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## A Reflection on *the Voice of the Silence*, No. 22

“Beware, lest dazzled by illusive radiance thy soul should linger and be caught in its deceptive light.” —*The Voice of the Silence*

Here’s a simple exercise. Take a sheet of paper and draw a line straight down the middle. In the first column make a list of things you consider to be beautiful. In the second column list those things that you consider to be glamorous. As a guideline, let us suggest that true beauty loses none of its charm over time; and glamor, which at first appears exciting and novel, eventually reveals itself to be superficial and hollow. So here is the question. If you had made this list ten or twenty years ago, would your answers have been the same? Would some items now in the second column have appeared then in the first? And if this is the case, how do you account for your change of perspective?

This month’s verse sounds a cautionary note regarding the Hall of Learning, a metaphor in *The Voice* used to designate a certain stage of growth. Here aspirants learn—among other things—to gain self-control over their desire nature. As Annie Besant observed, emotions and feelings are powerful forces in the lives of virtually every human being:

The life of sensation is the greater part of the life of the majority. For those below the average, this life of sensation is the whole life. For a few advanced beings this life of sensation is transcended. The vast majority occupy the various stages which stretch between the life of sensation and that which has transcended such sensation: stages of mixed sensation, emotion and thought in diverse proportions.

Few individuals are capable of living a life without being swayed by the pleasure seeking principle. Those on the spiritual path have graduated from that sector of humanity where pleasing sensations are the end-all and be-all of existence. They find themselves in an intermediary state, aspiring to lofty and selfless goals but still susceptible to the temptations of sensual pleasures and personal vanities. What is needed at this stage is the sword of spiritual discrimination, *viveka*, which is spoken of in chapter one of *At the Feet of the Master*. Unlike a sword of steel whose blade dulls with repeated use, the sword of discriminative wisdom is honed to a razor-sharp edge when consistently applied as a means of severing our emotional bonds from the deceptive lure of shallow and short-lived attractions.

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