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A Reflection on *the Voice of the Silence*, No. 14

“Chafe not at Karma nor at Nature’s changeless laws.”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

What are commonly referred to as “the laws of the land,” though necessary for the smooth functioning of a civil society, are in fact mutable, sometimes arbitrary, and often circumscribed, which is to say, limited in jurisdiction to the city, state, or nation that has adopted them. Nature’s laws bear none of those characteristics, being neither transitory, nor whimsical, nor parochial. The force of gravity works no differently in Barcelona than in Salt Lake City, nor can it be repealed by a tyrant or amended by any legislative body or head of state. If you jump off the Golden Gate Bridge, gravity does its work and does not discriminate on the basis of your age, gender, or social standing.

John Stuart Mill, in his essay “On Nature,” offers some insights that are apropos:

No word is more commonly associated with the word “nature” than “law”; and this last word has distinctly two meanings, in one of which it denotes some definite portion of what is, in the other of what ought to be. We speak of the law of gravitation, the three laws of motion, the law of definite proportions in chemical combination, the vital laws of organized beings. All these are portions of what is. We also speak of criminal law, the civil law, the law of honor, the law of veracity, the law of justice; all of which are portions of what ought to be, or of somebody’s suppositions, feelings, or commands respecting what ought to be.

We may complain about man-made laws that we dislike or that seem unjust, but man-made laws can be changed, improved, or even done away with. By contrast, the laws of nature are eternal, immutable, and impartial. Through centuries of careful observation and testing, scientists have discovered and given names to a great many of them. J. S. Mill describes these laws as “neither more nor less than the observed uniformities in the occurrence of phenomena; partly uniformities of antecedence and sequence, partly of concomitance.”

Theosophy informs us that there are subtle realms of Nature, undetectable even by the amazing instruments of modern science. These unseen worlds are also governed by laws, often described in our literature as occult, or hidden. Their existence has been perceived by the ancient Rishis and Yogis, who, through intense training in yogic disciplines, utilized the highest faculties of human consciousness to probe this unseen dimension of Nature. And one of the foundational laws that they discovered is called Karma. In a grand and sweeping statement, Blavatsky described Karma as “the Ultimate Law of the Universe, the source, the origin and the fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature” (*The Key to Theosophy*). If such a statement moves us to deep reflection, perhaps the most appropriate response would be one of awe, wonder, and humility.

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