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## A Reflection on *The Voice of the Silence*, No. 7

“When to himself his form appears unreal . . .”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

John Ruskin, the Victorian art critic and contemporary of H. P. Blavatsky, once said, “To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion all in one.” It seems to me that Ruskin’s observation can be related to spirituality. A truly spiritual life—and not one that is merely pious or perfunctory—contains not only great depth and intense devotion, but acute clarity of vision. By clarity of vision, I’m not suggesting the seeing of angels and auras and halos, but rather the ability to distinguish between the peripheral and the essential, the personal and the impersonal, the passing and the timeless. In the old Sanskrit writings, the sages describe this ability by the term *viveka*, for which the English translation is *discriminative wisdom*. For the person living a sanctified life, seeing clearly must surely reveal the beauty of life, the oneness of life, and the arc of evolutionary unfoldment.

In HPB’s wonderful spiritual guidebook, *The Voice of the Silence*, the ability to see clearly is one of the preliminary requirements put forth. Again and again, the aspirant is warned of two dangers, *illusion* and *delusion*, both of which involve a distortion in the perception of reality, thus masking the truth of what is. While illusions involve distortions deriving from outer conditions (*i.e.*, the appearance of a non-existent oasis in the distant desert sands), delusions involve those arising from the mind itself (the notion that I am the reincarnation of Napoleon, Caesar, or John the Baptist, depending on what day of the week it happens to be). Both are potential pitfalls that must be recognized and overcome.

According to *The Voice*, if the disciple identifies with his or her physical body (referred to as the *form*); if he thinks himself to be this temporary personality (referred to as a passing *shadow*); if she shrinks from pain and sighs for pleasure (revealing a lack of inner equilibrium); if he sees himself as the center of the universe (whether unconsciously or not); then the disciple truly “is caught in the webs of delusion” and must struggle to be free of these “dark garments” before proceeding on the path. When this has been accomplished and clarity of vision established, “then to the inner ear will speak THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE.”

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