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A Reflection on *The Voice of the Silence*, No. 9

“If thy soul smiles while bathing in the sunlight of thy life; if thy soul sings within her chrysalis of flesh and matter; if thy soul weeps insider her castle of illusion; if thy soul struggles to break the silver thread that binds her to the Master, know, O disciple, thy soul is of the earth.” —*The Voice of the Silence*

In this passage the disciple is presented with a set of four conditions and is asked to consider whether any of them apply. If the fledgling disciple is honest, he will most likely identify with one or more of them, taking that recognition as an indication of more work to be done in terms of self-transformation. One cannot become a “Walker of the Sky” or ride the great “Bird of Life” if one’s soul is bound by earthly interests. Let us now consider the four scenarios given and how they may be interpreted.

The first two phrases from the above citation represent pleasure (smiling and singing), while the latter two are indicative of pain (weeping and struggling). Pleasure and pain are often referred to in Eastern philosophy as the pairs of opposites. These are polarities that all human beings experience, often alternating between them like the pendulum of a clock. Unfortunately, if our personal happiness is dependent upon outer circumstances, *i.e.*, those times when everything seems to be going in our favor, then it rests upon shaky ground. Moreover, when we allow ourselves to become self-absorbed in our cocoon of self-interest, oblivious to the world and the concerns of others, then our so-called happiness is indeed fragile and tenuous. In terms of pain, we often experience acute suffering when reality intrudes upon the illusions we have eagerly embraced and nurtured over time. To live in a “castle of illusion” is to live in a veritable prison of our own making. Lastly, the reference to breaking the “silver thread” refers to the epic struggle between the personal and higher Self, a formidable battle that every disciple without exception must face.

To be earthbound is to be vulnerable to the push and pull of pleasure and pain, forever tossed to and fro by these agents of desire, unable to rise above one’s personal nature and enter the hall of wisdom “wherein all shadows are unknown, and where the light of truth shines with unfading glory.” This is the reason why many spiritual guidebooks emphasize the necessity of developing non-attachment, discernment, and self-control.

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