



THE UPPER TRIAD

SET NUMBER 5

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THE UPPER TRIAD

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Commentaries and quotations printed in the journal are intended to stimulate constructive thinking and further study along spiritual lines. Each thought may be accepted, deferred, or rejected, in whole or in part, according to the perspective of the reader.

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SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. THE UNITY OF ALL LIFE. That there exists one God, both immanent and transcendent, within which are differentiated all lives and all forms.

2. THE PURPOSE OF LIFE. That the purpose of life is the evolution of consciousness through experience and expression. That all life is conditioned by purpose within a grand scheme of progressive cyclic evolution.

3. REINCARNATION AND KARMA. That human evolution proceeds through many progressive incarnations according to a cosmic law of periodicity, ever onward and upward. That life is conditioned by the Great Teacher, the Law of Karma, which yields learning experiences and encourages evolution as a consequence of free will, through every thought, feeling, and action.

4. THE NATURE OF TRUTH. That truth can be found in philosophy, religion, and science, which are but aspects of one coherent and inclusive truth having no inherent conflict or contradiction. That there are many paths to God, embracing all religions and spiritual philosophy. That truth is relative and can be perceived in many ways and on many levels, according to consciousness.

5. THE PROBLEM OF LIFE. That the real problem of life in the lower worlds is the elimination of glamour and illusion. That glamour and illusion can be fully overcome, as the student achieves the alignment of a purified and integrated personality with the soul, through intelligent meditation.

6. PERSONALITY AND SOUL. That the true individuality is the soul which inhabits the personality. That the personality is composed of three interrelated instruments: the physical body, the emotional or astral body, and the lower mind. That the soul is the essence of the divinity within.

7. THE SPIRITUAL PATH. That the spiritual path in its many aspects embraces the higher stages of human evolution, as the human soul takes its stand and commits itself to conscious and selfless development. That this process encompasses the development of the inner, latent spirituality and the application of one's faculties in service to God and to humanity.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 81 - HAPPINESS

Happiness is a sense of well-being and contentment, but happiness can vary in degree and quality depending upon the basis for happiness and its effect on the personality. From a spiritual perspective, happiness can be either artificial or real (or somewhere in between). Artificial happiness is a sense of well-being that is based on the fulfillment of desire. That fulfillment may be material, financial, phenomenal, emotional, or even mental. There is a degree of glamour or illusion associated with any sense of artificial happiness, happiness based on lower-world values or personality (ego) values. True (real) happiness is founded in spiritual quality.

Happiness that is an expression or result of harmony between mind and soul is a relatively permanent quality, whereas happiness that is based on pleasure or lower-world values is only temporary (and therefore unreal, in the stricter sense). Real happiness is not a distracting emotional quality but a soul quality that comes as a consequence of purified (serene) emotions and a steady mind responsive to inner (higher) spiritual impression. It is a quiet, peaceful feeling of joy that is dependent only upon the inner self (the soul) and its relationship to the personality. Artificial happiness depends on the winds and tides of (apparent) fortune which may come and go and vary with circumstances.

Artificial happiness is rooted in selfishness. Real happiness is rooted in unselfishness. Lasting happiness cannot be attained through seeking; it can only be 'attained' through being. Even the spiritual student is vulnerable to a certain extent to artificial happiness, for wherever there is a good (but uncontrolled) emotional response, there is a temporary lessening of (interference with) spiritual poise. The aspirant is expected to be happy in the quiet sense of inner peace and joy. The aspirant is not expected to be excitable or even enthusiastic to the extent that the emotions are involuntary or undisciplined. Where there is true happiness, there are the higher (refined) emotions of aspiration, devotion, humility, peace, and serenity. With the spiritual discipline comes the inner confidence in a greater reality that is unmoved by circumstances. Where there is the natural (spiritual) feeling of compassion and identification with the soul and with humanity, there is also the natural demonstration of goodwill and quiet cheerfulness so characteristic of the true happiness. Such happiness cannot be deterred by (apparent) misfortune or other worldly events, personal or otherwise.

With discernment comes clarification (in relative terms) concerning pleasure, happiness, joy, bliss, samadhi, and nirvana. Pleasure implies the phenomenal or personality-centered fulfillment of desire. Happiness is an overall sense of well-being of widely varying basis. Joy can imply excitement (pleasurable loss of self-control) or it can imply the quiet peace and inner (real) happiness. In the Eastern tradition, bliss implies complete happiness; samadhi is a mystical (higher) meditative state; and nirvana implies heavenly liberation, a final beatitude and a state of oblivion. In the higher sense (in the Eastern esoteric tradition), bliss is an unemotional, impersonal, and abstract experience that involves soul-consciousness; samadhi means self-mastery; and nirvana implies an exceptionally abstract and impersonal state of consciousness, beyond that of the individuality-consciousness, where the soul is absorbed by the absolute consciousness (beyond perfection). Each of these terms points in some way to a degree of spiritual maturity, a maturity through which (necessarily) should the real happiness be manifested. For such happiness is the response of a purified personality to the true nature of the (higher) heaven worlds.

The story of Noah and the flood is a story of preparation, transition (migration), and new beginnings, on several levels. In cosmic, solar, and planetary terms it is the story of the gathering (abstraction) of experience to be carried over into the next cycle of activity, the gathering of seeds for further development. The evolved archetypes and patterns of life-forms are saved (withdrawn to safety), the forms are destroyed, but the life remains (on its level). On another level is described the human transition which is called death: the ascent and descent of human consciousness in preparation for a new birth. The old forms (bodies) are discarded and new forms are created from the fruits of past experience. The story of Noah also describes symbolically the end of Atlantis and the beginnings of the fifth (Aryan) root-race.

Whenever old forms crystalize and become unresponsive to further spiritual (evolutionary) impulse, they are destroyed so that new, more flexible, more responsive forms may be created and utilized. Such is the case on all levels of manifestation. The Atlantean civilization had declined and degenerated such that only a few were still spiritually responsive. Noah and his family represent those few (generically), the remnants of the Atlanteans who were saved by migration and prepared for a new beginning, and from which the Aryan root-race was developed. The flood described was the fourth and final cataclysm which destroyed the old Atlantean continent. The migrations from Atlantis provided for a rebirth of the Atlantean mystery schools in Egypt, Chaldea, and India. And the liberated souls (freed from the old forms) were then able to incarnate as new Aryan bodies were provided for further development.

The story of Noah is filled with numerological and linguistic symbology. The forty days and forty nights symbolize foundation and preparation. The ark is a vehicle of higher consciousness (the causal body). The raven and the dove represent the lower self (intellect) and higher self (intuition) respectively. The (purely symbolic) animal sacrifices refer to the purification (burning) of the animal nature in man. The covenant refers to the link between God (the Monad) and man (the soul and its reflection, the mind), and to the link or thread of life between the various cycles. The names of the descendants of Noah (and in subsequent genealogies) offer further insight into the nature of man and his enlightenment.

The story of the Tower of Babel is the story of the diversification of humanity from an original unified race into various sub-races and branch-races (and individualism), each with its own language and particular experience. The east represents the unified source of light and spiritual perception. The lower plain implies lower (external)(objective) consciousness, materialism, and intellect, all of which must be transformed before higher consciousness can be made manifest. At the conclusion of diversification, humanity (and all life) shall return again to the unified source.

The story of Abraham considers the great journey of spiritual unfoldment. Each major event in the life-story of Abraham marks a stage or step upon the spiritual path. The tests and trials are many, as the disciple progresses. Each place and each person in the story has its symbolic value. Ur in Chaldea represents the light of the mysteries. Egypt represents darkness and materialism. Palestine represents spiritual consciousness (the promised land). Lot denotes the lower nature from which Abraham withdraws. Lot is finally redeemed (purified and disciplined). And the mystic marriage of feminine and masculine principles is consummated and consciousness is exalted.

The fourth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Jnana Karma Sanyasa Yoga, the yoga of renunciation of action in knowledge. Therein Krishna discusses the nature of the divine incarnation, knowledge of God, action and inaction, works as sacrifice, and transcendent wisdom. The teaching presents itself on several levels as Krishna represents the life and consciousness of cosmic intelligence as well as that of a soul within a chain of spiritual teachers who share in a common source of consciousness and purpose. Krishna also represents the mature soul of the disciple. The soul or spirit remains unborn (on its level) while the personality or manifestation of the soul (or cosmos) makes its temporal appearance in the objective world.

From time to time throughout the ages of man, highly evolved souls (Sons of God) are made manifest in response to the spiritual needs of humanity (or a segment thereof). Each of these great teachers releases a renewed spiritual impulse of encouragement. Though the outer teaching may vary with the circumstances, the inner teachings of each dispensation resonate with a common source and character. As the spiritual student studies the teachings and begins to participate in the higher consciousness (through meditation), he gradually attains the consciousness of the source. To know God is to share in the divine mode of being. Through such knowledge and participation, the student ultimately becomes the Christ-consciousness, and is no longer required to incarnate, as he is one with the higher (group) life, and is fulfilled (completed)(perfected).

The purpose of the outer teachings of each dispensation is to encourage the spiritual progress of the masses and to hide or veil the inner teachings. The purpose of the inner teachings is to provide the training necessary for aspirants and disciples (spiritual students) to perfect themselves and simultaneously serve humanity. There are so many paths to God, and yet each one has an experience and offering for those who pass that way, and each one ultimately blends with every other in the final stages. The amount of work required for fulfillment is the same on any path, but the intensity of effort and the duration may vary (inversely). Each path involves action and inaction, and in the mystery thereof is the understanding of wisdom.

Action implies becoming, and pertains primarily to the lower life which is in the process of purification and experience. Inaction implies 'being' and pertains to the soul and its greater focal point, the monad. Right action is auspicious work performed in a detached manner, a state of mind in which there exists no bondage of works. Right action places emphasis on how and why rather than what (which presumes some illumination). Discernment is required for an understanding of the relativity of action (mind) and inaction (the Atman), and the implications of reaction.

A secret of action is sacrifice. The spirit of sacrifice (action) is a holy work of self-mastery and humanitarian service. This secret involves the transformation of identification out of the lower self and into the higher self. Wisdom is the fulfillment of works, the identification (and manifestation) of eternal being; whereas ignorance is the identification with phenomenal existence. The sacrifice (detached service) is simply the renunciation of the lower life, replacing it with conformity to the will of God. This (action) breeds enlightenment, destroys doubt, and creates confidence in the inner self. Self-harmony is the key to this truth, as purity in God-consciousness (self-harmony) breeds wisdom transcendent. Thus the warrior (Arjuna)(the aspirant) must arise and meet the challenge of sacrifice in the everlasting yoga.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 84 - MEDITATION TRIANGLES

As the spiritual student progresses in the daily (personal) meditation work, there comes increasing identification with humanity and with the evolutionary purpose or plan of spiritual fulfillment for humanity. As this identification with humanity unfolds, the thoughts of the aspirant turn naturally toward the element of service. One of the opportunities for constructive service is the work of meditation triangles.

The purpose of a meditation triangle is the unified invocation and focused release (distribution) of spiritual energies into the mental atmosphere of the planet. These energies, flowing through the planetary network, encourage the upliftment and transformation of human consciousness. The meditation work is quite simple and the effects are considerable. A triangle requires three people who agree to link up mentally on a daily basis. Appropriate spiritual energies are invoked and visualized as circulating through the three points of the triangle and pouring outward through the network.

The triangle meditation work may be a segment or part of the regular daily meditation work or it can be performed as an additional (informal) meditation period of a few minutes duration. It is not necessary for each member of the triangle to perform the work at the same time (or in the same place), for once the triangle is established, it can be activated by any one of the three members. The first stage in the triangle meditation is the visualization or activation of the triangle. The second stage is the pondering upon a seed thought of some appropriate virtue or quality and the invocation of the energies of light and goodwill, visualizing the energies as circulating through the triangle (clockwise). The third stage is the sounding (verbally or mentally) of the Great Invocation and the release or transmission of the invoked energies into the network of triangles. If the triangle work comes at the conclusion of a longer meditation period, the (impersonal) quality of that meditation is also transmitted mentally into the network.

Each individual may function in a number of unique triangles, but the emphasis should be on the quality of the meditation period rather than the number of triangles established. The triangle is the basic (smallest) geometric unit of circulation; the triangles (and their effects) are combined to strengthen the planetary (mental) network. Meditation triangles generally invoke and release more positive energy (quality) than could be manifested by the individuals independently. This is also true of larger group meditation work. The experience in daily meditation work (visualization, invocation, concentration, and meditation) naturally provides a foundation upon which to build the triangle work. Serious group meditation work is much more demanding, but the triangle work can invoke the appropriate adjustments in preparation for group work. Continued triangle meditation along with continued daily (individual) meditation will enhance the overall group work.

The symbolic triangle (upward pointing) represents the Trinity (the three major rays) of life (purpose)(power), consciousness (wisdom)(love), and activity (intelligence)(light). The triangle also represents the upper triad, the three aspects of the soul; atma (spiritual will), buddhi (intuition), and manas (mind). The circulation of energy through the three focal points of the triangle finds an energy correspondence within the human being and humanity, and within the planetary and cosmic lives. It is in this respect that the Great Invocation calls forth a powerful flow of energy on behalf of humanity, as the meditation triangles evoke and release that energy.

Inertia is a property or quality of matter (or force), representing resistance to modification in its state of motion or mode of application. Inertia suggests an inherent lack of flexibility in matter, an indisposition to motion, exertion, or change. It also implies deficiency in active qualities. Spiritually, inertia is a property of the personality (exoteric) and a property of space (esoteric). In each case there exist forces for progress and forces to resist progress. The progressive (evolutionary) force is superior, but the (inferior) resistive force acts as a check and a balance in order to guide the evolutionary experience.

That which has motion (and momentum) is less resistant to change. The apathy of the ordinary man requires considerable circumstances to overcome. The momentum of the spiritual student implies a measure of flexibility and open-mindedness leading to balanced progress. The inertia of the so-called aspirant to the spiritual life for whom spiritual activity remains a small part of the daily life, is an inherent property of the personality (form)(matter). But there are no real obstructions to living the spiritual life; for one who considers himself an aspirant, neither poor health nor worldly (family) responsibilities are acceptable excuses. All alibis and excuses (for the spiritual student) are but selfish rationalizations. The demands of the path are considerable, and the spiritual work (study, meditation, and service) must be placed in its proper state of primary importance (without neglecting other responsibilities).

The implications of the inertial property of space, and their meaning for the spiritual student are somewhat subtle and abstract. Inertia is the third or substance characteristic of the spirit (rhythm), consciousness (mobility), and form (inertia) triplicity. The effects of form on consciousness and perception are considerable, for the instruments and medium of consciousness are necessarily composed of matter. The student is the observer who is concerned with his mechanism (mind-sight), the observation (perception through a medium), and that which is observed. Each of these aspects depends on the quality, intensity, and character of the perceptual (inertial) sphere. Perception is an extension of the perceiver, and each of the various aspects in the process of observation are interrelated. The concordance of space suggests perceptual inertia.

Perception may be horizontal (through different media or reference frames) or vertical (through different planes or levels of consciousness). At each point of translation (tension) between a higher and lower plane (or sub-plane) (or between perspectives) there occurs a perceptual distortion due to the contrasting polarity and quality, a characteristic of contrasting inertial properties. Each plane (or sphere) tends to be somewhat exclusive and resistant to casual bridging efforts. Within the human being, it becomes necessary to build a thread or channel of rapport between the various planes or levels of self (being). Such threads occur naturally with certain forms of correspondence.

For example, on an atomic (highest) sub-plane of some plane of consciousness, it is possible to interact (perceive) in two directions: below (into denser substance) to the next lower sub-plane and to lower atomic sub-planes, and above (into finer substance) to the next higher sub-plane and to higher atomic sub-planes. This phenomenon is a function of quality (purity) and rapport (magnetic alignment) between corresponding or adjacent levels. A similar thread of consciousness is possible for the disciple. Through purification and spiritual activity, the disciple recognizes and overcomes his spiritual inertia and steps forward into a higher magnetic (soul) alignment.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 86 - DESTINY AND FREE WILL

Complicated by semantics and perspective, the paradox of destiny and free will has plagued thinkers throughout human history. The problem seems to involve the inherent limitations of human experience and consciousness, and the interdependence of events (causes and effects). A man is the dynamic totality of his experience and the totality of the (external and internal) forces acting upon or within him. Any decision (action) that a man undertakes is necessarily (and relatively if not altogether) dependent upon that dynamic totality of his being. Through karma (action and reaction) a man and his condition of consciousness are the result of past action and present being.

In a practical analysis, the problem of destiny and free will is relatively simple: it is the problem of freedom and law. Life is conditioned by natural laws which place bounds or limitations on freedom. All natural laws find some place and purpose within the evolutionary scheme. The overall purpose of natural law is to encourage and guide evolution. The unevolved man knows nothing of higher purpose and has minimal freedom. His actions are almost entirely the result of external forces. The truly enlightened man understands (to a certain extent) and intelligently cooperates with higher purpose, and has considerable freedom. His actions are based on realization; for the most part he chooses his response to the various forces acting upon him.

But even the practical analysis is not without its difficulties to be pondered. Science postulates a mechanistic universe that may even have an analogy in terms of consciousness. The (scientific) energy perspective is a very powerful one. The human being (soul) and its personality instrument are both affected by external and internal forces. Though the application of the various forces may be adjusted, what (ultimately) determines the adjustment? In an absolute sense, is not the totality of being an instantaneous predetermination? Is there an energy output, not directly dependent upon conditioned energy inputs, that might be called new (unique) causation? Religion postulates an omnipotent (having unlimited influence), omnipresent (immanent), and omniscient (having infinite awareness) God. But cannot omniscience imply a consciousness beyond that of human mentality, an impersonal (nonhuman)(abstract) intelligence unconcerned with trivial details (individual human souls), but concerned with a purpose and the means of accomplishment on a grand scale? Are not the various natural laws simply the (unconscious) consequences of divine purpose? And what about the philosophical doctrines of determinism (predestination) and fatalism (human powerlessness)? Are not these (limited) perspectives resolvable (more meaningful) within a broader framework of relative freedom? Even deterministic philosophy with its antecedent causes can be interpreted in harmony with relativity.

The proper exercise of freedom, dependent though it may be on external forces (destiny)(consequence of past actions) and internal forces (experience)(consequence of being), is an intelligent balance between free will and destiny (the bounds of law and consequence). Free will implies the ability to choose between alternatives such that the choice is creatively and consciously self-determined; but what is self-determination? Relativistic philosophy reveals the middle path in which either extreme (destiny or free will) is simply a (valid) way of looking at (apparent) reality. But who can say how the little world of human consciousness appears from above (beyond)? The whole key to the paradox is the nature of creativity and the concept of new causation (epigenesis), of unconditioned energy (from the monad) used in an unqualified manner. In the absolute sense, the paradox of destiny and free will remains, a paradox.

Formal (academic) metaphysics is the branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of reality, the nature of being (ontology), the nature of God and the interpretation of religious faith (theology)(the nature of divine and human relationships), and the philosophy of nature. Where physics (in the most general sense)(science) is the study of the visible (apparent) universe, metaphysics (beyond physics) is the study of the invisible universe. Where physics deals with visible forms and effects, metaphysics deals with the underlying principles and (invisible) causes.

In the formal sense, metaphysics includes religion; in the informal (popular) sense, religion includes metaphysics. Metaphysical religion is the frontier of religion, religion that is (in its reasonably pure form) relatively free from the crystallized structure and limitations of the orthodox churches. The popular metaphysical movement is a very broad and loose synthesis of metaphysical philosophy, metaphysical religion, and metaphysical science, embracing many degrees and levels of maturity and perspective. Where the individual approach is personality oriented, self-centered, and/or emotional; there is metaphysics in its lesser (glamorous) form. Where the individual approach is not self-centered (and is on mental levels), there is metaphysics in its higher (spiritual) form.

Formal metaphysics is somewhat impractical (being abstract and abstruse), though it is the foundation and the frontier of academic (orthodox) philosophy and does provide considerable insight into reality. Informal metaphysics tends toward the practical application of philosophy in daily living. In this sense, it is the translation, interpretation, and reduction of the higher philosophy into a form that can be readily and easily understood and assimilated. Popular metaphysics is the bridge or link between philosophy, religion, and science. The intention or goal of metaphysics is for man to understand the universe and the place of humanity therein, to give mankind some (enlightened) purpose or motivation for living (and growing), to free mankind from the bondage of materialism (and glamour), and to provide a bridge between the orthodox world of appearances and the esoteric (superphysical) world of realities.

The higher metaphysics (beyond the popular or informal metaphysics) consists of two branches: theosophy (and its link with the esoteric philosophy) and classical (academic) philosophy. The two paths naturally overlap somewhat, as many of the great philosophers lived consciously in both worlds (the esoteric and the exoteric). It is within these two paths of higher philosophy that is found the key or clue to the mysteries of life. That key is simply the difference between (and the relationships of) life (reality), quality (consciousness), and appearance. In this respect, metaphysics considers the supersensible world, beyond that which is apparent to the senses. To most people, sense impressions (appearances) determine reality, but to the metaphysical student there is a great deal of 'reality' beyond appearance. Thus metaphysics attempts to answer the question of what is reality.

The 'reality' of the observable (material) world is fairly well-known by orthodox science. But the world of causes is known only to the few, who through the evolution of consciousness and the cultivation of wisdom have attained firsthand self-knowledge of that greater reality. There are many who have received distorted impressions (and conclusions)(based on a lack of understanding) concerning metaphysical realms, but so few who truly understand. Perception without proper training (preparation) and understanding is of little value. The wise remain relatively silent.

The fifth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Sanyasa Yoga, the yoga of renunciation. The teaching concerning the soul and its potential, its limitations and its perfection, continues as Krishna discusses the renunciation and performance of action, the means of self-purification, the Self and its agent, the light of wisdom, and the (higher) path of renunciation.

The renunciation of action (karma sanyasa) and the performance of action (karma yoga) each lead to freedom, but theory (renunciation) and practice (action) are not separable, for each includes a measure of the other. There is a time for withdrawal and a time for right activity (holy work). Each path leads to the other, for each is but a perspective (emphasis). The path of renunciation leads to a state of mind in which the lower self identifies with the higher self. The higher self is not involved with action, for it is the lower self which is the agent in the performance of service through action. The path of action is the path of self-purification, the endless path of refinement which leads to freedom from action. The true self is above action; true renunciation is above duality (the realm of the pairs-of-opposites). Thus one can renounce action whilst performing it.

The realm of the pairs-of-opposites is the domain of objective experience, the realm of action and its consequence (karma). The various pairs-of-opposites provide the field of experience, and the unenlightened man is caught between them. As evolution proceeds, the spiritual student (Arjuna) must gradually free himself from their influence and pass on into the higher worlds where the sense of duality is nonexistent. It is through this experience in the lesser worlds and through self-purification (leading to service) that liberation is attained.

Karma is the medium of self-purification. But karma pertains to the phenomenal world (nature)(prakriti) and not to the realm of the true self (soul), which is the domain of noumenon (purusha). It is the 'I' that bathes in inaction (the subjective disposition of the soul) while the mind (personality) is the agent. In the metaphysical sense, the 'I' denotes identification with the soul, spirit, God, the life that thrills through all of manifestation (wherever the Krishna dialogue becomes personal, it refers to this greater (impersonal) 'I' rather than that of the lower, personal self). It is the work (dharma) of the lower self to produce (create)(evolve) quality (consciousness) as a consequence of action, and to allow the Lord (the Christ-self)(the soul) to work through its instrument without impediment. Through such action (self-purification and service) works are transcended. Through such action is found the light of wisdom, the light of the inner self.

The inner light leads to further participation in (realization of) God and the elimination (transformation) of the sense of duality. The integrated man (yukta) is one who realizes the unity of all life, one who sees that from the knowledge (of God) comes same-sightedness, for God lives through all, equally. There are no real differences, for all is one life. The path of unity is the (higher) path of renunciation. In this sense, renunciation means integration (unification)(absorption in the higher life). Thus, renunciation draws forth (invokes) the quality (consciousness)(joy) of the higher self. The self is known and sins are left behind (transformed into spiritual strengths); the spiritual student is led to no-return (the completion of human experience) (freedom from birth and death)(perfection)(nirvana). Nirvana is the end of phenomenal existence, the blowing out (renunciation)(sublimation) of the lower self in the (abstract) bliss of Brahman (higher existence)(peace).

An essential ingredient of meaningful group meditation is regular daily (individual) meditation performed seriously by each participant in the group work. Without such a foundation, group meditation as a constructive activity will not be as effective as it should. Another essential aspect of (true) group meditation is a quality of (unselfish) purpose expressed inwardly by each participant. The ability to contribute effectively will naturally come to the participant in accordance with the quality of effort and motive expended in the daily meditation work and the quality of the commitment to the group work.

The triangle meditation work is an intermediate step that further prepares the student for effective group work. The individual daily meditation work must continue, even though the spiritual student may have entered into group work; the (daily) triangle work should likewise be continued, as both forms of meditation work support and complement larger group efforts. The contribution of the triangle work is considerable, as the individual learns how to work constructively (and impersonally) with others in a project with a purpose that should transcend personality-relationships.

An isolated individual may (through training and preparation) participate directly (mentally) in planetary group meditation work, or through an organized group (on exoteric or esoteric levels). An individual may also attend (physically and mentally) group meditation meetings and contribute through such a group to the overall planetary effort. The student must discern the most appropriate group or activity for his efforts. Group meditation for individual development or special interests should be discouraged. Group meditation for humanitarian or more universal (relatively impersonal) causes should be encouraged. Purpose and motive are much more important in group work than in individual work. The student who is still concerned with how he can benefit from group work is not ready for serious group meditation.

Meaningful (and coherent) group meditation work contributes considerably more energy than would be possible for the sum of the individual efforts. But the requirements for successful group meditation are considerably higher. The participant must go beyond the personality actions and reactions of the commonplace. The individual must adjust himself and his participation for effectiveness and efficiency. The more obvious weaknesses (and some of the subtle ones) in the individual must be transformed if he or she is to contribute properly to the group effort. The nature of (serious) group meditation work is the invocation and evocation of spiritual energy for humanity. This energy is invoked, received (on as high a level as possible), transformed, and distributed on lower levels (primarily mental) for the benefit of human progress (in consciousness). If the group is sufficiently impersonal and sufficiently unified (coherent), then very little (if any) energy will be wasted. Otherwise the effort will be unproductive.

The dynamics of group meditation, both on personality and soul levels, provide the spiritual student with the preparation for (or participation in) the work of discipleship. As the aspirant approaches discipleship he is expected more and more to concern himself with humanity. The continued evolution of consciousness leads to constructive cooperation and higher degrees of group consciousness and identification. Group meditation provides an avenue (opportunity) for service (and group service). The right efforts expended therein can only contribute to the essential progress (evolution) of humanity, through the purification and elevation of consciousness.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 90 - THE SEAL OF SOLOMON

One of the ancient symbols of wisdom is the seal of Solomon, two triangles interlaced to form a six-pointed star. This emblem has been used in a number of ways to symbolize various aspects of the ageless wisdom. The downward-pointing triangle is the lower triad, the symbol of the path of descent (involution) and the symbol of matter (form). The lower triad also denotes the three principles of the human personality: the physical (etheric), the emotional (astral), and the lower mental. The upward-pointing triangle is the upper triad, the symbol of the path of ascent (evolution) and the symbol of spirit (life). The upper triad also denotes the three principles of the human soul: atma (spiritual will) (purpose), buddhi (spiritual intuition), and manas (higher mind). Together, the interlacing triangles demonstrate the unity of spirit-matter and life-form.

With the numerals of the seven rays (and planes of consciousness) placed auspiciously in the field of the emblem (one at each point of the star, in sequence, beginning with the peak, clockwise 1-6-3-7-2-5 with 4 in the center), many of the relationships and correspondences can be seen. The upper triad then indicates the three major rays of aspect and the associated trinities: spirit, consciousness, and matter; power (life), love, and light; monad, soul, and personality; will, wisdom, and intelligence; life, quality, and appearance; and so forth. The lower triad indicates the reflection of the upper triad into matter (objectivity). The Seventh Ray of organization is the reflection of the First Ray of power (will)(life)(purpose). The Sixth Ray of devotion (idealism) is the reflection of the Second Ray of love (wisdom). The Fifth Ray of concrete knowledge is the reflection of the Third Ray of comprehension (active intelligence). In each case the qualities of the major rays are reflected as the qualities of the objectified minor rays. The Fourth Ray is seen as the ray of balance (tension)(harmony through conflict) in the center of the emblematic field, providing a point of linking between Rays 1 and 7, 2 and 6, and 3 and 5.

As the seven planes of consciousness (physical (7), emotional (6), mental (5), intuitional (4), atmic (3), monadic (2), and God-consciousness (1)) are associated with the corresponding rays, insight into those relationships is also demonstrated. Similarly, the human principles associated with the upper and lower triads can find elucidation (atma (1), buddhi (2), higher mind (3), lower mental (5), emotional (6), and physical (7)). In that set of correspondences, four denotes the antahkarana, the bridge between mind and soul, between the lower personal self and the higher impersonal self.

The six points of the star (seal) of Solomon can also show some astrological relationships (two interrelated signs per point) in addition to the placing of the seven sacred planets. The septenary cycles of the evolutionary spiral and their relationships to other septenates can also be shown. The human (fourth) kingdom and the fourth (earth) globe (chain) stand prominently in the center of the field.

The upper triangle also indicates God the triple Logos (Shiva-Vishnu-Brahma) (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) whilst the lower triangle symbolizes man, the reflection of God (in principle). The two triangles indicate further the various pairs-of-opposites and their transcendence in unity. In this respect, the two triangles (upper and lower, respectively) denote the duality and relationship of macrocosm and microcosm, of good and evil, life and death, reality and illusion. As ancient as the universe, the seal of Solomon brings together the wisdom of manifestation; the emblem blazes forth as a symbol of creation itself, and the ageless wisdom that shall lead man from darkness into the light.

No. 91 - SPIRITUAL POISE

Spiritual poise is a synthetic (composite) quality that eventually comes to the spiritual student as a consequence of character and consciousness. Spiritual poise is an indication of the uncompromised manifestation of the soul through its lower self. The implacable (inner) self (soul) brings upon the personality the quality and disposition of spiritual poise, provided that the proper foundation of character and consciousness has been accomplished.

As a synthetic quality, spiritual poise cannot be cultivated directly, as it is a consequence of being more so than a consequence of becoming. There are many essential ingredients that must be attained before the synthesis of composure and spiritual disposition of the higher self can be evident. Much of the lower life must first be tamed, else the necessary ingredients (virtues)(qualities) shall remain elusive. Where the lower self remains undisciplined, the higher life cannot be achieved. So with some progress in the self-control of the senses and with the impression of higher purpose upon the lower self, the spiritual student can begin to cultivate the character and consciousness required.

The ingredients are often interdependent, as each quality may have its prerequisites as well as a bearing upon other characteristics. Three such essential ingredients are stability, serenity, and strength. Without stability there is distraction; and where there is distraction there can be no dependability or responsibility, and no consistency in the spiritual life. Without serenity there can be no selfless love, no peacefulness in humility, no clear vision of the needs of humanity and the work to be done. And without the unselfish love can there be true serenity? Without stability or serenity can there be spiritual strength? Without spiritual strength can the stoic ethic (insensitivity to pain or pleasure, and the quality of detachment) be maintained?

Since the pertinent virtues and ingredients are so interdependent, it is the overall quality of the spiritual life (as it overshadows the objective existence) that is so much more relevant. To seek spiritual poise directly serves only to undermine (through desire) the spiritual effort. To work quietly to improve the quality and consistency of the spiritual life, serves indirectly to bring about the soul-infusion implied in spiritual poise, by creating the foundation (fertile ground) for such manifestation. The motive is ever significant, since it is only with right (unselfish) motives that the work can be properly performed.

The confident and tranquil repose of mind, bearing, and appearance, even in the most trying of circumstances, implies an acceptance of the consequence of action and being, and the reliance upon the inner self for assurance. The balance and equilibrium of the poised (comfortable yet flexible) spiritual student rest upon the alignment of soul and personality, for the personality (mind) cannot be permitted to reason independently of the higher self, nor can the desire-nature (emotions) be permitted excitement or distraction, if the true self is to properly guide the lesser life.

Spiritual poise is a quality of balance between the head and the heart, between the soul and its reflection, between the inner life and the outer. Without such balance the esoteric path cannot be realized. The path ultimately requires the continual attention of the waking-consciousness. The part-time aspirant is not the esoteric student. But the full-time (in consciousness) student is the disciple who lives in the spiritual disposition, (nearly) perfectly balanced between the inner contemplative life and the life of action (service) in the outer world. Through such outer life the spiritual poise (the quality of the spiritual life) is transmitted (induced)(shared) as encouragement.

Logic is one of the more practical departments of philosophy, the branch of philosophy that deals with the principles of reasoning and the validity of inference. Logic can be a means to greater understanding, and as such is dependent upon knowledge, intelligence, and the ability to reason. Success (understanding) (correct or valid conclusions) depends very much on the logical method, the consciousness applied, and the validity of the assumptions upon which the inference is based.

There are three basic logical methods. Inductive reasoning is the reasoning of ascension, from a part to a whole, from particulars to generals, from the individual to the universal, from the lesser to the greater. Deductive reasoning is the reasoning of descension, from the greater to the lesser, from the universal to the particular. Analogical reasoning is the reasoning of correspondence and analogy. Analogical reasoning includes symbolic reasoning and the proper study of relationships. Each of the three methods can be valuable, especially where combined into a broader perspective. Of the three, the study by analogy and correspondence is the more powerful philosophical method. The deeper study of the esoteric philosophy, for example, can only yield understanding where there is an appreciation (recognition) of relationships through correspondence.

But each application of the (singular or multiple) logical method depends on consciousness. Traditionally, the realm of logical thinking is the exclusive domain of the intellect (concrete mind). But the testimony of science often indicates intuitive realization and understanding (followed by intellectual correlation). And religion speaks often enough of the mystical experience of direct realization beyond the intellect. Beyond the intellect (the mind of the personality) is the spiritual intuition (the realization of the soul as projected through the abstract mind). If logical reasoning is to be truly a path or means of understanding, the intellect must be uplifted into (and subservient to) the intuition (soul). Purely rational (intellectual) reasoning is limited by the capacity and experience of the mortal mind. The intuitive 'reasoning' of the contemplative is only limited by the ability of the intellect to properly interpret the realization. Rationalization is quite inferior to direct realization.

Two further elements of logic are essential to success (understanding). The first is the reservoir of experience (knowledge) held by the mind and the validity (correctness) of the assumptions which initiate the reasoning process or upon which conclusions are expected to follow. That which is logical is not necessarily true, for conclusions may be only as good as the validity of each assumption at each stage in the process. If any of the assumptions are false, then the conclusion may be inconsistent with that which is true. Another essential element to success is the ability (through training and experience) to interpret realistically the conclusions or realizations obtained. Here the facility of language (the correlation between thought and words) is quite significant. If the logical (and intuitive) studies are to be meaningful, the understanding must be brought down to some practical (addressable) level.

Logical thinking can be practical and reasonable provided that all of the elements are both valid and consistent. Effective logic (intellectual and intuitive) requires the continuity (consistency) of ideas. Where the correct (reasonable) relationships do not exist, the conclusions reached will not (generally) be consistent or valid. The science of inference and implication can be a serious and consistent means with which to attain the greater understanding that complements the studies of the philosophical student.

The sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Dhyana Yoga, the yoga of meditation (self-mastery). The teaching of Krishna (the soul) continues with a discussion of the spiritual exercise (meditation) and its relationship to the yogi (spiritual student)(Arjuna). The responsibilities of the karma yogi and the karma sanyasin are similar in the later stages as meditation and its associated activities are common to each path. Even the ascetic (sanyasin) has the responsibility of purification and meditation (holy sacrifice).

Not only must the rules (guidelines) of the path be adhered to (with some understanding), but the student must also put into practice the spirit of the teachings. This requires the surrender of the earthly will (the little wills of the personality) and the establishment of the meditative atmosphere. The head and the heart must share in each commitment (to the path), so that serious meditation can be accomplished. Right meditation then enhances (in quality) all of the (right) activities of the student. The constancy of the yogi implies the (process of) unification of the two selves. The lesser self can be a friend or an enemy to the greater self (soul). Through self-purification and meditation the enemies become friends.

The atmosphere for meditation should be purified (quiet) and the setting should be a place of solitude. Each aspect of the lower self must be stilled, in turn: the body rested, the emotions quieted, and the mind mastered, at rest in God. With practice comes the ability (ease) to achieve the meditative and contemplative states where the self in all (and all in self) can be directly recognized. The student can then look upon all persons as souls incarnate, regardless of the personalities. This perspective can be readily applied to the daily life of activity, as a realization (vision) of oneness (sameness) and the renunciation of the personality values.

One of the most essential elements in the meditative (spiritual) life is moderation (temperance). Spiritual exercise is a middle path; extremes have no place in the life of the student of wisdom. But what may be moderate for one person may be an extreme for another. The rules (discipline) of the path should not be confused with the standards expected of the worldly persons. The goals of the yogi are quite different (consciously), for the spiritual student seeks to remain steady in the wisdom (unity) of the soul. To achieve the yoga of equanimity, the student must be free from body-consciousness, free from feeling, and with the stilled mind in the contemplation (seedless meditation) of being.

Arjuna finds contemplation a difficult task as he (the struggling aspirant) recognizes the character of the mind as restless, strong, and obstinate. Krishna replies that the mind can be controlled with patience, firm resolution, and determination. With effort and discipline (while living a life of harmony) the restive (wandering) mind can be conquered and the silent thoughts (no thoughts) of eternity (truth) can be achieved in contemplation.

Finally, the fate of the imperfect (incomplete) spiritual student is considered. Krishna reaffirms the ancient truth that that which is once gained cannot be truly lost, for each new life is built upon the foundation established in the preceding life. Those who fail (as most do) to reach perfection in the present life find themselves again in incarnation, but with the fruits of earlier existence as conscience, wisdom, and natural talent. After a period of recapitulation, the student again continues upon the path, at approximately the place of earlier achievement. Nothing is lost, for the path of perfection (dhyana yoga) is one with the purpose of evolution, ever onward and upward.

The path of aspiration (seeking) leads naturally into the probationary path. The path of probation (preparation) is only one of many steps along the endless path of further preparation and purification. The further a student progresses along the spiritual path, the greater is the degree of refinement (of faculties) expected. The physical, emotional, and mental bodies must be purified (refined) (sublimated)(disciplined) if the student is to achieve that relative perfection that is implied at the fulfillment (completion) of human evolution. All along the way the lower self (personality) must be improved as a controllable and effective instrument and elevated such that the higher consciousness may be expressed properly in the lower worlds.

The process of refinement and elevation is a process of conversion and transformation of quality (of matter) from a lower state (a relatively coarse vibration) to a higher state (a higher, purified vibration or quality). This process is required in order to overcome the limitations of objective experience and to encourage the cultivation and manifestation of the spiritual consciousness demanded of evolution. The process of physical refinement and purification normally proceeds simultaneously with that of the emotional (astral) and mental natures as the three levels (instruments) are somewhat interdependent (though not necessarily cooperative at the earlier stages). The three bodies must be integrated such that the physical, emotional, and mental aspects function as a coherent (and controllable) whole. The integration of the lower self is a requirement for its elevation and alignment with the soul.

As long as the three elements of the lower self are permitted to function more or less independently, they cannot be properly controlled or effectively utilized by the higher self. The three aspects of the personality must be purified if they are to function harmoniously and cooperatively. Only relatively purified elements can be brought together to form a coherent and unified instrument. Such an instrument can then be elevated so that soul energies may come to dominate the lesser life (the form).

As progress is made in the discipline of the lower life, the process of refinement becomes easier in some ways (and more subtle in others) as the 'hold' of the personality is disengaged and as momentum is built up. Considerable and consistent effort may be expended over a long period of time before observable results or improvements can be noted. The strength of the elemental lives which form the three bodies is considerable. Even stronger is the personality-life of the integrated lower self (governed by the concrete mind) that is not quite responsive to soul direction. The resistance of the lower self must be fully overcome before the instrument becomes the faithful and cooperative servant of the God-self. The time required to achieve self-control (from the standpoint of the soul) depends upon the progress and experience attained in earlier lives. The student who faces the spiritual path for the first time may need a number of lifetimes to sublimate the personality and to achieve discipleship. The student of considerable experience on the path may need only a few years.

Truly the student of life can experience and progress substantially without concern for conscious efforts toward personality adjustment and improvement. But there is a limit to the progress that can be made without consciously directing the purification and elevation of the mortal self. The unprepared personality cannot be spiritually responsive, but as the work of refinement proceeds on the mind and the emotions and the physical body, so shall the personal (lower) self (eventually) be infused with the spiritual energies of the soul.

The longest major planetary cycle of practical significance for humanity is the passage of the planetary life upon a globe (planetary body). The present passage is upon the fourth globe (the present Earth) of the fourth round of the fourth chain. For humanity, this passage can be divided into seven epochs or root-races. Each root-race is a distinct collection of human forms that are evolved to provide humanity with vehicles of expression of certain characteristics. Human souls can then incarnate and express themselves, gathering experience to further the evolution of consciousness.

It is essential to recognize that the form evolves and that the life within the form (the human consciousness)(the soul) also evolves. The two evolutions (life and form) are related only on a temporary (useful) basis. When a particular racial form has expended its usefulness, that form will quite naturally pass into extinction as new forms are developed to meet the growing needs of the life-wave. Each of the present root-races may be divided into seven sub-races (and further into branch-races). Each division is a relatively distinct modification of the racial type, though the general characteristics of the root-race are retained. The formation of a new root-race is simply a major modification. The useful characteristics evolved in earlier racial forms are available for inclusion (and adaptation) in the patterns or archetypes of succeeding forms. In fact, even the older forms take on a measure of the new characteristics, and with the gradual blending and overlap of racial forms, it becomes virtually impossible to identify a pure racial type. The present Aryan root-race, for example, contains valuable elements of all colors.

One might ask why so many racial forms are necessary in the human evolution. The answer is not a simple one. There was a time when differing races were not needed; and there shall come a time again when the diversity of forms is not needed. But the present is a time of diverse experience, a time in which the (human) race is evolving simultaneously in many ways. Each race provides experience of a (relatively) distinct nature. The perfect (most appropriate) human form is slowly being developed (as an archetype) as the significant qualities of each variety of racial expression are assimilated. It is pointless to consider one form as being superior to another, since each has its outstanding qualities and each contributes to the progress of the greater (human) race. Besides, each human being is a soul that has neither color, nor sex, nor race, nor nationality. The form is merely a temporary instrument. Each soul may incarnate directly a number of times in each root-race, or in each sub-race, according to need.

The root-races of the present passage are, to date, the Polarian (first), Hyperborean (second), Lemurian (third), Atlantean (fourth), and Aryan (fifth). The first two root-races were not of the dense physical type and are long extinct; the third is almost extinct; and the fourth and fifth are still quite active (the sixth and seventh have yet to appear). The Atlantean and Aryan races are each contributing significantly to human progress. The Atlantean consciousness is essentially emotional, while the Aryan consciousness is primarily mental. But one cannot presume a level of consciousness directly corresponding to the racial form, for life and form follow different paths. The majority of humans in Aryan bodies are Atlantean (emotional) in consciousness rather than Aryan (mental); and there are many in Atlantean bodies who are Aryan in consciousness. It is the quality and polarization of consciousness that matters, not the type of racial form. For mankind is one, a family of souls living through a family of forms, one soul living through many.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 96 - KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING

The evolution of human consciousness proceeds in accordance with the assimilation and application of knowledge and experience. With increasing wisdom comes the ability to assimilate experience directly and consciously. This implies the capability to understand, comprehend, and relate knowledge, experience, and consciousness. Though the ability to understand depends on many factors, there is much that the student can do to cultivate and expand that ability.

Understanding is directly related to mental proficiency, which is an acquired characteristic (which may have been developed in earlier incarnations). The mind should have a broad foundation of knowledge available to it; and that knowledge can be expanded almost continuously. Specific knowledge and experience should also be helpful. The student can acquire (with discernment) pertinent or generally meaningful knowledge. Certainly knowledge is not the only essential key or requirement, but without knowledge or the ability to acquire knowledge, the mind is relatively helpless. The mind can be trained to enhance the acquisition of knowledge (through observation and study) and with some exercise, the student can learn to mentally program the memory and the patterns of information retrieval so that practically all the knowledge acquired consciously or subconsciously (and superconsciously) can be recovered (selectively), at will.

One of the more difficult of the keys to understanding is the correlation of knowledge. The ability to relate items of information in a meaningful way requires a mind properly trained in the art of correlation. It is this correlation of information (consciously or otherwise) that actually results in understanding and comprehension. Often the student will have all the necessary information but be unable to put it together in the right way to achieve a meaningful conclusion or realization. Discernment must be cultivated (and the mind trained) so that relationships can be recognized and so that threads (programs) of insight can be developed. It is in the art of discerning relationships that the intuitive ability is a most valuable aid. The lower (concrete)(intellectual) mind can be nicely programmed, but it is still quite slow compared to the intuition. The concrete mind operates in a single-track mode; only one thought, thread, comparison, or piece of information can be considered at any one time.

Though efficient programming of the lower mind can speed up the process of comparison (determining relationships), the abstract (higher)(intuitive) mind can function almost instantaneously. It is the intuition (buddhi) working with the abstract mind, and working through the disciplined (trained and responsive) concrete mind, that invokes immediate understanding; for the abstract mind (guided by the intuition) can work along many tracks (with cross-correlation) simultaneously. The intuition can also bring down into the waking-consciousness knowledge (realization) from higher levels, provided the lower mental framework (appropriate knowledge and language) is present. But the proper development of the intuition requires considerable spiritual training and the building of the bridge of consciousness between the personality and the soul.

Even with the attainment of all this, there may remain a serious hindrance to understanding, that is attachment and habit. In this respect, detachment means freedom from bias, prejudice, preconception, and misleading assumptions (illusions). Without such detachment, the mind is quite limited in its ability to correlate and accept realization. Only the open mind, free from opinions and free from bias, can consistently function as an instrument of understanding. With an open mind and a disciplined personality, the student can cultivate understanding, assimilate knowledge and experience, and improve consciousness.

Ethics is the philosophy and ideal of conduct, which considers the nature of morality and character, and the nature of good. Ethics is the practical (personal) branch of philosophy, for it considers individual human rights and the values of human motives, thoughts, feelings, and actions. A standard of ethical conduct and morality can be relatively artificial, personal, or natural (universal). An individual standard of ethics should take into consideration the moral (legal and cultural) standards of society, the inherent (personal) standards realized or evolved, and the understanding of universal (spiritual) law which determines the ideal of conduct.

The spiritual student is encouraged to live in ethical harmony with the external (orthodox) world and the internal (personal)(spiritual) world, to express wisdom in human relationships, and to achieve consistency in the inner life. Though many ethical and moral guidelines are available, the ultimate responsibility rests with the individual to realize and achieve a personal standard. Each must determine for himself a practical ethical code, keeping in mind the consequences of behavior. The only real (general) guideline is that the consequences or results (effects) of conduct should be constructive (positive). Through observation, evaluation, and experience the student should become increasingly aware of the value of right human relations.

Human relations and the science of morality bring about the question of what is right and wrong, and what is the nature (and extent) of individual rights (freedom). Individual freedom can only really be considered in relation to the rights of others. If the student truly respects the rights of others, then the student must determine where the individual freedom ends and the freedom of others begins. Individual freedom cannot remain unlimited if the human lifewave is to progress and evolve. What appears best for the individual must ultimately (spiritually) be subordinated to what is best for the group (universal). Selfishness (self-centeredness) must inevitably give way to selflessness, as the individual identifies with the God within (the God within every form of life). Individual purposes are usually scattered (incoherent) with respect to the greater life, but such purposes do provide experience. And as the individual aligns himself more and more with (coherent) group purpose, that experience is contributed to the group progress (humanity in its relationship to the greater life).

The natural, personal standard is both inherent (latent or potential) and acquired (developed through experience). Ethical and moral behavior is usually a consequence of intelligence (based on realization) leading to virtue. The science of ethics seeks to understand morality and to put that understanding into practice. Self-realization naturally yields an inner urge to that which is right according to spiritual law. The ethical (spiritual) student seeks to honestly observe and evaluate his behavior (and motives) and the effects of his thoughts, feelings, and actions. The student should recognize the ideal (code of conduct) and determine his practical relationship to that ideal. The student may observe the behavior of others (and the effects)(with the intention of understanding), but without judgement, remembering that each can only determine what is right for himself. But the student can learn from the experience of others and seek to apply that learning in the individual life. The student can increasingly understand the virtues (as principles) and how they can be applied to ethical conduct (adherence to spiritual law). As the life of the spiritual student becomes the life of wisdom (in human relationships), so shall the practical (ethical) philosophy be assimilated and naturally manifested.

The seventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Jnana Vijnana Yoga, the yoga of wisdom (knowledge)(jnana) and experience (realization)(vijnana), the yoga of spiritual discernment, which leads from the teaching anent the individual self to the knowledge of God, from psychology to theology. Krishna continues the dialogue with a description of the two natures of God and the passage of the serious student through illusion to reality.

The lower nature (prakriti) of God is form and consciousness, manifestation itself (immanence). The higher nature is spirit or life, the unmanifested, the cause (transcendence), the fountain of life. God is the beginning (origin) and the end (dissolution) of that (universe) which is merely the reflection of true being. Knowledge is concerned with the lower human nature and manifestation, while realization is concerned with the higher human nature (the soul and the monad) and that which lies beyond manifestation. God immanent is the seed of being, God in manifestation, the presence within all things (as all things are within that presence), of which attributes can be given. God is the Sacred Word which creates, sustains, and liberates all that is (all that appears to be).

The universe (illusion) is superimposed upon reality (the essence behind the universe). God is that reality which is hidden in and concealed by nature. Illusion (darkness)(the shadow)(appearance) is separation (from God), attachment to form; reality (beyond the world of shadows) is liberation, realization of life, the source of being. The three constituents of nature (appearance) are goodness (peaceful light)(sattva), passion (restless life) (rajas)(activity), and darkness (tamas)(inertia). These are the three gunas in which the soul (or its reflection) becomes entangled. The relationship of reality and illusion leads to the apparent paradox of a creator (precursor) living through (reflecting itself in) a universe to which it is not attached. God evolves, but does the Absolute evolve? What is the nature of the divine (cosmic) sutratman, the thread or continuity of life that relates all in the manifested universe to that which is beyond?

Manifestation conceals (through a veil of mystery) the unknown God (the Absolute), the immutable and changeless, the imperishable and supreme. Manifestation yields a sense of duality, a perspective that deceives and confuses reality (with purpose). The lesser nature (the reflection) can be known, but the greater nature (reality) can only be realized beyond human (personal)(dualistic)(intellectual)(illusionary) levels. Through unification in the higher self, the waking-consciousness can enter into reality and transcend pairs-of-opposites. All of oneself must be given to the one God and to the Path, if the student (Arjuna) is to attain the goal and allow the paramatman (the greater soul) to properly manifest through jivatman (the individual soul). Such nearness to God (in consciousness) then ever reflects the quality of that greater life. The one who has realized the truth is the student of vision, who needs nothing in the identification with God (being integrated in the one self).

To worship Krishna alone means to worship (recognize) the one God, regardless of its various representations as Krishna, Christ, Buddha, etc. The names of God are many. Lesser gods (objects of desire) are likewise many, but worship of such clouds the vision. Desire destroys wisdom. One cannot be absorbed (entangled)(bewildered) in desires (little values) and absorbed in God (through the greater values) simultaneously. Revelation (salvation and freedom) can come only through the highest essence within, as the lesser values are cast aside and the commitment is made to the spiritual path.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 99 - PHYSICAL SUBLIMATION

Physical sublimation begins with the cultivation of good health and the self-control (discipline) of the physical body. There is much that can be adjusted on physical levels to encourage the vitality and fitness (for spiritual work) of the physical body and its etheric counterpart. Reasonable cleanliness helps to loosen the hold of earthy matter which dulls the physical vibrations. Moderate physical exercise encourages flexibility and physical capability.

Of considerable relevance (in physical refinement) is the diet of the spiritual student. There is nothing really wrong with the popular standards for diet; it is simply that the spiritual aspirant must determine (and achieve) for himself a diet that is practical for the spiritual task. That diet may be gradually adjusted and transformed (improved) over a number of years according to the needs of the student. Occasional (moderate) fasting may be helpful in this effort. The spiritual student cannot really afford to be much overweight (or underweight) as that would be an unnecessary burden. Through mental and physical discipline an optimum weight should be found. Many guidelines for the improvement of diet are available to the aspirant. Water, milk, most fruit juices, and most vegetable juices; and most cereals, fruits, vegetables, cheeses, and nuts are considered to be beneficial. Alcoholic beverages (including beer and wine), carbonated drinks, and coffee are considered (by degrees) to be detrimental. Flesh foods (meat and fish) are also considered to be detrimental.

In withdrawing from the animal-food (flesh) diet, the student might first substitute successively smaller quantities of meat or substitute fish for meat as an intermediate step. Fish (cold-blooded) is preferable to meat (warm-blooded) as fish are lower on the evolutionary scale and therefore less harmful (distracting). But even fish sustain limitation. The objection (for oneself) to flesh foods may also be a moral or karmic one (karmically, the plant kingdom provides food to sustain the animal and human kingdoms; such is not the case for the animal kingdom to provide food, except in the case of products of animal processes, such as milk), but the practical objection is that the animal food inhibits spiritual consciousness and self-mastery. There is a practical limit to the spiritual progress that can be made on a meat diet.

It is, of course, better to eat meat and be spiritually minded than to be a vegetarian lacking in spiritual concern. The vegetarian is not necessarily spiritually responsive; but the spiritual student (at some point) becomes vegetarian as that does encourage spiritual progress (providing other necessary qualities are present). The spiritual aspirant must rise above the animal distractions which are otherwise well-established in the lower self, if the personality is to become centered in the soul.

The spiritual student is also discouraged from taking drugs (except where necessary for health). Meat, alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and aspirin are examples of nonessential drugs (or items containing such), which unnecessarily dull or burden the physical system and interfere with the communication between soul, mind, and brain. The 'mystical' drug experience is artificial (astral) in nature and only serves to weaken the capacity for higher consciousness. Smoking is similarly a burden on the physical vitality (with undesirable side-effects on subtle levels). In fact, anything which distracts the personality instrument from its evolutionary task is usually discouraged. Moderation is simply the first step in the transformation process. Though the student may be slow in recognizing (in himself) the effects of conscientious physical sublimation, the subsequent (gradual) deepening of the spiritual life should be reward soon enough.

A COMMENTARY ON THE ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY

No. 100 - CHARITY

One of the most characteristic activity aspects of love-wisdom is charity, which implies love, kindness, and benevolence. The spirit of charity leads to kindness in thoughts, feelings, and activities. Charitable gifts may be gifts of time and interest, thought or energy, or money and material resources. Charity also calls for responsibility and efficiency, for the wise and economical utilization of talent and resources in or to a charitable effort (individual or otherwise) is (spiritually) inherent in the opportunity to express kindness through benevolent work.

Charity can be a spirit of participation in the welfare of humanity. In relatively mundane terms, that can include the relief of (apparent) human suffering and the fulfillment of the basic material needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. It can also mean educational opportunities for self-improvement. In spiritual terms, it means the encouragement of progress in human consciousness, both individual and collective. The humanitarian (and philanthropic) efforts are probably as important as spiritual tasks. Humanitarian work generally deals with effects rather than causes, whereas spiritual work generally deals with consciousness (which is closer to the causes of human problems); but both types of effort are needed, and even in the humanitarian work there is a sharing of charitable energy (love and kindness) that ultimately leads to consciousness. Humanitarian gifts normally come from the (relatively) large numbers of persons who are concerned or interested in humanity and humanitarian work, while gifts for spiritual work normally come from the relatively small numbers of persons who realize the benefits (in consciousness)(for humanity) of spiritual work. Spiritual effort (especially in group formation) usually contributes substantially to the consciousness of humanity (through induction and stimulation), complementing and supplementing the humanitarian work.

One of the aspects of charitable giving is ownership. The concept of ownership is a worldly one, for philosophically (spiritually) no one can own or possess anything. But the individual or group may be given the guardianship and responsibility for that which is said to be owned. Such responsibility must (by cosmic law) be earned, either karmically attracted as a learning experience or attracted as a consequence of effectiveness (having suitable consciousness). The responsibility of the individual or group can be quite considerable. Failure to (reasonably) efficiently utilize resources for the common good often results in limitation and a lack of such opportunity in succeeding lives.

Another aspect of charitable work is the manner of participation with respect to the opportunity. Discernment is required in addition to a sense of responsibility, to insure usefulness. The existence (and recognition) of the opportunity (having the resources and realizing the need to be filled) should be accompanied by the discernment of alternatives and the relative usefulness of each. The specific areas or tasks that the spiritual student prefers to support are not as important as the purity (reasonableness) of the motives behind the assistance or gift and the relative value of the task. Above all needs to be the charitable interest in humanity and the spirit of participation through the meditative life (constructive thoughts are often as valuable as deeds). In any event, the student should realize that under spiritual law, that which is given is not lost, but shared within the one life; that all is energy to be used as wisely as consciousness permits; and that all within the one life is interdependent. With such realization and with charitable intent, the student can invest his time and resources wisely, for the good of humanity.