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A Reflection on *the Voice of the Silence*, No. 12

“Have perseverance as one who doth for evermore endure.”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

The Voice of the Silence makes no attempt to minimize the challenges associated with treading the path. Its vivid descriptions of the potential pitfalls faced by the aspirant may seem exaggerated to some, especially if they have had no experience with that way of life. Still others may feel discouraged, or even intimidated, by stark admonitions such as “long and weary is the way before thee,” or “the more thou dost advance, the more thy feet pitfalls will meet.” However, *The Voice* also contains passages marked by buoyant enthusiasm, such as “the more one dares, the more he shall obtain,” or “each sincere attempt wins its reward in time.” Throughout the book, a judicious balance is struck between sober words of caution and those conveying cheerful optimism.

Perseverance is universally considered to be an admirable quality and for good reason. Without it, we are likely to fall short of attaining our goals or realizing our most cherished dreams. Lacking perseverance, a budding author fails to find a publisher for her first book and forgoes a promising career; a talented young actor becomes discouraged after a few failed auditions and settles for a boring day job; an overconfident and unprepared high school senior scores poorly on the college SAT test, thus limiting her options for college. By any measure of worldly success, perseverance is an essential character trait, but its utility in the life of the spiritual aspirant is not to be overlooked or diminished.

The Voice of the Silence instructs the disciple to master the *Paramitas*, or supreme virtues. If my mind is accustomed to drifting from one thought to another, it is a safe bet that I will have difficulty with *Dharana* (intense concentration). If the love of instant gratification and desire for quick results describes my personality, it should be no surprise that I will have difficulty mastering *Kshanti* (unruffled patience). If I am overly sensitive and bristle at the least critical remark, then I will struggle learning *Vairaga* (indifference to pleasure and pain). The force of habit is strong, and I may grow weary in my efforts. Originally, I may have been motivated by high spiritual ideals, but the magnitude of the task raises doubts, and like the poet John Keats, I may sigh with resignation: “Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art.” It is in moments like this that we would do well to recall these encouraging words from *The Voice of the Silence*: “That which in thee shall live ever . . . is not of fleeting life: it is the man that was, that is, and will be, and for whom the hour shall never strike.”

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