then proceeds to ignore. One great thing the would-be occultist *must* learn is to make his own decisions, especially to find and to follow the will of his own Divinity. No one else knows that as well as ourselves. We should not allow ourselves to be influenced by others, however plausible their arguments may seem.

Yes, it will be difficult. Yes, it will mean pain and suffering. But did an athlete ever refuse the discomfort of training for a great race? Did an ambitious man ever achieve a great end without being willing to give up his comfort, ease—even necessary ease—and to spend long years in continued effort? Why should it be otherwise with the greatest endeavor in the universe?

We need to remember one thing. Our “lower self” stands in relation to the real Self as an instrument or vehicle. The lower self consists of a mental body or mind, an emotional body of feelings, desires, and passions, and a physical body, which is more often the victim than the originator of wrong ways of thought and living. It is not generally the body, which is the real tempter of man, but the thought-pictures evoked by the passions. All three of these bodies are creatures of habit.

If we persevere, they will become as willingly habituated to good habits as they are now accustomed to evil ones. As the Bhagavad Gita says, that “which at first is as venom, but in the end is as nectar” comes to the soul who can bravely persevere.

We should not force the personality by the personality. It is by the thought of the Inner Ruler Immortal within, by the growing glimpse and love of the BEAUTIFUL, the LOVELY, the TRUE, that we may render our lower selves ever more and more the channel of that Beauty.

Right Choice

Two things we should try to gain and hold from the very beginning: *right choice* and *the power never to become discouraged*. Let us ask ourselves: “I who aspire towards spiritual growth, for what reason do I desire this?” Let us be absolutely honest with ourselves, develop the ability to see ourselves—if we can—without either praise or blame, but only with a desire to understand.



Lorraine Hanson, Olympic Athlete

Do we desire to become happy and spiritually secure *ourselves*? Do we desire to be, or become, something beautiful, praiseworthy, special? Would we like other people to look up to us, so that from our spiritually exalted position we bend down to “help” them? In fact, would we in the long run make “God” an appanage, an adornment, an asset to our personal selves?

All this is so very natural. Dr. Besant once said that we may legitimately use personal ambition to overcome our worst failings in the early stages, but in the end we must utterly surrender any thought of personal gain. Says *Light on the Path*: “Pause and consider awhile. Is it the way you desire, or is it that there is a dim perspective in your visions of great heights to be scaled by yourself, of a great future for you to compass? Be warned. The way is to be sought for its own sake, not with regard to your feet that shall tread it.”

Only the pure love of God the Beautiful and the True, and the love of humanity and of all life, can bring us to God—when the love of ourselves, however high and admissible, is lost. May we become the pure and selfless channels of the Divine Love, the Divine Wisdom, the Divine Power, in order to help! This is the only voice that can be heard in the courts of Heaven. How difficult! Can we do it? Yes, by degrees; by prayer, by aspiration, by understanding, by practice.



Dr. Annie Besant

Discouragement

Never, never must we become depressed. At the outset we do not realize how great is the goal, how long is the way, or how dark at first is that way.

Slowly the road winds upward, through the years. In joy or sorrow, health or sickness, prosperity or the reverse, the effort must still continue. One must rise after every fall and gradually acquire courage, faith, the will to succeed and the capacity to love At first it will bring us effort, sacrifice and suffering, like any discipline intended for the training of the mind, organs or muscles. Later it will bring us something of inestimable value, a peculiar indefinable joy which one must have felt to understand. Only in those who have served it faithfully all their lives the spirit continues to soar till the very end.

—Alexis Carrel [Ed: winner of 1912 Nobel Prize]

St. Thérèse of Lisieux made a resolution at her first Communion, which she never in all her life broke: “I will never let myself become discouraged.” Despair is the other side of egotism, our one enemy on the Way. “Let him raise the self by the Self, and not let the self become depressed; for verily is the Self the friend of the self, and also the Self the self’s enemy” (Bhagavad-Gita).

The right motive and the cure for depression were summed up by a Teacher in these few words:

You must live for other men and with them; not for or with yourself.

—An Adept to W. Q. Judge

The following lines from *The Voice of the Silence* are well worth considering:

Before thou canst approach the foremost gate thou hast to learn to part thy body from thy mind, to dissipate the shadow, and to live in the eternal. For this, thou hast to live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee; to feel thyself abiding in all things, all things in Self

Of teachers there are many; the Master-Soul is one, *Alaya*, the universal Soul. Live in that Master as its ray in thee. Live in thy fellows as they live in it

Hast thou attuned thy heart and mind to the great mind and heart of all mankind? . . . so must the heart of him who in the stream would enter thrill in response to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes.

— End of Excerpt —

Lesson Four COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

Clara Codd begins this chapter with a compelling sentence: “The will is the factor of supreme importance in all occult work and in spiritual growth.” As the popular view of occultism is quite confused, it is helpful to consider some key ideas. Such terms as *Theosophy*, *Occultism*, *Divine Wisdom* and *Esoteric Science* are sometimes used interchangeably in theosophical writings and all refer to spiritual unfolding.

An A.P. Edition Standard Dictionary of 1925 gives the following meanings for the word *occult*:

I. To cover from view, or conceal, as by intervention; II. (1) Concealed from observation, or knowledge; mysterious; mystical. (2) Not immediately known; perceivable only by investigation.

Occultism has been linked historically with a wide range of mysterious happenings, things which could not be explained by science or religion. Often when strange happenings challenge fixed ideas, conventional thinking dismisses the phenomena as trickery or declares them to be evil. Not unexpectedly, popular images of occultism relate to magic, various forms of mind control, mediumship, and whatever else the prevailing worldview associates with sorcery.

Theosophy, however, embraces the unknowable, the mysterious and mystical. It encourages a sensible awakening to spiritual realities yet hidden, or *occult*, within the world of appearances. Theosophy, as true Occultism, is an investigation of our origins, inner nature, purpose, and destiny. As a practical science, it explores every aspect of human life. Most importantly, Occultism requires a way of living, which alone brings wisdom; an orientation to spiritual need. Clara Codd writes about Occultism:

Occultism is called in the mystic East the Gupta Vidya, the Secret Knowledge. It is not secret in the sense of being willfully withheld, but by virtue of the same conditions in which differential calculus is occult or hidden to one who is just learning the multiplication table. It is not a body of knowledge that can ever be communicated by word of mouth or the written word. It is born in a man, in proportion to his growth and fine response to all life. For it is the science of *life*, not only the science of life's material embodiments, and becomes the possession of the seer as his own being can grasp and respond to ever subtler and finer levels of being.

Codd, Clara. *The Way of the Disciple* (24)

A 2005 Webster's Dictionary shows how general usage of the term has changed since 1925. In the 2005 version, the word *occult* is defined as:

1) Of or relating to supernatural phenomena or influences. 2) Beyond the range of human comprehension. 3) Available only to the initiate.

Here it is implied that knowledge of hidden forces, or supernatural phenomena, is possible through initiation. Traditionally, an initiate is one who understands something of the hidden side of life through a definite training. Through certain disciplines, occult knowledge and powers such as clairvoyance may be gained.

True Occultism, however, is not about acquiring magical powers. Nor is it concerned with securing anyone's personal happiness, prosperity, or even psychological comfort. Occult Science aims to awaken us to our true nature for one purpose only: that we might serve wisely and peacefully, whatever our circumstances. Real occultism begins with a longing to be a force for good in the world. This longing, if truly an affinity with the Universal Soul, wills beauty and the spirit of truthfulness into every effort.

Occult work, as referred to by Clara Codd, is action that moves humanity toward its spiritual destiny. That destiny is a full awakening to the radical unity of life. Creative power emerges from a unified consciousness; it may be directed safely only by loving intention. Even as simple kindness, the spiritual will is a powerful force for healing. In its pure, altruistic forms—selfless compassion, charity, mercy, and courage—the supreme will is resistless. Its transforming power inspires all Nature toward a greater good.

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 practices it out of calculation of the ranks of the living altogether. “Not for himself but for the world he lives,” as soon as he pledges himself to the work.

Blavatsky, H.P. *Studies in Occultism* (17)

Lord, Thou has given me my being of such a nature that it can continually make itself more able to receive thy grace and goodness. And this power, which I have of Thee, wherein I have a living image of thine almighty power, is free will. By this I can either enlarge or restrict my capacity for Thy grace.

Nicholas of Cusa. Quoted in *The Perennial Philosophy* (169)

It is within my power either to serve God, or not to serve Him. Serving Him, I add to my own good and the good of the whole world. Not serving Him, I forfeit my own good and deprive the world of that good, which was in my power to create.

Tolstoy, Leo. Quoted in *The Perennial Philosophy* (170)

The adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of inquirers, and to become one, he must obey the inward impulse of his soul irrespective of the prudential considerations of worldly science or sagacity.

Chin, Vicente Hao. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (6)

Suggestions for further Study:

- The following essays by H.P. Blavatsky in *Studies in Occultism*: “Practical Occultism,” “Occultism vs. the Occult Arts,” and “Psychic and Noetic Action”
- Besant, Annie: *A Study in Consciousness*. Adyar, India: TPH, 1972. Part II, Chapter 1 “The Will to Live,” and Chapter 6 “The Will”

Thoughts for Consideration—

1. A member writes,

“...I’m still having difficulty in seeing everything as one. Being connected is not difficult at all, but how am I one with the tree as I drive down the road to work? In some way I feel above the tree, as how we treat the tree can determine its destiny, but in some way I feel subordinate to the tree as it doesn’t toil for its food & existence. It seems quite happy just to be there. Quite complicated I think. Can you shed some light on this?”

Maria Parisen responds:

“We reflect on oneness through feeling and thought, but unity is beyond them both. When “I” and “tree” disappear, then the deeper reality is known, the undivided Spirit, which is our common ground, our common truth and destiny. Those who work with trees—without exploiting them—develop an intuitive rapport. Being with trees, learning their language, reflecting on how we are one, intending their spiritual well-being—and living with your questions—is a beginning.”

Respond briefly to the question raised. Consider how the spiritual will is active, both in the questioning and in your thoughtful response.

2. Clara Codd states, “You must be capable of facing disappointment, loss, and failure without wavering in your ultimate intention.” Why is being aligned with your ultimate intention, through both failure and success, important? What practices have you found useful to remember and renew this intention?
3. How does *indecision* (one mark of a “feeble will”) detract from spiritual growth within individuals and within a group? How can we foster wise decision-making, through use of the individual and collective will?

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Five: "The Preparation for the Way—The Body"

The physical plane is the world *par excellence* for the training of the will, for the very matter of the plane has a preponderance of the *tamasic guna*, the quality of inertia or resistance. This is because it is a very far-away reflection of the plane of the Divine Will where that will is like a shining, resistless tide. So the difficulties and problems of life are designed to draw forth from us the power of our own *Atma*, or intelligence and will.

It is easier to train the body when we have learned not to identify ourselves with it. Try this exercise. Every day for the next month make a conscious effort to recall that you are not your body. "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14). This is literally true, for this abode of ours is continually changing from moment to moment, throwing off some particles while absorbing others. The "eternal city" which we all more or less unconsciously seek is the "City of God" within—eternal, unchanging, undying.



More than one simile has been used to designate the body. In the book of Genesis it is called the "coat of skin." Like all clothing it wears out, and then, after a time, we must have a new one. St. Francis called it "brother ass." As it is a living thing, possessing a faint elemental consciousness of its own apart from its owner (the collective consciousness of its cells), it is fitting to use the expression found in *At the Feet of the Master*, "the horse on which you ride." Imagine you could go nowhere except on horseback. What care you would take of your horse, how you would feed it properly, groom it, and train it! That is just what you should do with your body! Your body is a kind of animal, with animal instincts (which are enormously increased by the interaction of mind and emotions), and a wonderful, unceasing power for self-healing.

That the physical body has a vague elemental consciousness of its own is based on the fact that everything in the universe is alive and, therefore, to some extent "conscious" (though the consciousness of an atom will not be anything like human consciousness). Because the cells of the body have acted together for so long, they have acquired a dim, corporate consciousness. Notice how well the different parts of the body cooperate. If one organ is damaged, others attempt to take over its work. When any wounding occurs, the body-intelligence repairs it marvelously. To the very moment of death the body struggles valiantly, often against overwhelming odds, to adjust and heal. But too often the body-intelligence is frustrated and controverted by the ignorant will and desires of its owner.

Being a kind of animal, it is a creature of habit, as are all animals. A horse that is "broken in" has acquired certain habits; the "tricks" that a dog performs are nothing but conditioned responses; the manner and behavior of a cat is based on habit. Here we have the key to the training and management of the body. We are fortunate if our parents inculcated good habits in us when we

were young: habits of spontaneous early rising, moderation and self-denial in eating or drinking, being able to “do without,” and the conquest generally of the body’s natural inertia.

This is an important fact to remember about our bodies: they contain a preponderance of the *tamasic guna*. The Hindu scriptures say that all forms of matter have one of the three *gunas* (qualities of matter) in preponderance to the others. Thus, *tamas* (inertia) is the dominant quality of physical matter; *rajas* (vigorous activity) is the quality of the surrounding and interpenetrating emotional plane, hence the violence and urgency of the passions and emotions; *sattva* (balance) reigns more upon the mental plane, the plane of reason with its ability to judge and decide.

I must here introduce the Seven Deadly Sins of Catholicism: *sloth, anger, lust, greed, pride, envy, and covetousness*. They are called “deadly” because they “kill the soul,” which means that they entirely inhibit the soul’s higher manifestations. We will begin with the first of the Seven Deadly Sins—*sloth*—and will deal with the other six in the proper place. The great vice of the physical body is inertia, laziness, and dislike of effort. This inertia may take many forms. It makes us sluggards, lovers of ease, unable to make an effort. Dr. Alexis Carrel, recipient of the 1912 Nobel Prize for physiology or medicine, writes:

The first thing we must do is to remove the obstacles which hinder our spiritual development. It is necessary to renounce those mental attitudes which so atrophy the consciousness that they amount to spiritual suicide. Laziness is particularly lethal. Laziness does not only consist in doing nothing, in sleeping too long, in working badly or not at all, but also in devoting our leisure to stupid and useless things. Endless chattering, card playing, rushing about aimlessly in motorcars, abusing the cinema and the radio—all these reduce the intelligence.

Chattering incessantly saps our nervous energy. The above-mentioned factors are really escape-mechanisms. We do not wish to face ourselves or to listen to what our Higher Self, sometimes manifesting as “conscience,” wishes us to do. These can only be dealt with by the will, remembering—as previously stated—that the inertia of matter is the reflection of the resistless will of the spiritual worlds. Now we can begin to see the purpose of physical life with all its frustrations, disappointments and obstacles: battling with them, overcoming them, enduring them when they cannot be done away with—all this calls down in us more and more the power of *Atma*, the spiritual will.

All who desire to succeed in a given enterprise know that they must conquer this inertia. All leadership in the world of sports requires a grueling and prolonged anterior training. St. Paul uses this very simile. “So run,” writes he, “that ye may obtain,” and says that all who strive for mastery are temperate in all things and bring the body into subjection. His own success is due, he says, to days and nights of toil, to unlimited energy, perseverance, and endurance. Why should we assume that the great prizes of the spiritual life are to be attained with any less effort?

So let us conquer sloth, inertia, indecision, and dislike of effort. Let us strengthen our ability to make a prolonged effort. Let us develop our capacity to endure discomforts and, when necessary, pain. No athlete ever achieved greatness without enduring some physical discomfort or pain. This analogy applies to the spiritual life as well. Making a sustained effort while enduring temporary hardships are part of the price to be paid in the spiritual life.

Then, again, let us remember the inherent tendency of all forms of matter to create a habit. As life goes on we acquire so many bad habits, *i.e.*, overeating, smoking, excessive drinking, or just

simply avoiding physical exercise. It is fortunate for us if we have acquired *good* habits early in life, for it is more difficult to change as the years pass. Yet it *can* be done, if we have the will, the endurance, and the persistence to suffer the pain of breaking a bad habit and forming a new one. It pays to do so.

Do not be afraid of pain, of suffering, of “going without.” The first stage of the Path, Purification, means asceticism and will. But pain and suffering are mankind’s dark angel helpers, without which we would become but selfish, insensitive automatons. “Harmony,” wrote HPB, “is the law of life, discord its shadow, whence springs suffering, the teacher, the awakener of consciousness.” Sorrow is here—we cannot escape it—so take it by the hand, this mysterious and wonderful messenger of the Gods. The ancient Celts said of a person who suffered much, that he was “making his soul.”

How shall we feed the body, the “horse upon which we ride”? We have to consider age, heredity, and other circumstances. It is said in *At the Feet of the Master*: “You must study deeply the hidden laws of Nature, and when you know them arrange your life according to them, using always reason and common sense.”

Not everyone can become a vegetarian. If possible, gradually give up eating meat. The long, annulated intestines of humans are not adapted to the assimilation of meat, as the shorter, smoother intestines of the carnivorous animals are; hence the tremendous absorption of poisonous toxins by man.

The best foods for those who would live a spiritual life are described in the Bhagavad Gita as *sattvic*: “Foods that augment vitality, energy . . . delicious, bland.” *Sattvic* foods include the grains, fruit, fresh uncooked vegetables which grow above the ground, milk. But here again a wise discrimination should be exercised.

The chief enemy is overeating. The Indian scriptures say that one should fill the stomach with one-third food, one-third water, and leave one-third for Shiva. Or, to put it in the well-known words of Sir Philip Sydney, we should “rise with an appetite.” HPB says that nothing is more destructive of the higher subtler impulses than gluttony. So often gluttony is a “compensation” for some missing emotional satisfaction; a disappointed person often turns to food.

Alcohol has an even worse effect. No wonder Buddhism and Islam prohibit its use. Alcohol volatilizes and very adversely affects the centers in the brain by which the spiritual consciousness may enter the physical. As to smoking, it is said that heavy smokers run the risk of lung cancer. Esoterically speaking, it affects in time the interpenetrating, radiant psychic body, thickening it and rendering it less sensitive

Plenty of people will want to run our lives for us. But we shall not be happy unless we run our own. Dr. Edward Bach, the saintly doctor who gave up his work as a bacteriologist to cure people with flowers, wrote: “Our sole duty is to obey the dictates of our own conscience, and this will never for one moment brook the domination of another personality . . . We must realize that every being is here to develop his own evolution according to the dictates of his Soul, and his Soul alone, and that none of us must do anything but encourage our brother in that development.”

— End of Excerpt —

Lesson Five COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

Occultism considers the physical body as an essential instrument for human evolution. Perfect will, wisdom, and love are not bestowed upon anyone by an outside agency in a heavenly realm unconnected with the earth. In the view of Occultism, spiritual progress is earned during physical incarnation, through which enlightenment unifies the full spectrum of human life.

The goal of human evolution is a perfect alignment of immortal spirit, soul, and body—an integration that enriches all Nature’s kingdoms. As an embodiment of the World Soul, the earth itself is an evolving organism. Its invisible and physical hierarchies are in deep communion with each other and with solar and galactic forces. Humanity is a vital part of the greater “body” of its planet, responsible for bringing intuitive support to all earth’s diverse creatures.

The transcendental Self, which undergoes no change, is said to be the undivided source and ground of all Nature’s changeable forms and realms. H. P. Blavatsky gives this perspective on the appearance and evolution of form:



Neither the form of man, nor that of any animal, plant or stone, has ever been “created,” and it is only on this plane of ours that it commenced “becoming,” that is to say, objectivizing into its present materiality, or expanding *from within outwards*, from the most sublimated and supersensuous essence to its grossest appearance.

Blavatsky, H.P. *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy*. London: TPH, 1980, 42.

The whole order of Nature evinces a progressive march towards a *higher life*. There is design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces.

Ibid., 35.

The physical world, as Clara Codd notes, is continuously changing despite its solid appearance. Patterns arise, stabilize for a time, and then disintegrate in purposeful transformation. Within the physical body, as cells die each day, an innate intelligence guides newly born cells into their proper place. The body’s remarkable ability to sustain and heal itself, despite abuse and neglect, is a reflection of universal will and wisdom.

Truly connecting with the human body’s inner life—its order, harmony, resilience, and adaptability—awakens wonder and humility before Nature’s great evolutionary drama. As physical beings, we are especially close to other embodied life forms in an inter-dependent web of becoming. The “march towards a higher life” is a journey of togetherness. *The Voice of the Silence* (verse 217) affirms:

Before thou canst approach the foremost gate thou hast to learn to part the body from thy mind, to dissipate the shadow, and to live in the eternal. For this, thou hast to live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee; to feel thyself abiding in all things, all things in Self.

Parting the body from the mind is, in essence, impossible. The physical body is the visible expression of an individual and collective human soul, whose wisdom (or ignorance) plays through it continuously. What is needed, as Clara Codd states, is that we learn “not to identify ourselves with it.” Considering the body as a valuable animal, *e.g.*, the horse upon which one rides, encourages a relationship of appreciation and respect. As those who live closely with companion animals know, a working friendship is mutually fulfilling.

Releasing an unwholesome attachment to the body provides an immediate sense of well-being. The body needs freedom to do its own work well, a restful space to renew its vitality and deepen its innate intelligence. Self-understanding is acceptance of the body as an ally in a great work, without imposing unhealthy demands and desires. Dissipating the “shadow” is removing all separative tendencies, karmic or newly acquired, which obstruct vitality and healing intelligence



One cannot “abide” in the body truly, without also abiding in all things. Therefore, the science of yoga as interpreted by Patanjali requires commitment to right relations—a radical ethic based on *ahimsa* (non-harming)—as a foundation for spiritual practice. The Sanskrit term *yoga* is interpreted most often as the *yoking*, or union, of the individual with the supreme Self. Western holistic medicine draws on yoga theory and practice, incorporating traditional exercises (*asana*) and breathwork (*pranayama*) but often neglects the vital key to healing: a way of life that leads beyond traditional notions of health to Self-realization.

Though spiritual practice requires ongoing attention to physical well-being, enlightened people are not always outwardly robust. Well-known mystics, sages, and saintly people still have their share of illness and disability. And in obvious contrast, some disreputable folks enjoy long, illness-free lives. Always, we must blend the outer and inner realities, keeping appearances in perspective. As an unbroken state of wholeness and joy, eternal well-being transcends the play of illness and health while enfolding them both.

It is not the business of spirit to supervise our physical health, and spiritual health is no guarantee of physical well-being ... it seems that, at some point on the spiritual path, pressing concerns about physical health are discarded and health care in the ordinary sense becomes irrelevant. Yes, health may indeed flower but what is more likely is that a *sense* of healthiness supervenes which goes beyond the presence or absence of pain or suffering, disease or infirmity. Ordinary indices of health—whether heart disease, cancer, or high blood pressure—simply fall into no consequence. *This* is the healthiness of the spirit, and it *includes* both illness and death as crucial parts of it.

Dossey, Larry, M.D. *Beyond Illness*. Boulder, Co: Shambhala, 1984, 178.

In the tradition of Occultism, physical preparation involves a four-fold process: control, purification, healing, and sensitivity. The goal is increasing alignment of the physical/etheric body with our higher nature until they are perfectly at one.³ The process is highly individual, but when

³ Taimni, I.K. See chapters 4-5 in *Self-Culture in the Light of Occultism*. Wheaton, Illinois: TPH, 1970.

the Path is approached in humility and love, all Nature lends its support. These are perilous times. Humanity has, in ignorance and fear, brutally abused her earthly home and fellow creatures almost beyond physical recall. The inevitable influence of continuing worldwide environmental and social upheaval is widespread human suffering. The human physical body evolves, as a unity, in harmony with minerals, plants and animals. Every abused, enslaved, genetically deformed, and wantonly extinguished creature is a lost opportunity for cooperation, for learning and inspiration. *The Voice of the Silence* (Verses 66-68) advises:

Help nature and work on with her; and nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.

And she will open wide before thee the portals of her secret chambers, lay bare before thy gaze the treasures hidden in the very depths of her pure virgin bosom. Unsullied by the hand of matter, she shows her treasures only to the eye of Spirit—the eye for which there is no veil in all her kingdoms.

Preparation of the Body rests on helping nature. We may trust that each selfless gesture, every sincere effort, invokes in turn the assistance we need.

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. Spiritual practice, as well as holistic medical therapy, depends upon self-awareness. How can we develop a more effective awareness of the body, so we know how it is being affected by certain places, situations, foods, and our thoughts and emotions?
2. In Ayurvedic medicine, the three Gunas—*tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*—are energetic qualities inherent in all things, in various proportions. Foods are chosen to harmonize the body-mind, according to their tendency to subdue, stimulate or balance the system as a whole. How does this approach to nourishment complement, and improve upon, reliance on taste, smell, texture, and appearance? How can we develop greater sensitivity to the energetic (pranic) qualities of food? What other practices enhance digestion, assimilation, and internal cleansing (toxin release)?
3. Clara Codd states, “Plenty of people will want to run our lives for us. But we shall not be happy unless we run our own.” What are the qualities of someone who takes responsibility to optimize self-awareness and physical well-being? What are the obstacles and challenges of assuming responsibility?
4. In what ways will a deeper integration with nature assist you in your spiritual path? In this context, what practices have you found helpful to stay connected with and responsive to natural biorhythms and priority physical needs?

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Six: "The Preparation for the Way—The Emotions"



The first thing to do is to realize that we are *not* our feelings. Watch them moving, urging, arising. The same psychic body expresses desire, passions, and love. Motivated by the purely personal outlook, the little "I" desires, clutches and takes, like a child who "will have" something. This is generally felt about the waist, and indicates activity in that center of force, or *chakra*, called the solar plexus. Divine, less personal love is felt in the heart *chakra*. The "lower" emotions are of a slower, coarser vibratory wavelength than the "higher" feelings, and tend to drift towards the lower part of the radiating and interpenetrating "aura" which surrounds us. This may be the origin of the Christian custom of kneeling in meditation or prayer, and of the Masonic apron, thus symbolically cutting off

the lower part. The higher emotions glow and shine in the upper part of the aura, with spiritual aspiration always showing above the head.

Of the "deadly sins," lust and greed are grasping, clutching feelings; anger is the explosion of the personal self on being frustrated or denied. This is easily seen in little children who, in their early years, run through a recapitulation of the past evolution of the human race. All small children, unless of an exceptional order, are naturally greedy, selfish, and inconsiderate. They are not yet mature enough to "give." Alas! many people never grow up, and go on demanding and clutching all their lives. "Triple is the gate of this hell," says the Bhagavad Gita, "destructive of the Self—lust, wrath and greed."

Notice one thing about desire. It urges us until we give way and satisfy it. But that is not the end. It will arise again and again, each time stronger than ever, each time demanding more. Therefore desire is never conquered by giving way to it. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: "Do not believe that lust can ever be killed out if gratified or satiated . . . It is by feeding vice that it expands and waxes strong." If we have sufficient will and courage to bear the pain of denial of desire, it will gradually cease and trouble us no more.

Passion is a very potent form of desire. How difficult it is to control and master it! Many of us realize this from personal experience. If we allow our passions to be strong and uncontrolled, this effectively inhibits our goal of attaining the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.

The best way to deal with them is not to be always thinking about them and battling with them except when we must. Let us gradually squeeze them out of ourselves by cultivating the higher, nobler, more unselfish emotions and desires. The love of beauty, a generous appreciation for the loveliness of soul in others, the absence of envy, a sincere caring for the happiness and welfare of others, the giving of ourselves to those in need, and the still higher faculties of worship, adoration, selfless orientating of ourselves to the Eternal Beauty and Love—all these, cultivated and growing in us will slowly but surely extirpate the lower desires. "The self of matter and the Self of Spirit can never meet. One of the twain must disappear; there is no place for both."

Replacement is always better than mere extinction. That is the truth that lies behind the parable of the Lord Christ about the man who had seven devils and swept them out, but as he did not put seven angels in their place the devils all came back again more forceful than before. Mere repression is not the way. The vibration of the passions and emotions mean the presence of a corresponding type of psychic matter in the inner self. By encouraging the higher emotions we gradually build into ourselves a corresponding higher type of matter which prohibits the return of the lower forms.

What shall we then desire for ourselves, since desire in some form is the motive-power of life? Let us desire the better, the lovelier things of life, and finally desire them—not for ourselves—but for all life around us, that all life may grow in happiness, in wisdom, in power, as God means them to grow, not as men often think they must. *Light on the Path* tells us to “hunger for such possessions as can be held by the pure soul, that you may accumulate wealth for that united spirit of life which is your only true Self.” As the Lord Christ said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for they shall see God.” Blessed are those who ask nothing of the universe, but only give. The great sage Patanjali said that when all desire to possess ceases, then all things flow to a man’s feet.

Let us also cultivate the finer responses to life. How many of us have eyes which see not and ears which hear not! Become aware (without being necessarily clairvoyant) that you have a radiating, pulsating aura shining all round you, and not only a hard core of a physical body. The common habit of identifying ourselves with only the physical body influences the radiating psychic body (which readily responds to thought energy) and results in a diminution and congestion of the surrounding psychic field. Let us fill our hearts with love, joy, and courage, and then, by using the will, radiate them outwards. If it helps, try to visualize a strong, glowing rose color; by using the will, feel it expanding and radiating out all around you, as far as you can. The aura is elastic and will follow the will and imagination. Doing this exercise regularly expands and enlarges the personal radiation, to the benefit of both psychic and physical health.

Above all, let us try to understand true love, ever the life-giver and savior of all. When we say we love certain persons and demand their attention and presence, we do *not* love them. We are loving ourselves and craving the comfort their presence gives us.



We may, said St. Paul, have all manner of wonderful psychic and physical gifts, but if we do not have love, and do not do deeds for love, they are worth nothing.

And when we feel love and tenderness for another person, let us learn to express it gently and beautifully—by a tender touch, a kind word, or a lovely smile. Some of us have been brought up in a way which prohibits the showing of emotion. Break it down. How often have I heard people grieve because some loved one had passed on and they had never taken the opportunity to tell that person who much he or she was loved!



All children need gentle understanding, love, and care. It is their security for the coming battle of life. We need to encourage children to love, to admire, and to appreciate, instead of—as we so often do—to compete, to envy, or to “beat” some one else.

To love, to appreciate generously the great, the lovely and the true, is to share in some measure their loveliness. How often do we hear the opposite: criticism, de-bunking, salacious repeating of ill-natured gossip. Do you know why people do these things? Because their souls are starved and hungry, confined and frustrated. Love

them, for only love can help them to win through to freedom and joy.

I should also like to say a word about the sex impulses, which are so strong in most of us. You will find in the second volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 410, why this is so. The abuse and degradation of the sex-function is so disastrous in its effects because it is a reflection on earth of the highest, creative power in the universe. All forms of Yoga—both in the East and in the West—have been adamant upon the necessity for sexual control and sublimation. *Enforced* celibacy is not healthful. But as an aspirant treads the path to his Highest, the pull of the flesh gradually diminishes, for the sexual force then becomes sublimated into a high spiritual power. As long as this is not done, the impact of the spiritual consciousness upon the brain is hindered. But never try quick or special methods to achieve this. Purity of life and thought, loving consideration for another in legitimate sexual intercourse, will gradually bring this about. Married life *can* be a means of spiritual uplift, but it all depends upon our attitude.

It should also be remembered that the flow of higher pranic currents in the body induced by meditation sometimes accentuates the lower impulses. This is the reason why religious people are often guilty of sex sins. Consistently held, high religious thought will ultimately transform sex, but in periods when it is allowed to drop, the stimulus mentioned will often be observed.

I must mention one more point here. I have frequently come across men and women who, fascinated by Occultism, which they have crudely understood, and whose description of super-normal powers have attracted their egotism and pride, announce their decision to follow a celibate life without any thought of what this may mean to their partners. To these I would say: “You owe them a duty which you should not evade.” The *first* duty taught in Occultism is to do one’s duty unflinchingly *by every duty*. One cannot reach the essence of selfless love and the absence of all egotism, which is the goal of all occult endeavor, by such superior selfishness. The desire for occult powers and for occult advancement, so called, is a subtler form of egotism, more dangerous to true growth than the usual forms of physical ambition.

— End of Excerpt —

Lesson Six COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

A SPIRITUAL PATH is a way of life that must engage us completely. It becomes a full time commitment; the spiritual path is a deep vocation or calling that centers our life in meaning. Whatever our beliefs about God, whether we belong to a particular faith tradition or none, this path shapes our life. It determines what we value most and influences all our relations.

Various religions differ on matters of doctrine; ideas about God, gods, and religious practice vary widely. But without exception, all authentic spiritual paths are grounded in love. Within each faith tradition, we may find groups intent on division, strife, and domination; no tradition is immune to violence. But lovers of peace, justice, truth, and goodness are everywhere among us. Across faiths, we find each other.

A theosophical classic is the little journal, *At the Feet of the Master*, consisting of instructions given to the young J. Krishnamurti by his Master. The following is the teaching on love:

Of all the qualifications, Love is the most important ... It is not so much desire as WILL, resolve, determination. To produce its result, this resolve must fill your whole nature, so as to leave no room for any other feeling. It is indeed the will to be one with God, not in order that you may escape from weariness and suffering, but in order that because of your deep love for Him you may act with Him and as He does. Because He is love, you, if you would become one with Him, you must be filled with perfect unselfishness and love also.

From the above passage, let us reflect briefly on the Master's intention. This particular Adept follows a Buddhist path; he does not hold conventional Western ideas about God. In fact, the notion of an infinite Life personified as a male person is a completely foreign concept to this Teacher. He understands things differently. But when the Master speaks to the young disciple, he employs simple words. The message is conveyed so that a young child can easily understand.

Each of us knows that there is a Life within ourselves and all things. This is a universal human experience, variously expressed. For some, ultimate Reality is a transcendent, impersonal Principle—an unbroken Oneness. Others experience and conceive of a personal God—a Being who is Wisdom, Love, and Power. The Master says simply that God is love. He expects the young disciple to *feel* what he means, to perceive love as an eternal, supreme truth; the Master speaks of love as akin to will, determination, or resolve. Love is beyond desire, with its elements of craving and grasping. As a spiritual reality, love is unconditional, not dependent on circumstances or particular forms. As the ground of being, Love not only pervades and embraces all life. It also mandates unity. The Golden Rule, found among peoples everywhere, is simply a resolve to live in love.

Throughout the whole range of Nature's kingdoms, love is active. As sympathy, it appears everywhere as a power of consciousness. Sympathetic bonds naturally are strong within species, and individuals mature within larger communities. Where beings are semi-conscious or strongly identified with a group soul, separation may affect the will to live.

Minerals develop a dim, collective emotional consciousness. Rocky ceremonial sites carry astral "images" of the past; crystals selectively affect our emotional well-being through affinity. Certain houseplants are so attuned to human emotion that they respond when an absent caregiver *intends*

to return home. God as Sympathy works in observable ways through all life. But unless the human emotional field is pure and receptive, one cannot appreciate the subtle, innermost life of these younger brethren. Occultists are able to sense and connect with the eternal will-force in order to encourage and work with helpers in every realm.

Wildlife and domestic animals show great sympathy, ministering to each other tenderly in periods of hardship. Animals may serve human companions with remarkable care, changing their behavior radically to accommodate the needs of their human friend. Their sincere regard is the shining expression of an animal soul free from heavy personal overlay. Humanity, in harmony with the angelic (devic) overlords of the animal kingdom, is responsible for furthering the evolution of the animal kingdom in spirit of love. Animals, as well as devas, communicate through emotional “imagery.” Awakening to this inner world and sharing truthfully in their language requires a clear, selfless emotional field.

Human Self-consciousness enables us to expand pure sympathy into deeper forms of empathy, compassion, and conscious self-sacrifice. The true occultist and mystic surrenders to love for its own sake, thereby awakening to Nature’s eternal laws and latent creative powers. We are born to serve all earth’s kingdoms, visible and invisible, through communication and cooperation. The emotional body must be cleared entirely of separative, personal forces in order to receive and transmit universal love-wisdom.

.....when the “astral” reflects only the conquered man, the still living, but no more the longing, selfish personality, then the brilliant *Angoëides*, the divine Self, can vibrate in conscious harmony with both the poles of the human Entity—the man of matter purified, and the ever pure Spiritual Soul—and stand in the presence of the MASTER SELF, the Christos of the mystic Gnostics, blended, merged into, and one with IT for ever.

H. P. Blavatsky. “Occultism Versus the Occult Arts,” *Studies in Occultism*.
Theosophical University Press, 1946, 20.

Love informs all selfless service. Altruistic emotion, simple loving-kindness, benefits the whole of life for ages to come. Each of us must work the ways of the divine Will, healing the deep divisions within and among us.

I have decided to love. If you are seeking the highest good, I think you can find it through love ... John was right, God *IS* love. He who hates does not know God, but he who has love has the key that unlocks the door to the meaning of ultimate reality ... I subject myself to self-purification and to endless self-analysis; I question and soul-search constantly into myself to be as certain as I can that I am fulfilling the true meaning of my work.

—Martin Luther King

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. *The Voice of the Silence* warns us not to gratify, satiate or “feed” vice, or it will expand and grow strong. What is your understanding of vice as a living force?
2. How does a selfless orientation “to the Eternal Beauty and Love” change the quality and inclination of emotion in everyday life? What practices encourage this essential inward orientation?
3. Reflect on the meaning of these truths: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God;” and “When the desire to possess ceases, all things flow to one’s feet.”
4. What is your understanding of duty as an expression of selfless love?

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Seven: "The Preparation for the Way—The Mind"

We should try to realize that we are *not* our mind. As a preliminary, take some time to observe your own thoughts. Let them run on and watch where they go. You will find that they are extraordinarily mercurial, rapid, and ever changing. They are always like that but we only become aware of it by watching them. If we go with fast traffic, we do not realize how fast it is; but if we stand still and watch it, at once its speed draws our attention.

Notice that which provokes thought; it may be a physical event or an emotional desire. It is quite amusing to watch how accommodating the mind is—how the desire-nature and the mind play into each other's hands. If we desire anything very much, the mind will find all manner of plausible reasons why we should gratify the desire!



There are two early steps towards the control of the mind: attention and concentration. Never do anything with half your mind while dreaming about other things. Attend to what you are doing. When we act whole-heartedly for good we call down the attention and power of our immortal Selves. It is true that with long practice in meditation we shall develop a kind of dual consciousness. One part of our mind will be attending to something here, and another part will be unceasingly looking Heavenwards. But even then our controlled lower mind will be accurate and attentive. In fact, we should really know *what* we are doing and, if possible, *why*.

Concentration is the ability to think about something undeviatingly for a certain period of time. We all practice this quite naturally when we are interested in something. Therefore choose at first subjects of thought that interest you. We should think clearly and consecutively upon a chosen subject. Consecutive thinking leads to concentration. Follow a train of thought; go on an imaginary walk. This last point leads us to another great power of the mind which can become creative and powerful—the imagination. But remember that meditation, especially in its earlier stages, is "directed thinking."

Imagination is the image-making faculty. By means of this power we may fill our interior, subjective world. When we close our eyes, we shut out the objects of the physical plane, but we may instead see all sorts of interior scenes, figures, or ideas. Looking backward down the stream of time, we may see memories of persons, places and events. Looking up the stream of time we may see more pictures of hopes, wishes, and aspirations. These are involuntarily created by thought and desire (*kama-manas*). But we can also create them by will, and by the controlled and directed imagination. The uncontrolled imagination can play havoc with us. Therefore, our imagination must be controlled, directed, developed, until it becomes truly creative.

Part of this development of the imagination is the power to visualize. Some people have that power strongly developed. Such people can easily become psychic, for strong powers of visualization are the beginning of psychic sight. Look steadily at a rose. Close the eyes and reproduce it. If you are reading a good story, visualize it as you go along. This development leads to the growth of the creative imagination, a power of immense use in meditation. The development

of the imagination also enables us to “put ourselves in the place of another,” and so we learn to better understand others.

The reason, the understanding, and the intuition must be developed. All this is done by the practice of meditation and by patient, attentive study and thought. The intelligence must grow, and growing upwards, it must awaken the intuition. This is done by steady, patient *thinking*, by high, glowing emotion awakened thereby, and by learning how to come to grips with life. Spiritual study is not so much the amassing of facts (facts are most often not what they seem), but the development of faculty.

Read some statement or idea from a good, thought-provoking book. Spend several minutes *thinking* about it. If this has never been done before, a certain paucity of thought may supervene. Persevere. Presently, ideas, understanding, and inspiration will begin to flow in. Your mind is growing and reaching out to other correlated ideas in the universe. When you have thought as hard and as far as you can, wait, “looking at that which is invisible, hearing to that which is soundless.” When the end of a paragraph is reached, write down in as few words as possible the “gist” of that paragraph. Do the same with the chapter, even the whole book. One result of doing this will be a growth of the faculty to see *essentials* in life as well as in books; and also of the power to condense and clarify.

We should study not only books, but also life itself. Let us think about life, its meaning and purpose; about people so that we may understand and love them; about events so that we may learn to read their message to ourselves. “Listen to the song of life.” Try to intuit the deep underlying loveliness and purpose of life. “Regard earnestly all the life that surrounds you. Learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men.” This is from *Light on the Path*, which further tells us to try to look from an absolutely impersonal point of view; otherwise our sight will be colored. “Intelligence is impartial: no man is your enemy, no man is your friend. All alike are your teachers.” Again: “Study the hearts of men, that you may know what is that world in which you live, and of which you will to be a part. Regard the constantly changing and moving life which surrounds you, for it is formed by the hearts of men; and, as you learn to understand their constitution and meaning, you will by degrees be able to read the larger word of life.”

Intelligence is not the same as intellectuality. Intelligence is a power, a faculty—the power to understand, to see the underlying significance. Intellectuality is the power to amass and remember facts. It is clear that the would-be occultist becomes a super-psychologist.

The Preparatory Road

The preparatory road to the great Way has been well described by H.P.B. in “The Golden Stairs”: “Behold the Truth before you: A clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for all, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction . . . a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defence of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the sacred Science depicts. These are the Golden Stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom.”

That Preparatory Way has always been the same since the world began. It is depicted in the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha and in the Beatitudes of the Christ. The ancient Trans-Himalayan school enumerates six steps called *Paramitas*: 1) Charity, or love. All systems of Yoga begin with this; 2) Morality, righteous dealing with others; 3) Patience sweet, “which naught can

ruffle,” the patient bearing of pleasure or pain until we can be serenely non-affected by either;
4) Dauntless energy, which fights its way to the supernal truth, out of the mire of life’s illusions;
5) Deep meditation or contemplation, whose golden gate, once opened, leads the soul to the eternal realms; 6) Wisdom, which by identification with God, makes an individual consciously the Son of the Most High.

The One Enemy

There is only one enemy upon this Path, an enemy against which we must wage ceaseless war until it is destroyed for evermore. That enemy is *Ahamkara*, the sense of “I” and “me,” and “mine.” Let us not blame ourselves for that. For untold ages that sense has been the protector and a necessary shell, just as the eggshell protects the growing chick. H.P.B. says that its place in evolution is to provide a safeguard, so that inside that carapace of selfhood the individuality may safely grow until the hour strikes, when the enclosing armor may slowly and continuously be done away with. Then the firmly established individuality remains immortal *without a periphery*, in touch with and sharing the life of all things without exception. Keeping the simile of the eggshell, when the hour is ripe the chick within pecks at the shell to break it so that it may come out into the glorious light of day, and the mother hen helps from without. In the same way we begin to break the barrier of our tiny selfhood, and the “Master” and Guardian of our soul, primarily our own Higher Self (in some persons aided by a Guru or Master of the Wisdom), helps from without.

Until that hour arrives, it is impossible for any one of us to truly glimpse the glory that awaits us. It is as if the unborn chick was told of the sunlight without, and—never having seen it—could not imagine it. It might even refuse to believe that there was any other world but the one within the orbit of its own small consciousness. Or it is as if we tried to tell a bud what wonder and light it would presently bloom into. I must here quote the glorious words of *Light on the Path*:

Not till the whole personality of the man is dissolved and melted—not until it is held by the divine fragment which has created it, as a mere subject for grave experiment and experience—not until the whole nature has yielded, and become subject unto its higher Self, can the bloom open . . . Call it by what name you will, it is a voice that speaks where there is none to speak; it is a messenger that comes—a messenger without form or substance; or it is the flower of the soul that has opened. It cannot be described by any metaphor. But it can be felt after, looked for, and desired, even amid the raging of the storm.

Thus the bud can feel the warmth of the sun, even before it has bloomed and be “eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air.”

Here we must remember that “it must be the Eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not *desire for growth*.” God the Beautiful must be loved for His own sake alone. The old enemy, *ahamkara*, is hydra-headed, and it will raise its head again and again in many a form. When it no longer wears a material dress, it will appear in a spiritualized form. We can carry it with us a long way on this path, but the further we take it the more difficult does it become to kill it. It is important to kill it *now*, at the beginning of the Way, and so will a thousand serpents be kept from our path. Here is where the particular sins of the mind become plain—pride, envy, covetousness. They all take their root in the exaggerated sense of “I, me and mine.” Perhaps that is why St. Teresa ordained that her nuns should always say “our” for everything, even for a cup or plate.

The Idea and the Love of God

Sometimes I wonder about the fashionable interest in the sacred ways of the East. The East tends to envisage an impersonal Deity, the West a very personal one. There is a certain danger in a personal idea of the Eternal Life. We are so apt to endow God with the vices and peculiarities of a human being. As the skeptic Voltaire once said, “In the beginning God created man in His own image, and man has been returning Him that compliment ever since.” But there is also a danger in the impersonal way. The Impersonal, as Shri Krishna said, is “hard for the embodied to reach.” One then becomes apt to envisage Deity as a kind of formless gas, and to think that He can be appropriated and used by the personality for its embellishment or prestige, or to gain personal benefits, whereas He is the Mind of our minds, the Heart of our hearts, the Life of our lives. The danger is that we may “harden by the forcible passion for personal stature.” As the Lord Christ said: “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?” We all grow, as a flower grows, by virtue of the evolutionary pressure behind us, and our own spiritual desire.

To avoid these dangers let us always put Love first. Putting knowledge first can be so hard and proud. Always the unilluminated mind is “the great slayer of the Real.” The way of love is real, even when it seems a *via dolorosa*, a sorrowful way. Love is the great motive and living power of the universe. Let me quote again Dr. Alexis Carrel: “Only love has the power to throw down those ramparts behind which our egoism takes cover; to inflame our enthusiasm, to make us walk joyfully in the *via dolorosa* of sacrifice.” And again: “Sacrifice is not a virtue reserved for saints and heroes. It is a specific need of human life.”

It is impossible to love an abstraction. But the Eternal is a personality. Our little personalities are each the sum-total of our attributes. So God’s is the sum-total, the efflorescence, of the qualities of the universe. That is too big for us to comprehend, though we can trust the Eternal as little children trust their father who to them is incomprehensible. So we naturally look to a great Brother who has become one with the Supreme, and who reveals to us the Divinity of humanity and the humanity of God. Him we can love, with all our minds, and hearts, and souls. To Christians, this will be the Christ, who is the Teacher of the world, of Gods and angels and men. Never let love go, for knowledge may fade out of reach as yet. He that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. Tender of heart is he, humble and patient too. For love makes no demands; it only seeks to pour itself out, to shine because it must.

Let us now consider the “Way” itself. It has four points: meditation, study, self-knowledge, service of all life. We will consider each in turn, in the chapter on “The Method.” They constitute an age-old system of self-discipline. We must not shrink at the term self-discipline. Without it no real knowledge or added power to help is possible. How well the poet Tennyson expresses it in his poem “Oenone”:

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

And no one can do this for us. We must do it ourselves.

— End of Excerpt —

Lesson Seven COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

Perhaps the greatest need of our time is for peace of mind, a calmness that allows clear seeing. The mind is seldom still but surges with an inherent vitality in times of pain and happiness alike. Many repetitive thought forms are faint remnants of the past: impressions, opinions, memories, and fantasies. These relics fade in time, unless energized by attention. Most troublesome are separative ideas which embody great emotional energy and compel unwise action. These self-centered images generate individual and worldwide conflict. Until such internal warfare ceases, there can be no peace among us.

At this point then the world teems with the results of intellectual activity and *spiritual decrease* ... Who will help in the forthcoming gigantic struggle? Who? Happy the man who helps a helping hand.

The Mahatma Letters (Letter 66, Chronological edition), 179-80.



It seems strange that peacefulness comes only with a great, sustained effort, that the “peace that passeth understanding” must be earned. But realizing that we are *not* our thoughts requires that we observe, understand, and re-direct the oceanic forces of the desire-mind. This is a strenuous, yet essential, transformation.

Madame Blavatsky’s text *The Voice of the Silence* portrays the world of ignorance in vivid imagery. HPB, a woman of uncommon courage, dedicated her final offering “to the few,” knowing well that the ancient, narrow way is not for the fainthearted. We must face bravely the human condition, not in denial or cringing or even sadness, but with an appreciation for the greatness of the work ahead.

The Voice of the Silence (verse 69) depicts the mind polluted by selfishness as a toxic swamp. Thought forms shaped by personal desire, lethargy, and fear are as “foul and viscous mud,” which glue one’s feet

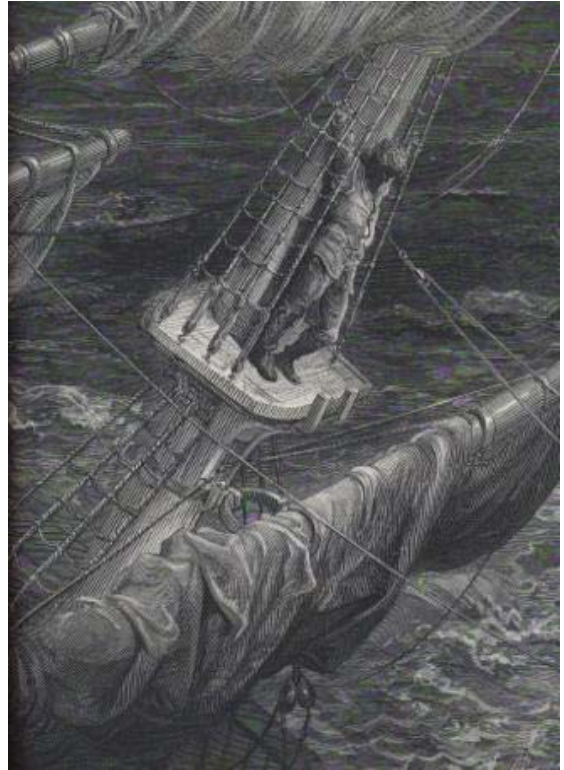
to the ladder’s lowest rung. Vices born of this mucky world drag down the unwary traveler. Unchallenged, “his thoughts become an army, and bear him off a captive slave.” Clearly, the polluted desire-mind needs a radical restoration. Our first action is to add no more poisons. Then we may purify and re-populate this teeming world with refined and beautiful creatures. Nourished by soul wisdom, a damaged ecosystem may heal itself in harmony with the greater whole. But each of us must begin the regeneration.

Collective human ignorance is described as a chaotic, stormy sea. Helpless before the karmic winds of selfishness, humanity is drawn into waves of collective sorrow.

Behold the hosts of souls. Watch how they hover o'er the stormy sea of human life, and how, exhausted, bleeding, broken-winged, they drop one after another on the swelling waves. Tossed by the fierce winds, chased by the gale, they drift into the eddies and disappear within the first great vortex.

Voice of the Silence, Verse 36

Underlying much of human activity is a deep weariness, a diminishing of life-force. Bleeding of subtle energy results from ignorance; an unwillingness to face and “kill” self-serving actions which exhaust the lower nature. The mortal self, on its long journey of becoming, cannot thrive without the eternal soul’s wisdom and love. It has no enduring power nor insight, isolated from its divine source. The wings of higher thought and feeling, by which the immortal soul moves above the chaotic seas, need mending. Healing the broken wings is to unify the unnatural division within.



Mind is a dual principle in humanity, the pivotal seat of both mortal and immortal consciousness. The lower mind, including rational thought and its related faculties, develops interdependently with our emotional and physical nature. The higher mind, instrument of abstract thought, is more closely allied with Atma-Buddhi, universal intelligence. Though a unity of subtle form and function, the mind is subjected to an intense “downward” polarization during evolution. The pull is energized by the illusion of a separate self. Until full attention is directed toward the indwelling spirit, the true Self of all beings, illumination is impossible. In *The Key to Theosophy*, HPB outlines the challenge:

Atma, the “*Higher Self*,” is neither your Spirit nor mine, but like the sunlight shines on all. It is the universally diffused “*divine principle*,” and is inseparable from its one and absolute *Meta-Spirit*, as the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight.

Buddhi (the spiritual soul) is only its vehicle. Neither each separately, nor the two collectively, are of any more use to the body of man than sunlight and its beams are for a mass of granite buried in the earth, *unless the divine Duad (Atma-Buddhi) is assimilated by, and reflected in, some consciousness.* (Chapter VIII)

The future state and the Karmic destiny of man depend on whether Manas gravitates more downward to Kama rupa, the seat of the animal passions, or upwards to *Buddhi*, the Spiritual *Ego*. (Chapter VI)

The age-old way of healing our fractured wings includes various mental disciplines: cleansing, calming, sensible energizing, firm guidance. Thus, the entire mind-body is gradually refined to mirror the wisdom, and to manifest the will, of the divine Self. Above all, right concentration is a calm, selfless abiding in which there is no strain, an “effortless effort.” It is that wonderful sense of being in the flow of a great creative life.

TWO KINDS OF INTELLIGENCE
A poem by Rumi (1207-1273)

There are two kinds of intelligence: One acquired, as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says, collecting information from the traditional sciences as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world. You get ranked ahead of or behind others in regard to your competence in retaining information. You stroll with this intelligence in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one already completed and preserved inside you. A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness in the center of the chest. This other intelligence does not turn yellow or stagnate. It’s fluid, and it doesn’t move from outside to inside through the conduits of plumbing-learning.

This second knowing is a fountainhead from within you, moving out.

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. Consider how an uncontrolled imagination might “play havoc with us.” How might the imagination be “controlled,” and yet be spontaneous, free, and truly creative?
2. Clara Codd notes that when thinking about a specific idea or statement, “your mind is growing and reaching out to other correlated ideas in the universe.” Reflect on the balance of stability and seeking needed for this inner expansion.
3. What practices have you found useful to see “essentials” in life? Why is this skill so important for an aspirant to wisdom, especially in our time?
4. Clara Codd states that, “Intelligence is a power, a faculty—the power to understand, to see the underlying significance. Intellectuality is the power to amass and remember facts.” Consider how these definitions relate to the Mahatma’s comment: “...the world teems with the results of intellectual activity and *spiritual decrease*.” (Letter 66)
5. What practices encourage the mind to be receptive to the Eternal, which “draws forth your strength and beauty?” Reflect on how the desire for growth may affect receptivity.

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Eight: The Preparation for the Way—Sins and Virtues

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS			
	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Emotional</i>	<i>Mental</i>
1	Sloth		
2		Anger	
3		Lust	
4		Greed	
5			Pride
6			Envy
7			Covetousness
THE ANTIDOTES			
	Diligence, perseverance, tireless effort.	Gentleness, chastity, temperance, unselfishness.	Humility, contentment, generosity, love.

Extreme anger causes rents in the psychic body, making it easier for evil entities to enter and dominate. Lust and extreme sensuality clog the organs, impeding the flow of *prana*, the life force. Greed coarsens both the outer and the inner side of the physical body. Greed to possess has an isolating effect upon the consciousness.

Pride throws a cloak round a person preventing them from empathizing with others (the sin of separateness), a very deadly hindrance to spiritual progress. Envy is the essence of small desires; it leads to fragmentation of the self and stops integration. Covetousness is the desire to possess another's powers or possessions. From one who suffers much from this, hook-like filaments are always passing out towards that which is desired. In the long run it means loss of faculty and mental decay.

These “seven deadly sins” all in the long run “kill” the soul by prohibiting contact with the higher.

True humility does not consist in belittling yourself, which often means inverted pride. It consists in not thinking of yourself at all. Contentment means the realization that no one ever got what was not theirs by fate, and that Life means well by us. Generosity and brotherly love break down envy and covetousness; the more we give to others, the more Life will give to us. “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom” (Luke 6:38).

[Editor: Because of the brevity of this chapter, the following excerpts have been added.]

MANKIND has always wondered about the problem of evil and sin. Christianity teaches that we are all born with the stain of sin owing to the act of Eve. More mercifully the Indian scriptures state that we are born with *Avidya*, which means being without the true knowledge. There is no

sin, only lack of growth. Through that lack of development we make mistaken actions, a step off the right road home, a *transgression* instead of *progression*.

How does Nature deal with this? By the reaction which means sorrow, disaster, and pain. Every action of ours thus brings its own reward. If it helps the progress of the united spirit of life, it brings opportunity and happiness; if it goes against that will to fulfillment, it causes pain and sorrow. Thus the heavenly surgeon cuts away the malignant growth.

The Master K.H. says, “Evil has no existence *per se*. Nature is destitute of goodness or malice; she follows only immutable laws. . . . The real evil proceeds from human intelligence—the progeny of human selfishness and greed. The origin of every evil is human action, in man whose intelligence makes him the one free agent in Nature” (*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*).

Why has man free will? That we may learn, under the play of the pairs of opposites, and their inevitable reactions, *how* to choose the good and reject the evil—in fact to become self-conscious, self-motivated “Sons of God” instead of nascent possibilities.

—Clara Codd, *Trust Yourself to Life*, Ch. 5.

AN INTERESTING FACT of Nature is that every virtue evolves out of a vice, and every virtue is indissolubly connected with others, so that to achieve one is at the same time to acquire others. H. P. Blavatsky tells us that all virtues are founded on the recognition of the One Life. In fact, we may say that all virtues are the result of pure self-forgetting, self-annihilating devotion to the good and happiness of others, to that true unselfishness which is pure love. Conversely, the root of all “sin” is selfishness, working for the little separated self alone, calculating only what it is getting out of things, without consideration for the welfare of all others.

Of all the many motive forces in life, there are fundamentally only love and hate, and all others are derivatives from these two. Those springing from love are creative, constructive, healing, and life-giving. Those arising from hate are mutually destructive, hurtful, and death-dealing.

Some of the derivatives of love are appreciation, encouragement, admiration, sympathy, and trust. The derivatives of hate include harsh criticism, imputing of evil motives, slander, and easy suspicion. They may be milder than murder, but they are of the same nature. The desire and intent to hurt is the same. So let us love, appreciate, encourage. It is not our business to seek vengeance or retaliation.

Pure love, divine will-to-good, is a healing force. Doctors and nurses who love their patients are real healers, and even “miracles” will happen sometimes by their simple love, patience, and prayer. No wonder that the ancient Romans said: *Omnia vincit amor!* “Love conquers all.”

—Clara Codd, *The Ageless Wisdom of Life*, Ch. 8, 9.

Lesson Eight COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

The spiritual path is described in various familiar metaphors: the journey home, an awakening from deep sleep, a battle or quest. Here in Clara Codd's brief listing of sins and virtues, the path is likened to a way of healing. Seven deadly sins are listed, followed by their antidotes.

Each of us, and our collective humanity, is afflicted with a false sense of separateness. As a result, we reap the cumulative effects of deadly actions, far-reaching acts of individual and collective selfishness. *The Voice of the Silence* tells how even the great saviors of humanity, in their boundless compassion and wisdom, cannot lift our karmic burden. They are liberated from personal suffering, yet they know that "...woe for the living dead, and helpless pity for the men of Karmic sorrow, the fruit of Karma Sages dare not still." (vs. 184)

People who are ignorant of the inner side of life are the living dead. They live in the transient, in superstition, fear and conflict. The eternal Sun of unity and peace cannot illumine those who deny its presence. Separative forces are indeed life-threatening; they "kill" the human soul by blocking the natural circulation of spiritual wisdom and power. The tragedy of a soul thus rendered lifeless is pictured in *The Voice of the Silence*, followed by an ominous note:

Yea, ignorance is like unto a closed and airless vessel; the Soul a bird shut up within. It warbles not, nor can it stir a feather; but the songster, mute and torpid sits, and of exhaustion dies.

But even ignorance is better than head-learning with no Soul-Wisdom to illumine and guide it. (vs.112-13)

The human soul, like any living being, cannot thrive without freedom to "breathe," move about naturally, sing, and fulfill its divine purpose. Ignorance suffocates not only human life; it demeans and depletes all creatures. As a "closed and airless vessel," ignorance becomes an instrument of sorrow. More dangerous still is knowledge without wisdom. Head-learning without love justifies neglect, denial, and the intentional infliction of suffering. Intellect without compassion has been termed the ultimate weapon of mass destruction.

Embodied in physical tissue as well as astral and mental substance, the various forms of hatred slowly break down personal integrity. These deadly energies cause disorder in the subtle vehicles: rents or tearing, congestion, cloaking, fragmenting. As such internal changes lead to widespread dysfunction, a loss of faculty follows. Healing requires that harmful forces such as sloth, anger, greed, and pride be completely neutralized by antidotes known to restore wholeness. These universal antidotes are the virtues.

Edwin Arnold's beautiful narrative of the life of Gautama Buddha, *The Light of Asia*, includes the following story from Prince Siddhartha's youth. Rich in symbolism, the narrative suggests the simple, transforming ways of spiritual healing.

.....Then it befell,
In the Royal garden on a day of spring,
A flock of wild swans passed, voyaging north
To their nest-places on Himala's breast.
Calling in love-notes down their snowy line
The bright birds flew, by fond love piloted;
And Devadatta, cousin of the Prince,

Pointed his bow, and loosed a willful shaft
Which found the wide wing of the foremost swan
Broad-spread to glide upon the free blue road,
So that it fell, the bitter arrow fixed,
Bright scarlet blood-gouts staining the pure plumes.
Which seeing, Prince Siddartha took the bird
Tenderly up, rested it in his lap –
Sitting with knees crossed, as Lord Buddha sits –
And, soothing with a touch the wild thing's fright,
Composed its ruffled vans, calmed its quick heart,
Caressed it into peace with light kind palms
As soft as plantain-leaves an hour unrolled;
And while the left hand held, the right hand drew
The cruel steel forth from the wound, and laid
Cool leaves and healing honey on the smart.
Yet all so little knew the boy of pain
That curiously into his wrist he pressed
The arrow's barb, and winced to feel it sting,
And turned with tears to soothe his bird again.

The hunter Devadatta now demanded possession of the swan. Sheltering the bird, laying the swan's neck beside his cheek, Siddartha spoke, "Say no! the bird is mine ...by right of mercy and love's lordliness. For now I know, by what within me stirs, that I shall teach compassion unto men and be a speechless world's interpreter, abating this accursed flood of woe, not man's alone ..."

Nonetheless, he offered to submit the dispute to a council of the wise, to which Devadatta agreed. After much debate the councilors were divided, until an unknown priest rose and affirmed Siddartha's right to the swan, declaring "...the slayer spoils and wastes, the cherisher sustains," which judgment all found just. When the King sought to honour the sage, he was gone; only a hooded serpent was seen departing. (The gods often appear in such disguises.) So began Lord Buddha's works of mercy. The swan, being healed, "went joyous to its kind."

The word "health" comes from the Anglo Saxon *hal*, which also gives us "heal," "whole," and "holy." Healing is a return to wholeness. An inner state of well-being, rather than a particular form or function, wholeness integrates body, heart, and mind in the sphere of the universal spirit. Healing has little to do with conventional notions of "cure," as wholeness is a way of unity without regard to conditions. While a cure alleviates physical symptoms, it may not affect the core malady, selfishness. Healing is freedom from the narrow consciousness of the ego, so that one may choose wholeness and health for oneself and others. Siddartha's spontaneous surrender to the need of the swan was healing for all, even for those who resisted its lesson. The encounter was pivotal for the young Buddha, who realized at once his great mission.

Karma ... seeks to explain an extraordinarily simple, merciful teaching process which brings to our attention again and again those qualities that block our heart and limit our experience of full being ... an opportunity offered at level after level of experience to bring us back to balance. It is the most merciful and attentive of teachers.

Stephen Levine, *Healing into Life and Death*, 34-5

The spiritual nature perfectly blends apparent opposites, acting always for the common good. There is gentleness with strength, innocence with wisdom, destruction with creation. Unlike these creative polarities, separative personal forces are extremes that perpetuate suffering. Sloth, as laziness and indolence, is deadly inertia rather than a healthy restfulness. When energizing virtues, such as diligence and perseverance, are invoked from within, they balance such extremes naturally with no disabling side effects.

The deepest healing is spiritual, renewing our connection with the whole of nature. In all manifestation, there are creative and destructive forces at work; some advance human evolution and others delay it. Some affirm life and others slay, spoil and waste. At any time, we can identify with the way of progress or the side of retardation. The blessing of human incarnation is a precious opportunity to identify with love, to become one who cherishes.

Struggle to be strong, not in order that you may be strong, but that the world may be stronger. Struggle to be wise, not that you may be wise, but that the world may be the wiser. Struggle to be pure, not that you may be pure, but that the whole world may be nearer to the purity that is divine. Care not for your own joy, for your own happiness, for your own satisfaction. Care only for the upward treading of the world and the little help you may bring to it. You must either be lifted or lift. You must either be a clog or wings to lift the world upward on its road. That is the great choice which lies before you in coming into this movement.

Annie Besant, *The Inner Purpose of the Theosophical Society*, Adyar Pamphlet, April 1930.

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. In her book, *Trust Yourself to Life*, Clara Codd bases one chapter on the following verse from “Song at Twilight.” Reflect on the significance of this verse in relation to spiritual healing. Why is it essential that we go on from just where we are? How is the idea of being not “good enough” a false perception and a barrier for healing? What are some antidotes for the paralyzing forces of doubt, guilt and despair?

We must go on from here.
Time has no turning—
Carry what we have learnt
Since there is no unlearning
The bridge behind is down.

2. Review again the subtle changes in the psychic body related to the seven sins. These disorders have been mapped in ancient medical systems and are familiar to practitioners of energy healing. How can we make use of such information in spiritual practice?
3. Reflect on the nature of sin and virtue, as causal agents in themselves, in light of the following statement. What is the implication for individual and collective healing?

No *thing* causes any other thing, for causality resides not in things but in the whole. Particular events take place not because of any power in some other events which are said to be their causes, but because of an organic linking of the whole cosmic experience, a linkage which is such that all events in the Cosmos are bound together in one harmonious correlation. Movement of any one 'part' or element of the Cosmos necessitates movements of all the other elements, not because of any direct 'causal power' exerted by the first but because all exist together in one seamless garment which is the Whole.

Prem and Ashish, *Man, the Measure of all Things*, TPH, 1969, 210.

4. In exploring the concept of the "dark angel" as an influence in human evolution, John Algeo states:

The dark angel is a part of ourselves with which we must come to terms. As the impulse to separate ourselves from others, it is the mirror image of the bright impulse to unite with all life. Our Omega point is to realize both impulses harmoniously ... Thus the bright angels and the dark angels are both necessary to us. And what is most necessary is that we learn how to deal with both in their proper times and places and according to their proper powers.

Angels and Mortals, TPH, 1990, 153. Also, *The Quest*, Mar-Apr 05, 69

In what ways do sin and virtue present a comparable polarity in our lives?

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Nine: THE WAY [Part I]

The first and most important point in the consideration of this ancient and eternal Way is meditation. Without daily, patient, persistent meditation the Way can never be found. It seems like a difficult and irksome activity to some people. Yet, in some measure we all “meditate.” If we are absorbed in thinking out a scheme of work, or even a new dress, we are “meditating” after a fashion. The business executive, who learns concentration of thought and well-directed planning of his activities, is learning something of value when he begins, in some future life, to really meditate. Planning, thinking what we can do for the best, lifting the heart in prayer, are all forms of “meditation.”

Let me list meditative states of mind in the order of their intensity:

1. Aspiration, the desire of the heart for the Star, the Ideal, the True.
2. Prayer, leading to the recognition of an “inner world,” and that the human being is a soul as well as a body.
3. Straight concentrated or sequential thinking. This, in time, integrates the personality.
4. Concentrated thought fixed upon an ideal, which brings about the union of the thinker with his higher life.
5. Adoration and worship. The mind having created the form, the heart is stirred and shines upwards.
6. An appeal to the Higher Self, bringing the Spiritual Will into play.
7. The realization of the Master and the “Presence of God.”

Two Great Truths

There are two great truths that lie behind all forms of meditation.

1. The Inner Self takes on the likeness of that which the mind contemplates. Many scriptural sayings bear this out: “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs, 23:7). “All modifications having disappeared, the mind, like a transparent crystal, takes on the nature and form of whatever is presented to it, be it the knower, the knowable, or the act of knowing” (Patanjali's *Yoga Aphorisms*, 1:41).

It is said that a husband and wife who truly love each other grow like each other as the years pass—because they love and think constantly of each other. Thus St. Paul exhorted his people to think on all those things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, having any virtue or praise.

2. The universal Life Energy, called in the East *Prana*, and which on the cosmic planes is one and the same thing as God's Will, follows thought, inspires, makes alive, makes real, the thinker's thought-creations. Finally, the thinker is united with and becomes the Loveliness he has glimpsed through his self-created thought-forms.

The Gradual Change in Attitude

Thus it is clear that meditation is an approach to the Highest within, and by that steady journey inwards the inner world grows increasingly more vivid and real, while the outer one loses much of its hold and reality. At a very advanced stage of meditation this is very patently so. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: “For when to himself his form appears unreal, as do on waking all the forms he sees in dreams; when he has ceased to hear the many, he may discern the One—the inner sound which kills the outer.”



St. Teresa of Avila describes a similar phenomenon. She writes: “I look down on the world as from a great height and care very little what people say or know about me. Our Lord has made my life now a kind of sleep, for almost always what I see seems to me as in a dream, nor have I any great sense of pleasure or pain.” This is the beginning of going “from the unreal to the Real.” Our body appears to us real, our emotions feel real, our thought seems important, because we have not yet realized the Divinity within. The sage Shankaracharya says that just as dreams appear to be true as long as one does not wake up, so the identification of oneself with the body, etc., and the authenticity of sense-perceptions and the like in the waking state continue as long as there is no “Self-knowledge.”

The relationship with others also alters. Most personal contact is by way of the *persona* or mask, which means no real contact at all. The relationship in depth is otherwise. It is to meet in a “different spiritual dimension,” in the “things that are eternal,” as well as, and no less than, in the outer world. Here the “real being” of one person speaks to the “real being” in the other.

The Bridge between the Lower and the Higher Consciousness

This journey inwards finally reaches a point where the *Antahkarana* (the bridge between the lower and the higher consciousness) is built. H.P. Blavatsky says that the true mind in us, which is spiritual consciousness in itself, cannot enter into direct relationship with the personality, except through its reflection, the lower, ordinary intelligence. “It is, therefore, the task of the lower *Manas*, or thinking personality, if it would blend itself with its God, the Divine Ego, to dissipate and paralyze the *Tanmatras*, or properties of the material form . . . It is *Kama-Manas* [thinking influenced by passion], or the lower Ego, which, deluded into a notion of independent existence . . . becomes *Ego-ism*, the selfish self.” (*Collected Writings*, Vol. XII, p. 631)

Indeed a great development of the “lower manas” will often shut out the higher perceptions. She says again: “By reason of the extraordinary growth of human intellect and the development in our age of *Manas* in man, its rapid progress has paralyzed spiritual perceptions. It is at the expense of wisdom that intellect generally lives.” (*Collected Writings*, Vol. XIV, p. 333)

This stairway or bridge from the lower or ordinary consciousness to the higher or spiritual consciousness, is described by various seers. St. Paul speaks of the “veil” which will be taken away when the Christ life is ready to be made manifest in us. (II Corinthians, 3 and 4) He also speaks of the “middle wall of partition” being broken down by the Christ consciousness arising in us. (Ephesians, 2:14) The “stairway” is the use, development and gradual purification of the

intelligence. H.P.B. tells us that in growing meditative states the images employed grow gradually simpler and more inclusive, so that finally the mind passes beyond any images at all, into what is called the “formless” regions, though, as she also says, formless only to a lower state of consciousness.

Light on the Path also describes this stairway:

Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life: But he is only so when he grasps his whole individuality firmly, and, by the force of his awakened spiritual will, recognizes this individuality as not himself, but that thing which he has with pain created for his own use, and by means of which he purposes, as his growth slowly develops his intelligence, to reach to the life beyond individuality.

That Way is meant for us all from the beginning of evolution. For the deep wisdom which belongs to our immortal Selves lies awaiting evocation from the very dawn of the great evolutionary journey. The Lord Christ, in His prayer before His betrayal and crucifixion, speaks to His Father of “the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” St. Paul speaks of One who has “called us with an holy calling . . . according to his own purpose and grace . . . before the world began” (II Timothy, 1:9). Man alone of all creation has the power to come face to face with God, because we have within us a spark, a germ, of the Eternal Life and Consciousness of the Universe. “The Principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard, or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.” (“The Three Truths”)



This Way upwards is also beautifully described by the Master K. H. in a letter to Miss Francesca Arundale:

Child of your race and of your age, seize the diamond-pen and inscribe them [the pages of your life-record] with the history of noble deeds, days well spent, years of holy striving. So will you win your way ever upward to the higher planes of spiritual consciousness. Fear not, faint not, be faithful to the ideal you can now dimly see.

Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, First Series. Edited by C. Jinarājadāsa.

As the way slowly progresses, that idea and vision become gradually clearer and stronger. The Master K. H., in a letter to another woman, says: “Little by little your sight will clear, you will find the mists pass away, your interior faculties strengthen, your attraction toward us gain force, and certainty replace doubts.” (Ibid)

Once formed, the *Antahkarana* allows the intelligence to transfer from the ordinary concrete thinking mind to the higher plane of the divine mind. This is the “Son of God,” the Christ spirit, in us. Beyond lies the plane of the eternal, universal Divine Consciousness, but first the consciousness of our own immortal Ego must be achieved. *Through* him we reach God, the Divine Life.

This is symbolized by the Lord Christ when He says, identifying Himself with the Divine Self in every man: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

H.P.B. says: “No single rung of the ladder leading to knowledge can be skipped. No personality can ever reach or bring itself into communication with *Atma* [Divinity] except through *Buddhi-Manas* [our own divine Egos].” (*Collected Writings*, Vol. XII, p. 634)

The Consciousness of that Higher Self, once reached, illuminates and inspires the lower human consciousness. As said before, the whole purpose of evolution is for it to do so, but before the “grace of God” can descend and take possession of us, we must have made anterior, faithful effort to make that possible. Thus H.P.B. quotes from the Qabbalah: “All creatures in the world have each a superior above. This superior, whose inner pleasure it is *to emanate into them*, cannot impart efflux until they have adored (*i.e.*, meditated as during Yoga)” (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 116).

Spiritual Consciousness

What is the consciousness of that Higher Self, and how may it be described? It cannot really be described in human words. It is beyond the feeling of space and time. It is not intellectual knowledge, nor is it composed of purely human emotion, although the purest movements of the heart are nearer to it than any play of the intellect. Spiritual knowledge is not evolved or developed as human knowledge is. It is “born” in us when the hour is ripe. The Race of Mystics, says Hermes the Thrice Greatest, is not taught, but their wisdom is called to memory by God when He so wills.

Nothing in the world can so help all around us as for a single individual to attain to God-Knowledge. That individual is but the pure channel of an infinitely greater wisdom and power to help. “I live,” wrote St. Paul, “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” The union with our own inner Divinity endows the personality with a wisdom and power far beyond what the personality is capable of. Thomas Merton in *Elected Silence* writes:

For all great mystics without exception, the peak of the mystical life is a marriage of the soul with God, which gives the saints a miraculous power, a smooth and tireless energy in working for God and souls, which bears fruit in the sanctity of thousands and changes the course of religious and even secular history.

Those I have met, who have felt and known its beauty, say that it is a flow of power past the understanding which affects for happiness and good every living thing around; that it is a marvellous sense of utter peace in which nothing personal matters or can possibly disturb it; that such a sense of divine love fills the heart that it overflows to every living thing; that a world of amazing light opens out before them, light which is bliss, power, love of all things.

Preliminary symptoms of it often show as a sense of enormous inner light, of intense happiness, of shining power. St. Teresa of Avila thus describes it: “The brilliance of such a vision surpasses anything which one can imagine on earth . . . It is quite a different light from that which we see on earth. In comparison with the visionary light the radiance of the sun which we behold appears dark, and it is as though we could never open our eyes again.”

A paper was found in the lining of a coat worn by the great French mystic Blaise Pascal, on which he had written: “In the year of grace, 1645. Monday, Nov. 23rd, from 10:30 p.m. till 12:30:

Fire!
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
Not of the philosophers and the learned,
Certitude, joy, certitude, emotion, sight, joy,
Forgetfulness of the world and all outside God.
The world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee.
Joy! Joy! tears of joy. My God, wilt Thou leave me?
Let me not be separated from Thee for ever.

Then there are the beautiful words of Plotinus, who tells us that only a few times in life did he attain such consciousness. “But now we are not tuned up to the vision, and so we have no power to unfold our mind’s eyes and gaze upon the beauty of the Good. He who has perceived This can perceive no other thing, nor can he who has gazed on This look on any other thing, nor hear any other, nor move any part of the body; he forgets all the bodily senses and movements, and he is *still*. Then shining all round the mind, It floods the whole soul with light, drawing it out of the body, and changing the whole man into pure being.”

“Be still, and know That I am God,” sang the psalmist; stillness of body, stillness of the emotions stillness of the mind. For in that silence, the “still, small voice” which spoke to Elijah the prophet can be heard. Stillness even of the heart: “I sleep, but my heart waketh” (Song of Solomon 5:2); the “silence in heaven” of which Revelation (8:1) speaks. “Look for the flower to bloom in the silence which follows the storm” (*Light on the Path*).

No man can hold that consciousness always, not whilst he is yet man. “The silence may last a moment of time or it may last a thousand years. But it will end. Yet you will carry its strength with you. Again and again the battle must be fought and won” (Ibid).

To an individual who has once experienced this, life can never be the same again. Henceforth his personal life is hid with the Christ within and in God. But we must prepare for it. Only the pure in heart can “see God.” “To the pure in heart comes also a quiet spirit, one-pointed thought, victory over sensuality, and a *fitness to behold the Self*.” (Patanjali’s *Yoga Aphorisms*, II:41) Says the angelic Plotinus: “Everyone therefore must become divine, and of godlike beauty, before he can gaze upon a god and the Beautiful Itself.”

Physical Organs of the Spiritual Consciousness

There are certain organs in the physical body which are, when developed, the means whereby the spiritual consciousness, and the awareness of the psychic realm too, may be brought into the physical consciousness. The two glands in the brain, the pituitary body and the pineal gland, are highly important in this regard. During life the brain, with all its chambers and centers, is pulsating with light. Under sustained spiritual effort this becomes intensified and the light takes on a strong swinging motion. “The arc of the pulsation of the pituitary body mounts upward, more and more, until, just as when an electric current strikes some solid object, the current finally strikes the pineal gland, and the dormant organ is awakened and set aglow with the pure Akashic Fire.” Once the pituitary body has awakened the pineal gland, “the light which radiates from this seventh sense illumines the fields of infinitude. For a brief space of time man becomes omniscient; the past and the future, space and time, disappear and become for him, the present (the Eternal Now of the philosophers). If an Adept, he will store the knowledge he thus gains in his physical memory, and nothing, save the crime of indulging in black magic, can obliterate the remembrance of it. If only a

chela [disciple], portions alone of the whole truth will impress themselves on his memory, and he will have to repeat the process for years, never allowing one speck of impurity to stain him mentally or physically.” (*Collected Writings*, Vol. XII, p. 618) Hence the pineal gland is the physical organ for bringing spiritual consciousness into the physical consciousness, and the pituitary body is the organ for awaking the consciousness of the surrounding psychic plane.



Other physical transmitters of inner impressions are the seven great centers, more or less corresponding to the great nerve plexuses, which are called in the East *chakras* or “wheels,” because of their rotary movements. They are situated at the base of the spine, near the spleen, at the waist (the familiar solar plexus), at the heart, at the throat, between the eyebrows, and at the top of the head. These are all, when fully developed, organs of inner vision and response. They can be specially developed by certain occult means, connected with the rousing and directing of the “fire of Kundalini” coiled at the base of the spine; but this is an exceedingly dangerous and painful thing to do except under the guidance of a true Adept, and should otherwise always be left alone. The different chakras develop naturally and slowly by spiritual and altruistic living.

There are also three channels for mounting spiritual forces in the spine, called in the East the “vital airs.” One flows right up the center of the spine and radiates from the great chakra at the top of the head. It is called in the East the *sushumna nadi*. It is accompanied, on either side by two others, one positive and one negative in the forces they carry, and called respectively the *ida* and the *pingala*. They cross each other in the manner depicted in the ancient symbol of the Caduceus, and finally one passes into the pituitary body, and the other into the pineal gland. The wings in the symbol indicate the free soul of the person who has learnt to awake and to use these hidden powers. It is an interesting fact that the positive and negative forces play in an opposite direction in the bodies of men to those of women.

There may be discerned a sensation of burning or heat in certain parts of the spine. The same sensation will sometimes be felt in the vicinity of one of the chakras, as also a creeping sensation, likened in the East to “the creeping of an ant.” A meditative state sometimes brings on a sensation of heat. These little symptoms are indications of movement and life, but need not be regarded too seriously.

The presence of the three “vital airs” in the spine is one of the reasons why the meditation posture called the “Lotus” position is such a favorite one in the East. It consists in sitting with the legs folded as one folds one’s arms, thus resting upon the two pelvic bones and leaving the spine erect and free. It is sometimes difficult for the stiff-boned Westerners to achieve.

All that I have written above is interesting, and, I hope, somewhat helpful. But the true results of meditation and aspiration do not rest here. To see the true result, look back after a year’s practice and observe the increasing sensitivity to unseen and subtle things, the gradual deepening and purifying of character, the widening of outlook, the more tender and sympathetic response to the needs of others, and the dawning sense of nearness to Eternity. —End of Excerpt—

Lesson Nine COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

The ancient and eternal Way, as presented here, is a path of meditation. Clara Codd's outline of meditative states shows a progressive integration of individual and universal consciousness. The seven states are not separate or linear; they suggest interactive modes of emotional, mental and intuitive being. Deepening concentration, guided by spiritual aspiration, leads naturally to meditative absorption or communion. The meditative state becomes more creative and healing as the power of empathy unfolds in daily life.

Glimpses of the inner worlds come for each of us in various ways. The experiences may not be pleasant but are always instructive. In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asks Krishna, the divine Teacher, to reveal his true nature. But when Krishna reveals the wholeness of Self, Arjuna cannot bear the holy vision. Thus, the need for ongoing preparation is clear.

Higher sense perception often comes unbidden and in unusual circumstances. Beyond lower psychism, such perception comprises actual participation in a soul world normally veiled from view. The following experience on a London subway train shows how the self is drawn into a more expansive, inclusive being.

Vauxhall Station on a murky November Saturday evening ... the third-class compartment was full. For a few seconds only ... the compartment was filled with light. I felt caught up in some tremendous sense of being within a loving, triumphant and shining purpose. I never felt more humble. I never felt more exalted. A most curious, but overwhelming sense possessed me and filled me with ecstasy. I felt that all was well for mankind.... Beauty, music, joy, love immeasurable and a glory unspeakable, all this they would inherit...

This happened over fifty years ago, but even now I can see myself in the corner of that dingy third-class compartment, with the feeble lights of inverted gas mantles overhead and the Vauxhall Station platforms outside ... In a few moments the glory had departed—all but one curious, lingering feeling. I loved everybody in that compartment ... at that moment I think I would have died for any one of [them]. I seemed to sense the golden worth of them all.

Cohen/Phipps, *The Common Experience*, TPH, 1992

Note how the ecstasy and sense of wholeness involves humanity as a whole. Reflect also on how sensing “the golden worth” of another may inspire conscious self-sacrifice. Usually our personal desires, habits, appearance, our own progress and happiness, the wellbeing of our close friends and family claim our attention. The sense of separateness from most others is strong, as is a fear of death. Illumination transcends this world of the “illusory self” entirely. Near-death experiences may bring a similar break-through as the individual, free from the physical body, discovers an inner world of radiance and glory.

Even a fleeting glimpse of the eternal may be transforming, bringing universal values, a willing alignment with the soul of things, an orientation to the eternal. The subway experience affected profoundly the life of the person concerned, who became a well-known minister, spiritual counselor and writer. Depending on an individual's preparation and circumstances, such experiences of higher consciousness may be transforming. Or, as Cohen and Phipps point out, spiritual intimations may apparently lead nowhere.



Illumination refers to a state of clarity and joy which deepens with gradual assimilation to the divine Spirit. *Enlightenment* and *liberation* are similar terms, sometimes used interchangeably, for the full awakening to the wholeness of life. The glowing halo and translucent, radiant aura of enlightened beings, a common feature of religious art, reflects a state of freedom from conditioned existence. Through such beings, the luminosity of eternal Life—perhaps as God, Brahman or the Beloved—shines brightly for all.

No real treading of the Way is possible until intuition is unfolded sufficiently for inner guidance. Trust in God, or the divine Self, is different from relying on disembodied “guides,” gurus or other authority figures. Intuitive knowing is illumination from one’s own heart, a certainty of purpose and direction which can never be given by another. The enlightened teacher strives to awaken the seeker’s powers of intuitive insight rather than create a sense of guru-dependency.

Visions of unity and harmony may unfold naturally from our lifework. Fritjof Capra, author of *The Tao of Physics*, reported the following experience, which he interpreted in the light of previous study and thought. Note again how participation is primary.

I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon, watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing, when I suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance ... as I sat on that beach my former experiences came to life; I “saw” cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I “saw” the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I “heard” its sound, and at that moment I KNEW this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.

Joseph Campbell, in a discussion of chakra symbolism, associates Shiva Nataraja, “Lord of the Cosmic Dance,” with the heart chakra. The awakening of the heart brings awareness of the essence of sound, the creative hum of the void which both precedes and precipitates all things. This sound is heard from within oneself and simultaneously within space, a sound beyond silence which “resounds with the wonder of existence.” (*The Mythic Image*, Princeton University Press, 1974, p.356) In the above quote, Capra is part of the dance as well as witness; the knower participates in the known. Such is the way of the heart, a way of harmony.

Illumination may release great vitality, enhance perception, and fuel creativity. Masterpieces often unfold in transcendent moments when the artist, musician, educator, scientist, philosopher, leader, or activist—unconscious of self, totally absorbed in the work—achieves something of universal significance. These are times when normal boundaries dissolve, giving rise to a luminous clarity and compassion. With loving attention, such moments deepen of their own accord.

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. Reflect on a time in your life when a “darkening” of your heart, mind, and body challenged your ability to go on. Perhaps there was despair, doubt, depression, a great weariness, or a drought in your creative life. What brought you through? How can we help each other to trust in life, even without dramatic illumination experiences?
2. Clara Codd quotes HPB’s teaching that the thinking personality, or lower *Manas*, if it would blend itself with the Divine Ego, must “dissipate and paralyze the *Tanmatras*, or properties of the material form ...”

The Voice of the Silence states, “Before thou canst approach the foremost gate thou hast to learn to part the body from thy mind, to dissipate the shadow, and to live in the eternal. For this, thou hast to live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee; to feel thyself abiding in all things, all things in Self. (vs. 217)

Reflect on the above passages in the light of the following lines from “Tintern Abbey” by William Wordsworth.

....that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on –
Until the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

3. Thomas Merton is quoted as saying that the marriage of the soul with God “gives the saints a miraculous power, a smooth and tireless energy in working for God and souls ...”
What are other qualities of this spiritual energy, and why are its effects so far-reaching?

Has the teaching of the chakra system, well known in holistic healing circles, been useful to you in your spiritual practice? In your view, has this model of the human subtle anatomy been a helpful influence on Western thought and practice?

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Ten: THE WAY [Part II]

The mounting stages of consciousness on this great journey are called in *The Voice of the Silence* the Three Halls. This metaphor well defines the stages on the inward journey. Meditation, sleep, and death are analogous processes. Indeed, we may say that all three use the same gateway. In sleep, for example, we leave temporarily the body and pass into the inner soul-world, the *subconscious* of modern psychology.

The same thing is true of the soul during meditation. It withdraws, consciously and by the will, from the outer world and enters the inner. Long, long before the highest state of meditation is reached, slight changes in that direction can be observed. The slamming of a door, the ticking of a clock, can be very disturbing to a beginner. With practice the clock will not be heard, the attention being directed strongly inwards and consequently a slight dulling of the senses supervening. That is why it is well to close our eyes during meditation, as it helps us then to be on the mental plane.



The Hall of Ignorance

If we look around us with our eyes open, we respond to a world full of sensory objects. This world is called in *The Voice of the Silence* the Hall of Ignorance, the world in which our body is born, lives, and dies. Through that body and all its experiences, the soul learns and develops its powers. But there is one thing to be noted about all physical phenomena—they are in a state of flux. The very word *phenomenon* tells us that, for it is a Greek word meaning “appearance.” In the Hall of Ignorance, we are aware only of the passing appearance of things. Therefore, we must enter an inner world to seek for the *noumenon*, or eternal possibility behind all *phenomena*.

The Voice tells us that if we would cross this Hall safely we must not mistake the fires of lust (selfish desire) that burn therein for the sunlight of life. Ah! how many people do that, in soul ignorance! It also tells us to learn to discern the ever-fleeting from, the Ever-lasting. This requires a spirit of discernment or discrimination, which is the first step on the Path Homewards. Deep thought and meditation will help us in this regard. The path inwards is always marked by an increasing sensitivity and subtlety of response in the mechanism of consciousness.

When we close our eyes, what do we see? An inner world of thoughts, images of aspiration and desire, and countless memories. Invisibly to the physical senses they take form and shape around us. In a letter to Mr. A. P. Sinnett, the Master says:

Every thought of man upon being evolved passes into the inner world, and becomes an active entity by associating itself, coalescing we might term it, with an elemental—that is to say, with one of the semi-intelligent forces of the kingdoms. It survives as an active intelligence . . . for a longer or shorter period proportionate with the original intensity of the cerebral action which generated it. Thus, a good thought is perpetuated

as an active, beneficent power, an evil one as a maleficent demon. And so man is continually peopling his current in space with a world of his own, crowded with the offspring of his fancies, desires, impulses and passions; a current which reacts upon any sensitive or nervous organization which comes into contact with it, in proportion to its dynamic intensity. The Buddhist calls this his Skandha, the Hindu gives it the name of Karma. The Adept evolves these shapes consciously; other men throw them off unconsciously (*The Occult World*, p. 111, 1913 ed.).

This world may not presently be transparent to us, but with practice it grows clearer and more vivid. In meditation it is of immense help to possess the power of a trained imagination and visualization. It is worth while to improve that faculty. The “trained imagination” is under the control of the steady mind and will. The uncontrolled imagination is called “fancy” by the Indian sage Patanjali. If anyone doubts the power of the imagination, call to mind Dr. Coué’s famous example. He tells you to put a narrow plank on the ground and walk along it. Could you walk along it as easily if it were fixed between two skyscrapers across a street?

The Hall of Learning

This first inner world is called in *The Voice of the Silence* the Hall of Learning. It is not a small, sparsely populated world. It is a large country full of an enormous amount of things past, present, and to come. It is the world of sleep and dreams. Psychologists call it the subconscious. It will become known to us and gradually understood. In this world, thought, desire, and aspiration are creative powers, taking shape and form in our imagination. These forces are *real*.

Consciously or unconsciously we all populate our current in space with the host of our own thought-creations. In the lower levels of this inner world we become aware of the buried past and the less desirable tendencies which survive from that past. Jung calls these the “shadows.” In its very extreme form it is what occultists refer to as the “Dweller on the threshold.”

We shall also discover, create, and use what Jung calls the “transforming symbol,” but which religion calls the Guardian Angel. These are but the personifications of our deep divine possibilities. Consciousness oscillates between these two opposites. The purpose of this oscillation is a very interesting one. It generates energy and power in us that would never have been produced if we had nothing to resist or overcome.

This, then, is the Hall of Learning: the psychic world, the world of psychological facing, overcoming, and understanding. But *The Voice* also warns us of its perfidious beauty, for on that shining, starry plane everything radiates with an unearthly beauty. But here no *true* voice is heard, and the perfidious beauty is the fascination which the forms created by our own—largely unconscious—wish-fulfillments, exercise over us. It is the super-sensuous world, the world of deceptive sights and sounds, the world of mediums.

A great help in meditation is the creation in this inner world of a thought-form such as the Lord Christ, Shri Krishna, or one of the Masters of the Wisdom. Every day, recreate the thought-form patiently and slowly, like some picture you know and love. The great consciousness of the Master or our own Higher Self, will one day infuse it and make it come alive. Have we ever noticed how even the photograph of someone dearly loved, and often looked at, becomes alive? Through that form the soul of the original has been touched, and a response has come. The same is true of the form of a great Teacher.

The mind builds such thought-forms on the psychic plane. If it can do this successfully, the heart will begin to respond, and a wave of love and adoration becomes generated. But never force this feeling. However long it takes, wait patiently till it spontaneously springs up in the heart. There is no power in the world so purifying, so ennobling, as intense, self-forgetting emotion.

A word here may be said concerning the development and use of mediumship. The “trance” state of very deep meditation is in no way comparable to the trance of a medium. The former is self-abstracted and in a state of high positivity; the latter involves the surrender of one’s psychic vehicles to some other entity and is in a state of complete passivity. Students of Occultism should eschew mediumistic practices. They lead nowhere, except to loss of power in the succeeding incarnation, and lay the personality open to the possession and influence of many irresponsible entities, of whom there are countless numbers on the lower levels of the psychic plane. No Adept or Master of the Wisdom ever sends a message through an ordinary medium, numerous as are the claims made nowadays in this direction. Indeed, mediumship and Occultism are poles asunder.

The mind and the heart are the two wings by which the human being flies to heaven. The mind is the form-builder; the heart is the life-giver. H.P.B. writes:

The heart is the king, the most important organ in the body of man . . . The heart is the center of spiritual consciousness, as the brain is the center of intellectual. But this consciousness cannot be guided by a person, nor its energy directed by him, until he is at one with Buddhi-Manas [the higher spiritual counterparts, C. C.]; until then it guides him—if it can. Hence the pangs of remorse, the prickings of conscience; they come from the heart, not the head. . . . The psycho-intellectual man is all in the head with its seven gateways; the spiritual man is in the heart (*Collected Writings*, Vol. XII, p. 695).

It is as well to remember that it is not the physical heart which is meant, but that shining, golden chakra which is situated between the shoulders blades, but slightly outside the body, a little to the right. Meditation sometimes produces a *glow* there. So also does high and pure emotion.

I think it was this “chamber of the heart” which was called by the Lord Christ the “closet” or little room: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door [*i.e.*, ceased to respond to outer thoughts], pray to thy Father [our Higher Self is often called our “Father in Heaven”] which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” [visible and tangible response]. St. Teresa, in her *Way of Perfection*, describes this inner chamber in the following terms.



Begin by fixing this truth in your mind, that there is within you a palace of surpassing splendor . . . for no building can be compared in beauty and magnificence with a soul that is pure and filled with virtues. In the midst of this palace dwells the great King who deigns to be your constant guest, and here He sits upon a throne of priceless value, and this throne is your own heart. But here comes the great point of all. We on our part must have a full and hearty determination to make over to Him entirely this interior palace. He will never give Himself entirely to us, until we have given ourselves entirely to Him.

These are thought-forms created in meditation by the power of the imagination. They are all self-created, but may become avenues of approach to that which is higher. These reside at the highest levels of the Hall of Learning, or the psychic world.

The Voice of the Silence tells us that if we would cross this Hall safely we should not stay to inhale the stupefying scent of its blossoms. Our Divinity, our true guide, dwells on a plane beyond. It is well, if we become at all psychically sensitive, to be wary of what is told us from this plane, for what most of us are not aware of is that we have deep, subconscious, desires which create forms almost unknown to ourselves. If, for instance, we have a deep, unrecognized desire for personal success, prestige, or comfort, the form created by this deep desire may be infused by some nature-spirit who will say that which we long to hear. Hence the need for facing, overcoming, and understanding.

The Hall of Wisdom

We must pass on towards the third layer of our consciousness—that which corresponds to the heaven-world after death, called The Hall of Wisdom. Shadows are unknown there and the light of Truth shines with unfading glory. This is the plane of intuitive knowledge, of deep spiritual comprehension, of the eternal significance of things.

As we steadily progress, we shall find that our thought-images steady and simplify. From conception to conception the consciousness enlarges and simplifies. All these ideas and images are not Reality itself, but little windows through which we glimpse Reality and through which Reality shines back to us. We are really prisoners in this house of the body, knowing nothing of the surrounding world except what is reported to us through the five windows of the senses. From sense-impressions we form mental concepts, and they form a sky-light into the higher worlds. Do not trouble about the size and shape of the “window.” That does not matter. A window must be looked *through*, not *at*. Let us try always to look *through* all forms, looking for that which is invisible, and listening for that which is soundless. Slowly the windows enlarge, become more beautiful, more transparent. One day, quite suddenly, we shall leave the windows behind and stand face to face with the whole sky.

For there is a deeper level of consciousness belonging to the true home of the Spirit in man “where Truth abides in fullness.” From that deep consciousness, no images are brought back to the waking consciousness, but a *feeling* of

intense, unimaginable peace and bliss. It is the plane of the Heaven-world after death, the plane of divine purity and beauty, but veiled by the brightest images, the “fairest forms” of all which the personal consciousness has known and purely loved. We best may imagine it as unfathomable, unimaginable Light and Love and Life.

The form of prayer belonging to this state consists in a wordless, imageless lifting of the soul—the “naked intent directed unto God,” as *The Cloud of Unknowing* puts it. For it is by this



means that the “different spiritual dimension” becomes manifest, interpenetrating and transcending the space-time and cause-effect world in which our bodies exist.

The Fourth Hall

There is still a fourth stage, another “Hall,” reached by very few—a state of high spiritual consciousness, contacted in the condition of Samadhi or Ecstasy. But who can even glimpse it, even with the aid of our poor imagination, for never can the sights and sounds of earth translate the immeasurable glories of the spiritual worlds. *The Voice of the Silence* calls it “the Shoreless waters of *Akshara*, the indestructible fount of omniscience.”



This is the long, long road from the unreal to the Real, from the ever-fleeting to the Everlasting, from the long death of blinded, material life to the consciousness of Immortality. What a road, but how glorious and wonderful! With what patience, perseverance, and dedication it must be tread, even through many lives and deaths! The person in whose heart the urge to tread it is awake, however dimly, will try to find it again and again. This is the true religious instinct, the homing instinct of the exiled, divine Spirit in mankind. One day humanity

will surely find and follow it, for “somewhere the weariest river winds safely to the sea.”

Always the voice of our diviner Self is calling us, if we have the ears to hear. “Come, my other self,” it seems to say, “to the lands of beauty and wisdom and power and peace.” For that which is uncreate abides in every one of us as it abides there. From the very beginning a thread of light from our diviner Self guides us ever nearer. In our best and loveliest moments we glimpse this haven of our souls.

Hence, in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us higher.

William Wordsworth. *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*

But it is more than worthwhile even to begin the road. Writes Dr. Alexis Carrel: “To make one’s spirit grow, there is no need to be learned or to possess great intellect; all that is needed is the will.” Ah! there are no automobiles to take us to heaven, and there are no short cuts. We ourselves must tread that Way, every step ourselves. It demands endless will, perseverance, faith, love. As the poet Christina Rossetti once said, “Does the road wind uphill all the way? Yes, to the very end.”

— End of Excerpt —

Lesson Ten COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

A story is told of a young man named Hugh Brady, who kept homing pigeons as pets. One day he found a new bird—a wounded pigeon—in the garden of his home. Hugh nursed the bird back to health and it stayed with his flock. During the following winter, Hugh suddenly became ill and was taken to a hospital two hundred miles away for emergency surgery. He was still recovering in the hospital, on a bitterly cold, snowy night when he heard a tapping at the window. It was the new pigeon. When a nurse opened the window, the bird flew straight to Hugh. The pigeon was not homing in the usual sense. He traveled over a great distance, in difficult weather, to a place he had never been.

A natural “homing” intelligence is part of human nature too, a wisdom of wholeness and healing which Clara Codd calls the “true religious instinct.” Such intelligence is beyond pleasure-seeking, preferences, creeds and ideologies. Receptive to the spiritual nature of everyday things, elevated thought and feeling know the direction of goodness. In this spiritual flight, they will become true, beautiful and good all through. Clara Codd notes,

Midway between the physical and the spiritual lies the fluidic principle, the Soul, with two great powers which ultimately become the wings with which he flies – thought and feeling. Normally, these wings are pinioned to the interests of the earth ... Meditation is a method of setting those wings free, making them strong, that one day they may essay the immortal “flight of the alone to the Alone,” and become forever one with the Spiritual Self.

Meditation and the Consecrated Self, 201



The Golden Stairs

Metaphors for the levels of consciousness—described variously as stages, halls, and worlds—are a “flight” map of the inner environment. But to interpret the map, an intuition for our spiritual home must be awakened, tested and then trusted. Meditations, which strengthen devotion, reverence and discernment, will also mobilize powers of the divine will, such as endurance and daring. The journey is not without its perils, all of which arise in some measure from the frailties of the personal self. The virtues are as wings for an immortal Individual, transcendent powers for wholesome action.

When there is no resistance to the homing intelligence—when love is a pure yearning for wholeness—the flight is not an outcome of thought and planning but rather a natural inclination of the heart. One is alone, and content in aloneness, as there is no “other” to compel or obstruct—only Divinity everywhere. Such aloneness is a surrender to spaciousness and simple presence.

Among the sacred animals of various religions, the swan and crane symbolize a consciousness at home in earth, water and sky, while dove, eagle and owl represent the soul qualities of peace, power, and wisdom. The Hindu Rig Veda, among the most ancient of world scriptures, symbolizes the divine spirits as birds of heaven descending to earth and flying back to the celestial home:

Dark the descent: the birds are golden-colored; up to the heaven they fly robed in the waters. Again they descend from the seat of order, and all the earth is moistened with their fatness. (I.164.47)

Here the radiant spirits descend to the dark earthly worlds, where they gather experience. Returning to heaven, the pilgrim birds spiritualize, lift or enrich matter. The flights between heaven, the seat of order, and earth suggest a purposeful reincarnation. Both heaven and earth are nourished and integrated through the circulation of vital force. (Feuerstein & Miller, *Yoga and Beyond*, 1972, 145)

The archetype or divine source of the pilgrim spirits, beyond space and time, is symbolized in esoteric Buddhism as the Great Swan, Kala Hamsa. *The Voice of the Silence* counsels, “Bestride the Bird of Life, if thou wouldst know. Give up thy life, if thou wouldst live” (Vs. 20-21). The range of the Bird of Life, the creative field of AUM, spans all worlds including those of non-being, the realms of infinite possibility. One who contemplates such images, merges with their essential truth, is said to outgrow karmic influences.



The journey to the divine Self is often symbolized as a flight to Truth, God, the Beloved, the Guardian Angel or Master—to a way of life beyond all notions of personal identity. Withdrawing from limiting forms, Individuality is blessed with a universal perspective. The upper reaches of human evolution are said to involve a radical freedom, with corresponding planetary responsibilities for those able to assume them.

When our great Buddha—the patron of all adepts, the reformer and the codifier of the occult system, reached first *Nirvana* on earth, he became a Planetary Spirit, *i.e.*, his spirit could at one and the same time rove the interstellar spaces *in full consciousness*, and continue at will on Earth in his original and individual body...that is the highest form of adeptship man can hope for on our planet. But it is as rare as the Buddhas themselves ... *Conscious* life in Spirit is as difficult for some natures as swimming is for some bodies.

The Mahatma Letters, Chron. Edition, 62.

In the Halls of Ignorance and Learning, the aspirant is still wedded to earthly forms and selfhood. A strong desire to unite with beautiful, truthful appearances sustains the disciple but may also lead to self-deception. The reverencing of false teachers, devotion to personal progress and a fascination with phenomena are common obstacles in these worlds.

Expanded states of consciousness, represented by the Hall of Wisdom and the Vale of Bliss, are an assimilation to the Higher Self, the innermost spirit. Here, the Master is an interior presence of nobility and benevolence.

When this stage is reached and divine “formlessness” can be not only endured, but accepted as all sufficient in itself, and when there is no longer any longing for the form of the beloved ... a marvel comes to birth. For as the disciple grows in wisdom and power, nourished by the substance of this joy, he learns that this most blessed life streams into him through forms other than the one he loves best. The Master can use many forms to manifest his love – not only all the forms within men’s minds of masters of the past and present, but many other forms of men, animals, plants, minerals. All forms of beauty and goodness become channels for the fullness of the Master’s bliss.

G.R.S. Mead, “The Master,” *The Theosophical Review*, Vol 39, 248-56.

Being together in our journey, united in mind and heart about a few things we hold dear, ensures a measure of freedom. The resources for our individual and collective unfolding are very near, always within reach. These may include material things, but the most precious resources are those soul qualities which bring out the best. We know what those powers are. We also know quite a lot about how to nourish kindness, courage, and understanding in ourselves and others. Let us be together in this discovery—how to bring our flights of inspiration, and a deep caring, to where it is most needed.

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. Often the spiritual journey is described as “the path inward.” How does sensitivity to the *noumenal* life in all things (defined by Clara Codd as “the eternal possibility beyond”) help us to appreciate the phenomenal?
2. Reflect on the passage related to thought forms which begins, “Every thought of man upon being evolved passes into the inner world, and becomes an active entity...” What are the implications of this teaching, for individual and collective well-being and spiritual growth? How may we learn to evolve these thought forms consciously, with clear intention?
3. What practices have helped you to develop your imagination? Are there specific meditations or prayers that have been especially useful? What have you found to be the greatest obstacles to developing the creative imagination, and how are you meeting that challenge?
4. Compare the creative powers of desire and will, from your own experience.

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

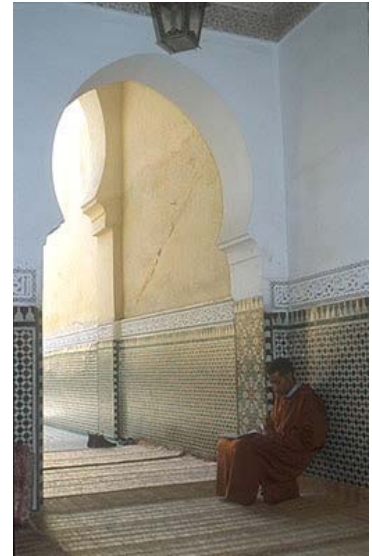
Lesson Eleven: THE METHOD [Part I]

For the beginning student of meditation, the outlines and procedures of meditation are like the lines on paper for one learning to write; or like the five-finger exercises for one learning to play the piano. They are necessary aids in the beginning. Later, there comes a time when the consciousness escapes and transcends such guiding lines and flies straight to the heart of things.

First Step: Mental

We begin with our ordinary mind. To quote *The Voice of the Silence*, we may now ask, “O Teacher, what shall I do to reach to wisdom? O wise one, what, to gain perfection?” And the answer is: “Search for the paths.” This is the same advice as that given in *Experiment in Depth: A Study of the Work of Jung, Eliot and Toynebee* by P. W. Martin. The author, having described how he discovered and trod this road by self-analytical methods, tells us to search the scriptures, any scriptures, for those who wrote them knew whereof they wrote.

So begin with deep thought upon some scriptural statement. If desired, do only this (and nothing else) for some time before attempting true meditation. Ponder on these things, as did our Lord's Mother, who kept all the things she did not quite understand and “pondered them in her heart.” “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established” (Proverbs, 4:26). This intellectual concentration, which results in mind-control—the ability to think clearly and to think only what we wish to think—is the best preliminary to learning the art of meditation. In addition, it tunes the mind and renders it more ready to think upon higher objects of thought. So, for a long time (until the awakened and soul-tuned mind rushes straight to the goal), begin a period of meditation with deep, steady “pondering” upon some valuable saying. Meditation proper passes from this preliminary concentration of thought upon some saying to the idea, the “feeling,” the life, the spiritual significance that lie behind.



Second Step: the Development of Character

All of us can—by honest and steady thought, and by observing the effect of our words and actions upon others—discover the weak points and serious flaws in our own characters. Character is the sign-manual of our souls. The development of our character is in our own hands. Life is doing its best for us in this direction, but we can enormously aid life. Do not have any silly pride about this. We are all very incomplete beings as yet, and it is for our own happiness and the welfare of others to put matters right as far as we have the power to see and the will to act. After you have identified what is one of your chief shortcomings, spend a little time in the morning meditation visualizing the exact opposite quality—what it means and how you could act it out in your own life. Do this for several weeks before tackling another. Our virtues and vices are so intimately related that to deal with one is to deal with several. There was a splendid article, “The Treasures of Meditation,” by Dr. W. E. Sangster, a famous Methodist pastor, in the *Reader's Digest* for October 1956, which very pertinently deals with this form of thought. The author calls

meditation *directed thought*, a spiritual exercise consisting of deep, continued reflection, not vague *day-dreaming*. “One has to learn how to turn a theme over and over in the mind.” He thought over “humility” and saw that it means to have an absence of pride or self-assertion, making a person more eager to listen than talk, more anxious to admire than criticize. In meditating, he says, “hold this concept clear in your mind and warm in your heart. A beginner may be able to retain it for only a minute—but minutes can work miracles when repeated often . . . At last I came to see that humility is simply truth, for only the spiritually blind are self-important.”

Third Step

Surrender to God is the next step. “Lift up your hearts.” That Divine Life, that Divine Love, that Eternal Mind, is around us and within us, stretching beyond the illimitable confines of shoreless space. And yet God is illimitably beyond. “Having pervaded this whole universe with one fragment of Myself, I remain” (Bhagavad Gita). There is nowhere where God is not, there is nowhere where we can wander outside His Love and Care. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalms, 90:2). The same thing is true of Time.

There are three metaphysical terms which best describe the Eternal Life:

Light: “God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all” (I John, 1:5). The Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Love: “God is Love” (I John, 4:8). “Underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy, 33:27).

Life: “In Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts, 17:28). Think of the Beauty and Vastness of God, the Divine and Eternal Life, as around us and within us, and of our unity therewith.

Stop thinking upon God’s ultimate attributes, and, with heart and mind uplifted, gaze into the empyrean. Stretch the arms of your soul upwards, as a child returning to his Father-Mother, and keep *still*, willing to respond, waiting upon the Lord. The first intimation of a response often comes as a divine smile and the soul of the meditator smiles back.

Fourth Step: the Higher Self

Picture that higher side of you which has “never left the bosom of the Father,” that spark of the Divine Life which shines ever as the star of your being. It has never left the Garden of Eden, but has sent its representative down here slowly to gather the fruit of true life and living. Therefore God is still connected with us. A ray of the Divine Life is ever with us, the true source of all that is beautiful and good in us. A ray of the Divine Life is ever with us, the true source of all that is beautiful and good in us. “All is impermanent in man except the pure bright essence of *Alaya* (the spark of the Divine in us) *The Voice of the Silence*. Man is its crystal ray; a beam of light immaculate within, a form of clay material upon the lower surface. That beam is thy life-guide and thy true Self, the watcher and the silent thinker, the victim of thy lower self. The



Soul cannot be hurt but through thy erring body” (*Ibid.*). Remember that even your body is “the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (I Corinthians, 3:16).

That golden thread will guide us back to that same divine Self after death. “In each of us that golden thread of continuous Life—periodically broken into active and passive cycles of sensuous existence on Earth, and super-sensuous in Devachan—is from the beginning of our appearance upon this Earth. It is the *Sūtrātman*, the luminous thread of immortal, *impersonal* Monadship, on which earthly lives or evanescent *Egos* are strung as so many beads—according to the beautiful expression of the Vedantic Philosophy” (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 513).

As we aspire towards him God, the *Sūtrātman* shines, glows and expands. If we approach Heaven, Heaven will approach us, for that Higher Self is only too eager to pour itself into its lower representative, to illuminate and work through it. It is the “Angel” within us, the “pearl of great price,” the “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” *Light on the Path* calls it the Star of our souls and says, “When you have found the beginning of the way, the Star of your soul will show its light.”

As said before, at the moment of highest aspiration, when the mind and heart can soar no further, wait, rest on that moment, trying to hold yourself there, even if all images vanish and a blind, wordless lifting of the heart to God supervenes. “Steadily, as you watch and worship, its light will grow stronger . . . And when you have found the end, its light will suddenly become the infinite light” (*Light on the Path*). For our diviner selves are the doors to God. “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him” (Psalms, 37:7).

There are certain signs, which sometimes come—a divine smile, a sense of light and joy. But if we do not wait upon the Lord, we give Him no time to incline unto us. But remember that the Higher Self is not affected by anything that happens to our personal selves, nor is it interested in personal ambitions, aims, and enjoyments. It is one with the All. How can it be personal, or put the personality first? And so *The Voice of the Silence* tells us to “seek in the impersonal for the Eternal Man.” But the Impersonal is not a cold, abstract quality. It is *Pure Love*, because untainted with self. It is its very nature to pour itself out for good, for loveliness, for compassion.

The Divine Life is our “Father”; the spark or flame of it in our hearts is the “Holy Spirit,” the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, which means the strength-bringer. The fully illuminated individual, or Adept, the Link between God and human, is the “Son.” The “Master” reveals to us the humanity of God and also the Divinity of mankind. The next step is to visualize the “Master.”

Fifth Step: the Realization of the Gurudeva (Divine Teacher)

There is One in whom all this is perfectly developed, who is that lovelier Self, one of that body of Adepts who have preceded us upon the Way. Their compassion and their help are always there for us, but they help us more by what they *are* than by solving our personal difficulties and problems for us. That is *our* business, our task in the School of Life. We grow to wisdom and beauty by our *own* efforts, as a flower grows. The gardener cannot make the flower open. It grows by its own instinct, “eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air.” All around us and within us are the love, the beauty, and the wisdom of God. Let us press eagerly forward to open ourselves to the light and love of the universe, as the sacred lotus flower, growing upward from the dark earth and the water, opens its heart to the sun. “Let us wait patiently for the day of our real, our best birth,” wrote H.P.B.

Picture the Adept, the Master of Wisdom, in the “fairest form” which appeals. Keep it always the same. Look steadily at a picture of the Lord Christ or any other great Teacher whom you can

naturally revere. With your eyes closed, try to reproduce that image in your mind. For those who are deficient in the power of visualization, the following practice—recommended by an Eastern sage—may be helpful.

When you meditate on the Lord Krishna, in the beginning keep His picture in front of you. Look at it with steady gazing. See His feet first, then the yellow silken robe, then the ornaments round His neck, then His face, earrings, crown on the head set with diamonds, then His armlets, bracelets, then His conch, disc, mace and lotus. Then again come to the feet. Now start again the same process. Do this again and again for half an hour. When you feel tired look steadily on the face only. Do this practice for three months. Then close your eyes and mentally visualize the picture and rotate the mind in the different parts, as you did before.

You can associate the attributes of God, as omnipotence, omniscience, purity, perfection, etc., during the course of your meditation.

Or we may think of the great characteristics of the Master, such as concentrated power, undeviating purpose, unending patience, enduring will, abiding sympathy, universal wisdom, and illimitable love.

The Master is the personalized aspect of Deity, one through whom the beauty of God shines perfectly, what the East calls an *Ishtadeva*. It is easier to picture God in human form than as an abstraction. Imagine in the astral light around us a beautiful thought-form of the Master, and picture yourself on your knees, or seated in meditation before Him. Tell Him your highest aspirations. If love awakes in your heart, let it flow out to His feet in natural, unrestrained ardor. Then *wait*, with your soul's attention fixed on Him. It may be that one day a smile or a vibration will pass to your consciousness through that image, for the great consciousness of an Adept is unfailingly aware of the aspirant's feeble endeavors. The Master K. H. once wrote to Mr. Sinnett: "I can come nearer to you, but you must draw me, by a purified heart and a rapidly developing will." Keep still, with the attention fixed upon Him. Offer yourself to Him unreservedly, aspiring to become one of His workers amongst men, for love of them and Him.

The Last Step

Glowing with love, responding to light—surely we would like to pass that on to others, to radiate it specially to those we love or would like to help. With your imagination, bring them into that Light. Pray for the Master's and God's blessing upon them. Then picture the radiance and blessing streaming out into the whole world on all sides. Fill your aura with the rosy light of love and stretch it as far as you can. Think, and *feel* peace, joy, and blessing to all beings, to all life.

The Return

Before coming back to ordinary life again, open the eyes and rest a little while. One's whole being has been highly tuned, and sometimes a too sudden return gives a slight shock to the nervous system. This is the true meaning of retiring to a mountain to pray. The "mount" is the increasing tension within, as the vehicles of consciousness learn more and more to respond to subtler and finer stimuli. Let them tune down a little before resuming life, somewhat as an athlete will "cool down" after a strenuous workout.

This is the morning discipline that establishes a rhythm that persists throughout the day. Is this too difficult, too irksome, or too strenuous for some of my brothers who read this? Then spend even five minutes with your eyes open, thinking over some beautiful and true statement, or perhaps some problem or duty in your life. Use prayer with loving confidence in the Eternal Loveliness who is the Father of us all; think of the Lord Christ as a dear and understanding Elder Brother. But never let a day pass that you do not in some small measure keep contact with your higher, divine Self, and through that, with the Eternal Life of the universe.

Let me quote the wise words of the British theologian, Dean Inge:

Without prayer there can be no religion . . . A lifting up of the soul to God; that is one side of it; and a descent of the Spirit of God into the human soul; that is the other side of it . . . Prayer is born of two opposite states of mind, the sense of alienation from the unseen Power which surrounds us, and the desire for communion with it. We desire to open out our minds and hearts that He may fill them. On the Godward side the gates of personality are always open. God redeems and saves us by imparting Himself to us; by changing our wills, enlightening our understandings, and quickening our affections. The soul grows and expands under a regime of prayer as the body under a course of good food and exercise. While the life of the *psyche* seems to be purely individual, that of the *pneuma* seems to be super-individual. "Prayer is the elevation of the mind (or soul) to God." Do not be content with any narrower definition.

Lesson Eleven COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen

Clara Codd's meditation model is a universal pattern. Various religions and healing traditions emphasize one aspect or another, drawing upon a few basic principles. This chapter sounds the keynote of her book, as Clara Codd's life and work revolved around one central theme:

Never let a day pass that you do not in some small measure keep contact with your higher, divine Self, and through that, with the Eternal Life of the universe.

A few preliminary practices, not mentioned in this section, are useful to encourage a calm yet active field for meditation. Entire texts have been written on each one, elaborating on the principles outlined in Clara Codd's earlier chapters. Meditating on these elements of preparation, we sense how they support our own practice.

The first is to look very seriously at our relationships. When the emotions and mind are continuously unsettled by conflict, meditation is impossible. All our relations must tend toward deeper understanding and harmony. Inevitably, things will shift: friendships, food choices, career and colleagues, perhaps a complete change of environment and life work. Through it all, we must fulfill clear obligations well, in a way that inspires humanity as a whole. As each life both reflects and supports the greater journey in a unique way, each must find a healthy balance.

A quiet space that encourages reflection, clean and sparse, whether a separate room or prayer carpet or garden bench, provides an accessible retreat. Sitting meditations of this type require a certain privacy conducive to inner silence, whether one is alone or meditating with others. A

meditation space becomes over time an atmosphere charged with devotion, reverence, and love. As a hungry child seeks nourishment, the sensitive soul inclines toward a time and place of prayer.

Preparation often includes cleansing, burning candles or incense, playing joyous or peaceful music. Such simple rituals have long had a place in prayer. But in time, some turn away from customary routines and meditation forms, which may become attachments, toward a radical freedom. Meditation then becomes a daring inquiry, a bare-bones approach.

Can we put away all ideas, concepts, and theories and find out for ourselves if there is something sacred—not the word, because the word is not the thing, the description is not the described—to see if there is something real, not an imagination, not something illusory, fanciful, not a myth but a reality that can never be destroyed, a truth that is abiding?

To find that out, to come upon it, all authority of any kind, especially spiritual, must be totally set aside, because authority implies conformity, obedience, acceptance of a certain pattern. A mind must be capable of standing alone, of being a light to itself . . .

J. Krishnamurti, *This Light in Oneself*, Shambhala, 1999, 3

Another preliminary practice for meditation is a supportive posture. The science of posture (asana) and gesture (mudra) is well developed in various Yoga traditions. A seated posture, with spine upright and hands resting lightly in the lap, is stable and said to encourage a balanced flow of subtle energies. The most useful posture is one that offers no distractions; the body is relaxed, comfortable, and alert. Whether the body is at rest or actively engaged as in walking meditation, the mind is free to observe and reflect. The inner side of posture is the stability of the emotional and mental bodies: calm, balanced, flexible, properly energized, and upright (poised, selfless).

The breath is a great ally in prayer and meditation. Simply attending to the breath, paying attention to its natural rhythm, brings relaxation and insight. Allowing the breath to deepen a little, in a calm way, energizes the whole field of action. Prayers and scriptural passages may be more vivid when synchronized with breath and voice. A wandering mind is gathered in easily with a gentle attention to breathing.

The world of mind and heart, thought and intuitive knowing, is the creative field of the soul. We share this inner world with innumerable other beings, most of whom are invisible intelligences of various kinds. Some are lower in evolution than humanity, not yet self-conscious but aware in their own way. Others are fellow humans no longer embodied physically yet quite alive and active. We may sense the ebb and flow of other lives, or even see their subtle forms. It is easy to be deceived by appearances in the astral and mental worlds. Meditation must carry the soul beyond particular forms, toward the divine ground where the many are One.

Other beings, working consciously in the invisible worlds, are well beyond us in wisdom, love, and creative power. The latter are the Earth's creative hierarchies, including saints, sages, and bodhisattvas who are no longer in physical form. These are among the guardian spirits who guide and protect humanity within karmic law. Human adepts, embodied Masters of Wisdom, are an active part of this brotherhood. Working with such beings depends entirely upon our willingness to live in truthfulness and love, as they do.

Awakening to the spiritual life draws us ever closer to each other and the Holy Ones. “Lifting the heart” in kindly deeds, especially in times of suffering, is a most powerful prayer. These great souls do not seek our worship and praise. Always, they direct our reverence toward the One Life they alone serve. And they have asked, throughout the ages, that we try to lift a little of the world’s suffering.

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. Move through the following Prayer of St. Francis very slowly, in a contemplative way, entering fully into each phase. How does a meditation of this type help us to face and respond effectively to suffering? In what sense here is “dying” essential for one who is an instrument of Peace on earth as in heaven?

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

2. The following invocation is practiced by some theosophical groups to close their study meetings. Members stand in a circle and hold hands. What is the purpose of this prayer form? How else might it be used effectively?

O Powers of Love, we pledge to you our faithfulness,
Knowing that only love can redeem the world.
We invoke your blessing on all who strive to serve you.
We invoke your blessing on all who are enduring suffering, that they may discover their
 enfoldment in your love, even in the midst of their affliction.
We invoke your blessing on all those who are inflicting suffering,
That they may return to you and serve you.

3. J. Krishnamurti asks, “What is the quality of a mind that is completely silent? Not how to achieve silence, how to have peace of mind—we are speaking of the quality of a mind that is absolutely, timelessly silent.” (*This Light in Oneself*, 44)

Clara Codd's *THE TECHNIQUE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

Lesson Twelve: THE METHOD [Part II]

Two other things are needed: deep study for the development of the mind and mental body, and a growing knowledge of oneself, whereby one may learn to understand all others.

Study

No one can tread the Path Home without a clear and spiritualized intelligence. Intelligence is not the same thing as the intellect. The intellect includes a well-stored and logical mind; the intelligence is a *power*, and occult training (as said before) aims at developing *faculty* rather than amassing facts. Therefore choose a book for study which makes one *think*, not just one that is easily read. The method of study has been described in the section on “The Training of the Mind” (Chapter Six). It will make the thinker clear and concise in expression, and will also develop the intuition, or as “The Golden Stairs” puts it, “an unveiled spiritual perception.”

Study also the world-trends of today. For the Masters of the Wisdom are intensely preoccupied with the problems of bringing the whole of humanity safely into the dawning Aquarian Age. Sir Francis Bacon said in his youth, “I have taken all knowledge to be my province.” The aspirant could well say, “I have taken all humanity to be my sphere of interest and service.”

Self-Knowledge

Over a Temple in ancient Greece were inscribed the words: “Man, know thyself, and thou shalt know the universe and God.” If we can learn to know, to control and guide ourselves, we have the key to the understanding and helping of all others, for we are all of exactly the same nature under our skins. Therefore all inner schools of thought have always recommended a time every day when the aspirant examined his day with all its motives and acts, especially in their effects upon others. Benjamin Franklin looked back over his life every day with a special eye to the particular virtue he was practicing that week. The majority of us know very little about ourselves, and very many people would be completely astonished if they could see themselves clearly. But the would-be occultist must learn to do just that, absolutely, dispassionately, without blame or self-satisfaction, learning to know “human nature” and what makes it act.

The occultist is a super-psychologist. He or she has an understanding heart, and studies the greatest of all books—the great Book of Life. Self-examination is best done regularly once a day, or (at minimum) once a week, noticing in particular:

1. The type of thoughts;
2. One's desires and motives;
3. Your words and actions—were they true, necessary, and kind?
4. The problems and events of your environment and their lessons to you as a developing soul, adding to your strength of purpose and endurance, your power of decision, and your ability to spontaneously sacrifice your own comfort, pleasure, and success for the welfare of others.

Not that we should “wallow in unselfishness,” or weakly give way to others on all occasions. When a thing is right and we know it, we should not let ourselves be deflected by the objections, opinions, and desires of others. If we are gently but firmly determined, most people will give way and bear us no grudge.

There is always one thing to be guarded against in the habit of self-analysis and self-review. We must never, never let ourselves become self-centered, or develop the ecclesiastical failing of “scruples.” The robust common sense of the great Teresa comes to our aid here. She writes: “It is a great grace of God to practice self-examination; but too much is as bad as too little, as they say. Believe me, by God’s help, we shall advance more by contemplating the Divinity than by keeping our eyes fixed on ourselves.”

That is why we must learn to look on ourselves with the dispassion of a complete stranger, and never be led into either anxiety or remorse. Both anxiety and remorse are a serious wastage of power. With anxiety, we lose energy by focusing on the future; with remorse, our force is dissipated by focusing on the past, and thus the personality in the present is depleted. Egotism is the real root of both. So an ancient scripture says: “Never be sorry, regret nothing, but cut all doubts with the sword of knowledge.” I can assure my readers that if for a moment one can become in consciousness the Higher, Radiant, Impersonal Self, anxiety, remorse and indecision will disappear like mists before the morning sun.

Dr. Rudolf Steiner has some wise words on this subject in his book *An Outline of Occult Science*:

Anyone who can acquire the habit of frequently entering into the quiet of his own soul, and who, instead of worrying about himself, utilizes such time for the transforming and ordering of those experiences he has had in life, will gain much. For he will perceive that thoughts and feelings become richer by bringing life’s experiences into connection with each other. He will become aware that he gains stores of new knowledge, not only through new impressions and new experiences, but also by letting the old be digested within him.

He who is able to set to work and to ponder the value of experience—nay, even the opinions he may have formed—doing so in such a manner as to exclude himself, together with his sympathies and antipathies, his personal interests, and his feelings, will indeed be doing much to prepare the ground for knowledge of the supersensual kind, and he will in very truth be cultivating what may be called a rich inner life.

So much wisdom and power lie in living just one minute at a time, forgetting the past, and never calculating about the future for oneself. Only try it. The happiness and power that at once inspires the personality are almost unbelievable. A Sanskrit scripture has a lovely hymn called “Salutation of the Dawn”:

Look to this Day, for it is life,
Within its brief span lie all the Verities
And Realities of your existence;
The Bliss of Growth,
The Glory of Action,
The Splendour of Beauty.

Yesterday is but a dream,
Tomorrow is but a vision,
But today well lived makes every
Yesterday seem a dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a Vision of Hope.
Look well, therefore, to this Day,
This is the Salutation of the Dawn.

(Author unknown)

The poet Goethe said that every morning he began life anew. How wise he was!

Establish a goal and stick to it year after year—a spiritual goal. We are, in the words of the old hymn, “a day’s march nearer home.” Life is always our friend, and death as great and lovely a friend, bringing to our tired souls the blessed anodyne of peace and love. “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” says our divine Self to its lesser representative, “enter thou into the joy [really the ‘shining,’ the ‘radiance’] of thy Lord.”

One result of getting hold of ourselves, of being able to discipline and deny ourselves, is the growth of dignity and poise, and hence the respect of others, though this is not a main aim. The true and honest spiritual person does not feed his or her personal pride. One should always be willing to acknowledge one’s faults, and to repair them if one can, even at the cost of the greatest humiliation and pain to oneself. Resentment and deceit do not belong to the spiritual life. All this is summed up in the beautiful words of *Light on the Path*: “Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears [of self-pity] . . . Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters, its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.”

The greatest asset we have in life is the integrity and illumination of our own character. Its quality and growth not only render our own life purposeful and inspiring, but are also, by radiation, our greatest gift to our environment and to our fellow-human beings. “What you *are*,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson, “speaks so loudly to me that I cannot hear what you *say*.” Life is slowly evolving us all. Every event is framed towards the glorious goal of our existence. “Karma” is the Will-of-God, the Will-to-good, in action, leading us to the lovely far-off event towards which our whole being moves.

Dr. Alexis Carrel has something very pertinent to say here.

One must accustom oneself to distinguish between light and darkness. Then one must impose upon oneself the duty of avoiding evil and doing good . . . The most effective way to live reasonably is every morning to make a plan of one’s day and every night to examine the results obtained . . . We should plan ahead what help we can give to others, how we can discourage the spite and malice in our midst, how we can fight our own selfishness and churlishness, and how we can curb our tendency to over-indulgence . . . And just as the tradesman keeps his account books, so every individual ought to register every day the good and evil for which he has been responsible. Above all he should record the amount of joy and sorrow, anxiety or peace, hate or love which he has given to his family and his neighbours. It is by the patient application of these techniques that the transformation of our bodies and souls will gradually become a reality . . . We must observe how far we have carried out our

programme and how we have disobeyed the rules we have set ourselves . . . Thus we strengthen the intelligence and the will.

Love and Service

We shall not reach the goal by thought and meditation alone. It must be balanced by the love and service of all life around us. This includes not only the people we love, but also the people we perhaps do not love, but who are in need; and still further, all the kingdoms of nature, even the flowers and inanimate objects. To the spiritually awakened individual there is nothing “common” or “unclean.” He cannot do otherwise than treat everything with respect and gentleness. “Mary and Martha” are the twin-aspects of our souls. Whilst Mary in us gazes heavenwards, Martha lovingly serves. We begin with serving unobtrusively all those around us and that service does not consist in telling people what to do, or officiously taking decisions and actions out of their hands. This is pure egotism. Sometimes the only service possible is our own silent attitude of mind. It is not service to make others “good”; it is better to make them happy if we legitimately can.

After our charity has begun at home, let us expand its field of influence, and become interested in the welfare and happiness of our town and country and of all humanity. The Master wants a dedicated channel of his purposes and compassion amongst humanity, if we can qualify as such.

Lastly, do not be afraid of sorrow and pain. Grasp your friend Life bravely by the hand. Its sternest lessons become a smile of love. “Suffering is given to every mortal—but only a few know that it is the most precious gift of the Gods.” Only two things in the world really matter: love and courage. Never forget that.

This is the road of the love of God and the love of humanity. As our Lord Christ said, it covers all the Commandments. It is the road to true happiness and power, for no person is truly happy unless they are doing what their own innermost soul desires them to do. Find out what that is, and remember that, valuable as the advice of the truly wise is, no one can tell us that but our own Soul. Let us learn to listen and to find the way ourselves.

There is a little book that will help us beyond all others in this matter of how to live. Some spiritual treatises are mystical and some ascetic or ethical. To this latter category belongs *At the Feet of the Master* by J. Krishnamurti. Read it, ponder on it, live by it. No better guide was ever written. Something like it in Christian terminology is the well-known *Imitation of Christ*.

Final Words

A Hindu saint, Ramakrishna, once said that to be a teacher and lecturer many books must be studied, but that to reach God one thought alone, dwelt on throughout one’s life, was sufficient. Here is the “one thought” as I can conceive of it:

I am the Soul and not the body. Every minute, every hour, every day, every year, even every life, I am steadily walking the road Home to the Eternal Beauty. Every morning I kneel before the Shrine within, before the golden veil which hides the excess of His Glory. One day it will thin and reveal His Loveliness. All day long I am that Soul. My threefold personality is a passing, ever-changing thing. Patiently, unwearingly, I try to understand this ‘shadow,’ to control it, to use it in service to bear sweetly with all that may happen to it, to claim no possessions for it, physical or mental; slowly to make it the pure, clear crystal vase through which the Light of my True Self may shine. As I

tread this long, long road, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, year by year, I ask no reward, place no time-limit. For in His will, the Ever-Lovely, the Eternal, the Beloved, lies our peace and our eternal well-being. In that Love I rest for evermore. Along this road I will reach that wisdom, that understanding, that loving heart, which will enable me to bring to all others the inspiration, the comfort, the strength, the joy which lie only in Him. May I ever remember that 'I' am nothing, nothing. The Ever-Lovely is All.

Here is the beautiful prayer of St. Ignatius Loyola:

Teach us, O lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do Thy will.

One last word of warning. So often have I seen people harden by the conscious or unconscious passion for spiritual stature. Ask *nothing*. Do not desire to *be*, or to achieve, anything. Be willing to be yourself, and to wait with patient humility for the coming of the Divine Grace. Only learn to love, to understand, to promote the welfare of others.

As an old Hindu saying goes, "They who never ask anything, but simply love, Thou in their heart abidest for ever, for this is Thy very home."

I will close this section with more words of Dr. Carrel: "Only a very few people achieve spiritual evolution, for it demands a persistent effort of the will . . . But all can set out on this path which, though it must be followed through clouds, leads to the radiance of the heights."

THE CLASSIC MEDITATION OF THE LORD BUDDHA

It is said that one day a monk came to the Lord Buddha and asked Him to show him the way to the Happy Land. "In truth," said the Blessed One, "there is such a paradise, but the country is spiritual, and accessible only to those who are spiritual."

Said the disciple: "Teach me, Lord, the meditations to which I must devote myself in order to let my mind enter into the paradise of the pure land."

The Buddha said: "There are four great meditations. The first meditation is the *meditation of love*, in which you must so adjust your heart that you long for the weal and welfare of all beings, including even the happiness of your enemies. [Good-will]

"The second meditation is the *meditation of pity*, in which you think of all beings in distress, vividly representing in your imagination their sorrows and anxieties so as to arouse a deep compassion for them in your soul. [Compassion for others]

"The third meditation is the *meditation of joy*, in which you think of the prosperity of others and rejoice with their rejoicings. [Sharing the joy of others]

"The fourth meditation is the *meditation on serenity*, in which you rise above love and hate, tyranny and oppression, wealth and want, and regard your own fate with impartial calmness and perfect tranquility." [Happy equanimity]

Lesson Twelve COMMENTARY by Maria Parisen:

Clara Codd emphasizes how “intelligence is a *power*, and occult training ... aims at developing *faculty* rather than amassing facts.” Only intuitive knowing, the wise application of knowledge, renews individual and community alike. Clarity of vision, precise and timely communication, and cooperative action—all lead naturally to helpful change. As the purpose of occult training is solely to forward human evolution, thus to promote the unfolding of all life, study along these lines requires an engagement of the whole self.

Life itself is the teacher; each encounter and circumstance is the perfect time for learning. The wide range of such study is outlined here, as it has been given through the ages. Attending this school for human evolution is obligatory. We have already signed in by incarnating at this time for a particular, significant work. But the choice whether to pay attention, to do the required fieldwork and assignments, is ours alone.

In occultism the book of life is the one to which we turn our chief attention. We study other books merely in order that we may live...it is the life and not the knowledge, the purified heart, not the well-filled head, that leads us to our Master's Feet....Where there is not calm self-mastery, indifference to personal matters, serene devotion to work for others, there is no true occultism, no really spiritual life.

Annie Besant, *The Doctrine of the Heart*. TPH, 1978, 15,18

As has been noted previously, the human heart plays a central role in spirituality, symbolizing the empathy and self-sacrifice inseparable from higher intelligence. “Lift up your hearts...” is the traditional invitation to center ourselves in friendship, reverence, gratitude, and courage. Powers of the heart enable us to expand in wisdom through and for community. They become a way of being in the world no matter what circumstances prevail, as the means by which we learn and grow.

Madame Blavatsky advised her students to center consciousness continually in the heart, to listen there for the promptings of the spiritual consciousness. She was not referring to the physical heart, but to a deeper reality. HPB explained that of the principal human centers (chakras), the head or psychic center is often predominant or “positive” in relation to the heart. Most of us equate intelligence with thinking and psychic phenomena, thus impressions flow primarily from brain to heart. But practice can change this polarity, rendering the heart “positive” with respect to the psychic centers. We can begin to live from the heart, rather than from the head. According to HPB, when the heart's deep internal memories and ways are accessed, consciousness expands beyond personal boundaries.

The Eastern Secret School knows each minute portion of the Heart, and has a name for each portion. It calls them by the names of the Gods, as Brahma's Hall, Vishnu's Hall, and so on. Each of these corresponds with a part of the Brain. The student will now begin to understand why so much stress is laid on the Heart in connection with meditation, and why so many allusions are made in old Hindu literature to the Purusha in the Heart ...

HPB, *Collected Writings*, XII: 696.

Consciousness research in the West, focused for decades on the brain, is turning its attention to the heart as a primary mediator of perception. The electromagnetic field of the human heart is 5,000 times stronger than the brain's. Strongest up to 18 inches from the body's surface, this field continues indefinitely into space, much like radio waves. Researchers note that when two heart

fields oscillate in unison, a rapid exchange of information takes place, as in a dialogue. When the heart-field of a healer and patient meet, studies suggest that “the heart field of the healer literally paces the patient into new patterns of health.” (S.H. Buhner. “The Heart as an Organ of Perception,” *Spirituality and Health*, Mar-Apr, 2006, 40.

Studies show that the heart is directly connected to brain centers for emotional memory, sensory experience, sensory meaning, problem solving, reasoning, and learning. Heart coherence, a state in which an individual’s heart rhythm entrains or paces brain activity, leads to changes in perception. Centering in the heart allows information to flow through the heart first, then to impress the brain for translation and retention. Through such interaction, similar to the positive heart-head polarity described by HPB, an “unveiled spiritual perception” may become possible.

As brain function changes, so does what we see and learn. What people perceive when they live from the heart is quite different from what they perceive when they live in the head. In coherence, a whole new world opens, and things not normally perceived become commonplace.

When someone in a state of heart coherence allows his or her heart field to entrain or merge with another EM field, the rapid download of information between the organisms happens naturally ... a direct conveyance of meaning without language ... This interchange, rooted in our hearts, alters our lives, shapes its quality, reminds us that we are never alone. It reconnects us to the ground of being from which we come and nurtures us in a natural empathy with the world around us. (Buhner, 41)

We have come into incarnation during a world period of great turmoil. The conflict and violence are deeply rooted in human nature, not imposed on us from without. Centering in the heart, we may touch suffering directly, understanding the great causal connections without becoming entangled. Neurologically, the heart is connected with brain centers for such tendencies as revenge as well with centers for forgiveness. Heart-centered meditation and inquiry necessarily invokes all that needs to be understood, energized, or resolved. Metaphysically, the heart is at once a place of dynamic transformation and a silent refuge, a citadel of peace.

In his hours of silent meditation the student will find that there is one space of silence within where he can find refuge from thoughts and desires, from the turmoil of the sense and the delusions of the mind. By sinking his consciousness deep into his heart he can reach this place—at first only when he is alone in silence and darkness. But when the need for silence has grown great enough, he will turn to seek it even in the midst of the struggle with self, and he will find it ...

HPB. *Collected Writings*, VIII: 127-9.

Centering in the heart is not for self-benefit, but to bring a different quality of awareness to all we do, and to everyone we touch. Heart-centered perception involves feeling and energy patterns, intuitive impressions, and thought imagery. All blend in a wholeness of perception and action. Beings who radiate affection and care naturally entrain others, reinforcing the good, though the beneficent influence may not be felt consciously or be apparent outwardly.

Sound spiritual practice helps us realize how deeply we influence, and are influenced by, all other beings. Studies have shown that simply witnessing a spontaneous good deed “elevates” our consciousness, whether or not we enjoy other benefits. It matters not who is the caregiver; tender, heroic animals inspire as well as human and angelic helpers. Our tears of gratitude, wonder and inspiration, a sudden knowing, the touch of Self, all flow from that spirit of solidarity which

energizes all goodness. Selfless acts draw us into the heart of caring where higher education begins.

—Thoughts for Consideration

1. The following “Coherence” exercise helps to release stress, balance the emotions, and enhance well-being. Practice it for 5 minutes daily for one week and observe. Gently shift your attention to the area around your heart. Shift your breathing; breathe in through the heart and out through the solar plexus. Activate a genuine feeling of appreciation for someone or something in your life. Sustain the feelings of appreciation or love while radiating them to self and others. When your mind wanders, gently focus your breathing back through the heart and solar plexus and reconnect with feelings of care or appreciation. After you’ve finished, sustain these feelings as long as you can.

J. Kamp, “A Change of Heart Changes Everything,” *Ode*, June 2005, 27.
See also www.heartmath.org for HeartMath’s scientific research.

2. The following practice engages heart intelligence in a different way. Experiment with it in different settings and in various encounters.

Focus on a natural object: plant, flower, or fruit. Note its appearance, colors and shadings. Immerse yourself in its sensory aspects. Continue to look at the object before you, asking “What does it feel like?” This activates the heart as an organ of perception and helps to shift your attention to the object’s electromagnetic field. You will experience a unique feeling-complex, not easily named, as the object’s EM signature moves through your heart. Allow the feeling to fill you. Breathe through and with the feeling while focusing on the object. Notice how your breathing slows, your vision slips into softer focus, colors seem to brighten, and your body relaxes. These physiological shifts always accompany the movement into heart-centered perception. Reach out with your heart field and hold the object in front of you. Feel a sense of caring for it. As you do this, the two fields will entrain and you will feel a flow of energy between yourself and it. If you do this with a plant, you might ask it to tell you about itself. George Washington Carver once said, “Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough.” (Buhner, 43)

3. The last chapter of Clara Codd’s *The Technique of the Spiritual Life* consists solely of a meditation practiced daily in some Buddhist traditions: four sublime states of mind to lead toward eternal happiness. These states of consciousness align us with the highest creative forces within and around us. A traditional form is added to the one given in her text, in each section. Note how mind and heart are completely integrated in this practice.

Benevolence

The first meditation is the meditation of love, in which you must so adjust your heart that you long for the weal and welfare of all beings, including even the happiness of your enemies.

- Here, with thoughts of benevolence, one pervades first one direction, then a second direction, then a third direction, then a fourth direction, then above, then below, then all

around. Identifying oneself with all, one pervades the entire universe with thoughts of benevolence, with heart grown great, wide, deep boundless, purified of all ill will.

Compassion

The second meditation is the meditation of pity, in which you think of all beings in distress, vividly representing in your imagination their sorrows and anxieties so as to arouse a deep compassion for them in your soul.

- Here, with thoughts of compassion, one pervades first one direction ...then a second ...then a third ...then a fourth direction, then above, below, then all around. Identifying oneself with all, one pervades the entire universe with thoughts of compassion, with heart grown great, wide, deep, boundless, purified of all ill will.

Joyous Sympathy

The third meditation is the meditation of joy, in which you think of the prosperity of others and rejoice with their rejoicings.

- Here, with thoughts of joyous sympathy, one pervades first one direction, then a second ...then a third ...then a fourth direction, then above, below, then all around. Identifying oneself with all, one pervades the entire universe with thoughts of joyous sympathy, with heart grown great, wide, deep, boundless, purified of all ill will.

Equanimity

The fourth meditation is the meditation on serenity, in which you rise above love and hate, tyranny and oppression, wealth and want, and regard your own fate with impartial calmness and perfect tranquility.

- Here, with thoughts of equanimity, one pervades first one direction, then a second ...then a third ...then a fourth direction, then above, below, then all around. Identifying oneself with all, one pervades the entire universe with thoughts of equanimity, with heart grown great, wide, deep, boundless, purified of all ill will.
