

Transcript ~ Sacrifice and Solidarity

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Delivered at Santa Barbara ULT, November 2020

The cosmos periodically engages in the sacred process of self-gestation. It unfolds from the unmanifest to the manifest. It does so through the sacrificial act of emanation, or giving birth to new life out of its own immaculate substance.

This sublime creative act begins the process of involution, or the descent from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from cosmic consciousness to human self-consciousness. When the divine process of descent reaches its most metaphysically complex point of unfoldment, evolution begins, and there is a turning back toward the homogeneous, or the divine quietude of self-realization. Cosmic and human sacrifice are essential to both involution and evolution.

Thus, in ancient times, mankind recognized that its awakening to self-awareness was due to the conscious sacrifice of higher beings, and as such, humanity felt obliged to emulate their progenitors through acts of purification and sacrifice, of inner and outer offerings to their celestial parents. In ages long past, sacrificial offerings became the nourishing bond of divine community, or of solidarity between gods, men, and nature. All was harmony and sweet accord in those halcyon days.

Humanity's spiritual, intellectual, and moral growth proceeded in accord with the cyclical rhythms of karmic development. However, over many ensuing eons of time, and through many grievous misuses of natural creative powers, the notion of sacrifice became increasingly materialized. Mankind began to worship at the altar of self, and sacrifice was no longer based on knowledge, nor was it spiritually cleansing.

Solidarity among and between all the kingdoms was diminished, and division and divisiveness supervened. This sad condition has continued, and according to teachings, has cast a long shadow that obscures the consciousness of mankind in Kali Yuga, and especially so in our own time. Despite the sins of Atlantis, most human beings still

recognize the elementary reality and pristine meaning of the two terms sacrifice and solidarity.

These two concepts still retain something of their spiritual resonance, even in a culture like our own, which cherishes competition over cooperation, and favors insular groupism over inclusive community building. While we still have an intuitive feel for these noble ideas, they are not really concepts that think about very often. If we think about sacrifice at all, it is in regard to parenthood, that is, giving birth to and raising children in a spiritually unstable world of moral relativity, devastating drugs, and various forms of identity crises.

In this respect, parental sacrifice has been especially poignant in regard to single parenting and its complex moral, psychological, and economic demands, especially on single mothers. Teachers too have long been revered members of the circumscribed circle of those who engage in some form of sacrifice for others. Traditionally, teachers have been seen as those who help the young give birth to knowledge, such that the latter may contribute to the well-being of a civilized society.

But with the advent of atomized families, conflicted psyches, and drugs, teachers have become surrogate parents. They are implicitly responsible for shepherding students through the tumultuous trials of childhood and puberty, as well as being purveyors of modern knowledge. As a consequence, teacher burnout is extraordinarily high.

What is more, teachers are, by and large, confined to teaching dry facts in one or another form. Intellectual development is paramount, and information mastery is king. Thankfully, science, and especially mathematics, forces students into the realm of abstraction and problem-solving.

However, moral ideals that fuel the heart are forbidden territory, and even the free-ranging domain of literature where morality, psychology, and culture can be encountered and discussed are now suspect. Due to our increased political correctness, there is an explicit censoring of various authors and selected works which cross the crimson line of populist morality. For example, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, Harper

Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* are all banned in certain states in education.

Human solidarity as a concept still signals togetherness, connectedness, and reciprocity. We love the idea of a golden age, a time of plenty, of social harmony, and the rule of adept kings. But that's now for fairy tales, and not for serious historical study or for classroom discussion.

Furthermore, the real-world contemporary meaning of human solidarity has been increasingly contracted to apply to various forms of groupism, ethnocentric attitudes, partisan politics, and even to the idea of the corporate community. This is true at the international level as well as the national and community levels. More fundamentally, human solidarity as the core concept of a vibrant spiritual and moral community has been lost in the existential quest for expanding the boundaries of individual freedom and for diversifying the opportunities for worldly success.

However, there has been some movement toward understanding the significance of solidarity in contemporary ecological studies. We now understand that there is a vast web of interdependence between all the kingdoms of nature. Within the ethos of deep ecology, man is increasingly viewed as the trustee of nature, and not simply as its opportunistic exploiter.

There is also some germ of recognition that man is interdependent with man, but until recently it has not resulted in any kind of shared awareness that might lead to bonds of fellowship that supersede parochial concerns and national self-interest. Then the pandemic came. Fortunately, it has slowly affected the modern collective mindset and ways that could benefit humanity in the long run.

For the first time, we have a feeling of global community that goes beyond the calculus of mere economic interdependence and shared geopolitical interest. Thanks to COVID-19, death and suffering are no longer a forever receding future event, but an imminent possibility for everyone. The pandemic is no respecter of persons, nations, technological know-how, vaccines, or any political ideology whatsoever.

The pandemic has brought fear of death and suffering to the forefront of consciousness. We can never go into public or participate in a family gathering now without the background awareness that we might be contracting a virus that could be deadly to ourselves or to our elders. While fears of the pandemic have been exaggerated and often ignore emerging evidence, the pandemic has brought about a keener collective awareness of the principle of sacrifice and its potential connection with solidarity through shared suffering.

For example, there is a heightened appreciation now of doctors, nurses, and a host of others. In the beginning of the pandemic, while many of us feared for ourselves or our immediate families, there were those who braved the storm and took considerable risk for others. Duty became the new royal dispenser of action.

Moreover, doctors, nurses, and other frontline helpers were themselves contracting COVID-19, and not a few were dying. Their deaths were seen as tragic by many and were an understandable cause of grief for family, friends, and colleagues. Our hearts immediately went out to them.

Yet, at another level, those medical workers who contracted the virus were decidedly inspiring. Doctors, nurses, and hospital staff were acting heroically. They were not simply doing their paid duty, but were deliberately risking their own health for the welfare of the ill, which seemed to grow exponentially every day.

Courage became the moral and spiritual counterpoint to the pervasive global fear. Later on, when we saw beyond the fog of fear, we began to do more than lament the loss of life. We began, as peoples, to celebrate first responders and eventually include in that category of praise many workers who were not highly educated, not highly trained, and not highly skilled professionals.

First responders actually embraced everyone who willingly did their job and their duty in the public realm despite high exposure to COVID-19. Grocers, checkers, postmen and women, firemen, policemen, and the like. These dedicated laborers in dangerous fields could not and would not shelter in place.

They made shelter in place possible and helped us curb our fears and even tempered our criticism of social and economic restrictions. The result of all this now is that people across national borders and competing institutions are bonding together, not simply out of sheer fear, but out of sheer gratitude, sympathy, and admiration for so many selfless exemplars. Respect for first responders has become a different kind of inoculation.

It's a moral and spiritual vaccine that will be far more worthwhile than whatever imperfect physical vaccine is finally adopted and used. So even at the ordinary human level, we can now see how personal sacrifice by many can build moral community beyond geography and cultural boundaries. We sense how a felt sense of solidarity could, in time, lead to a new, more vibrant sense of fellowship which trues us to the pole star of universal civilization, the hallmark of the Aquarian citizen of the future.

In the end, then, sacrifice is a thrice sacred fire that descends from heaven to earth and returns to heaven with earth purified and renewed. In this deeper sense, sacrifice is that principle which consecrates, makes sacred, makes holy, purifies, gives life, sustains life, and destroys form in order to regenerate life for the sake of universal enlightenment. Sacrifice is the great unifier of God, nature, and man.

At the highest human level, where the divine and the human merge, it is jnana yajna, or wisdom sacrifice, which is the quintessential quality of the bodhisattva and the heartbeat of the self-governed sage. For we lesser mortals who are determined to do all we can for brotherhood in these most challenging of times, H. B. Blavatsky encourages us to engage in intelligent as opposed to impulsive sacrifice. The more we engage in thoughtful and timely acts of personal sacrifice, the more we will sense the unmanifest presence of a golden age waiting to be born in the hearts and minds of men and women across our beloved globe.

So now we have plenty of time for questions and comments and thoughts. The question is, it's not what's done, but the spirit in which the least thing is done. You're very qualified to answer that question.

So how does that relate to sacrifice and solidarity? Yes, you're very qualified. All right, well, clearly that's the spirit of it, so to speak. It does encapsulate.

It's not the actual external measurement of the action, necessarily the perceivable event, but the quality of the consciousness, the purity of the motive that is behind it. And the thing about actions that flow from a sacrificial spirit, from tapas, from internal heat of renouncing, as is pointed out, any sense of concern for oneself or really even results, that kind of spirit is itself contagious. It's strange, but even things that seem simple, that don't seem to attract a lot of attention, if they're done with this wonderful spirit from the unmanifest to the manifest through a pure heart with a focused lucid intelligence, when that happens, there's something that's emitted, a kind of efflux, that purifies the entire atmosphere.

And it can be reflected, too, in the tonality and quality of speech, or also in gesture, or also in which way the way someone looks when they're speaking. Even their silence can be sacrificial. So there's something about human beings in their simple acts, as well as their large lacks on the stage of history, which are clearly, we can see their sacrificial element, the element of thinking beyond self to a much wider domain, a much richer domain, we might think, of history.

But nonetheless, whether the smaller the minuscule, I mean, whether the larger the minuscule, the quality of the heart consciousness is what, in a sense, embraces a larger circumference of hearts and minds, affecting them unawares, perhaps. One remembers a wonderful story about Gandhi, where someone, this might have been mentioned before from the platform, but like all good stories, it's worth retelling. But this reporter came to speak to Gandhi, and he was determined to do a thorough, honest reporter's report on Gandhi.

He was fed up with all the journalists going there, only to be deferential to Gandhi, only to be, you know, only to be very gracious to him, always praising him, always awed by him. It was difficult not to be awed by Gandhi in a certain way, a kind of, you know, that kind of saintly atmosphere, and his sweetness, and as, you know, as someone once

said, once you met him and you walked with him in the dong, you realize this man truly loved people. He truly loved people, and his mind was always active.

It was active on what to do, how to be helpful, how to do this, and how to do that. So, but anyway, so this reporter goes, makes an appointment, goes to Gandhi at the precise time. He has his questions all thought out very carefully, and he's going to challenge him in every respect, not realizing that that's the least thing Gandhi was afraid of, was the challenging question.

That was like, you know, morning breakfast. You know, that was not anything he was at all evasive about. But the fellow comes in, grim and determined, we can imagine, his little hut, and he walks in, and he makes a little gesture of a bow, and he looks in Gandhi's eyes, kind of like looking at Ramana Maharishi's eyes.

When you looked at his eyes for a moment, he paused, and Gandhi made a gesture for him to sit down, and he said something very sweet and gracious to him, and put up his hand like, you know, hold on, no questions, just sit down. And he said, in a moment, I felt as though an invisible arm went out and enveloped me in simple human warmth. And he then asked me, before I could ask him questions, he asked, what is your name again? Ah, yes.

Who do you work for? I see, I see. How long have you been doing it? Ah, do you have family? Do you have wife, children? How many? And what are their health like? And so forth and so on. He said, by the time my hour was almost up, I realized I'd been talking about myself.

And at the same time, while I was talking about myself, I felt better. And because he was so genuine, and then he took my questions, now give me your questions, for sure. Frank answers every one.

Didn't dodge a one. And he said, I left, and I was leading the course of all those who said, when you encounter something so genuine, who sacrifices personally for everything that is worthwhile, and he's a true spokesman for the poor, for all those who

are the outcast, he's a true spokesman. What can you do but be elevated? And he went on to become a very successful person in the sense of a very good reporter.

So you see the effects. The question is, we often think of sacrifice in terms of a formal ritual, but Mr. Judge in notes on the Bhagavad Gita has pointed out that during this time and cycle, there's a disjoint between the formal sacrificial acts and the inner meaning. What would we have to say about this disjoint? The strategy didn't work.

What Judge mentions in that section about ritualisms and the animal sacrifice and so forth, that is very mysterious, and somewhat shocks our contemporary sense of things, too. It seems like what he's pointing to is that at one point in evolution, going back in time to ancient times and culture, there was a deeper knowledge about rituals that was the kind of knowledge which recognized those actions and those mantrams that were voiced the right way with preparation and the right attitude, and also those who were witnessing it also had to be in the proper posture for it, but with the right attitude, the right preparation, the appropriate mantrams, it was a summoning, an integration of the cosmic and the human, of summoning divine influences and beings who could then, because of the matrix created by the knowledge and the attitude and the actions and the sounds that were sounded, and the purity of the sounds and the motives behind the sounds, would be such that they could be a summoning which would allow a kind of purification to take place to those individuals who were witnesses and therefore in the proper mental attitude to benefit from it, and also there was a giving, because you not only receive, you must also offer to the gods as well. So out of that ritual, that enactment, would come a new resolve that you would do better, that you would honor all your duties, all your responsibilities, be truly loving, truly inclusive, truly aware of the fact that there's a divine harmony of various kind of music between the celestial and the terrestrial, and periodically it becomes cacophony, and so when people come together in rituals, they're re-establishing a harmony, they're getting out, moving away from the cacophony, and to therefore creating more music that's more appropriate for society, you might say.

So it was a way of regenerating the collective as well as the individual, and so that's a very wonderful thing. We know in time this becomes rather mechanical and mindless, because people lose the ancient knowledge. They know the rituals, they have feeling for it, and you know, we shouldn't shortchange that, because people who genuinely have a feeling that what they are doing brings them closer to Krishna or Shiva or whomever, Krishna tells you in the Bhagavad Gita they're working for him too.

So anyone can take a ritual, adopt a ritual out of the world's heritage, adopt something that you think is useful, and you can use it as an occasion for having the right mental attitude, preparing for it, being worthy of it, and seeing it as an occasion for acceleration, for growth, for learning. You can do it. You can take this all from the past now and redo it in a different way.

That's why some people might give it their own meaning, but if they do and they see that it's not to be divorced from the rest of their life, that it's actually part and parcel of the weave and woof of their living, then it has a more cleansing influence. So we can well imagine that even though that knowledge has been lost by and large, those who are genuine of heart, who do home puja, who do individual puja, who find their own moral, spiritual, psychological acts that they can do, that refresh and renew and remind them that they're part of some vast cosmic enterprise, cosmic pilgrimage, even for a few moments, it's said. You know, if you read some of those Upanishads or you read some of what the Buddha says, about one sentence uttered in pure love and devotion is worth a thousand mantrams that aren't said with any feeling or knowledge or any understanding or any gratitude whatsoever.

We can make our own kind of rituals, our own observances, develop our own patterns that are filled with the solar and not just the lunar, which can therefore actually spread out like a beneficent, you know, blessings to the culture around us and to infuse our relationships with something sweet, something nourishing, and it becomes reciprocal too. It's amazing how, you know, how they say a smile brings a smile, and that in turn brings another smile. Or Emerson, his wonderful poem about love and courage, talking about the, you know, the twinkling in the eye that goes from person to person to person

to person, because it's love, you know, and daring, dare to love, have a twinkle in the eye and that smile.

One of the things about COVID we notice when we go out in public, we all, you know, we wear our mask, so now we're into the, into what would be called the eye language. You see, people's eyes are more, it's more interesting. People, when they go to help you, their eyes greet you, their eyes, their smiles are not just commercial smiles.

It actually has to go to the level of the eyes. So often I, when, you know, one sees people, they aren't speaking, but when you see their eyes doing this, you know, they're saying, oh, thank you, or no, you first, something of that sort. I think we're going to have a new, a new kind of language like that, which was mentioned in the past too, you know, and that, you know, a lot of people have this doubt, language of the eyes, language of gesture, language of touch.

All these things are perhaps going to be recovered in a different, in a different way. So we have silence in marketplaces, yay, and children not throwing nitfits. They're wearing their mask.

They feel more, you know, present. So they're listening to mother, listening to father, watching other people, all doing the same thing. See, everybody's following the same discipline.

So that's good for children directly. They see that, and I think they respect that. They feel part of it.

Just by that, I'm doing something that everybody else is doing. Adults are doing it. That's a good thing too, you would think.

It might not be a ritual, but it's a good pattern. How does one develop the wisdom needed for the pure sacrifice? For example, Ganesha principle, which enables one to do the most with the very least action, is required to do action effectively. Compassion is not enough.

One needs dhyana and prajna, as well as the paramita of dana. So how does one develop the wisdom needed? Yes, one would agree. That's really a question about the path, fundamentally, the unfolding from beginning with the germ, the germ of love in the heart, and such that it infuses the mind, and then they can work cooperatively together, the mind and the heart, in such a way that one becomes, as HPB says in the key, what is needed is intelligent sacrifice.

Look at Father Damien. There you have love, you have sacrifice, you have community, right? You would also assume too that he had a high degree of perceptiveness. He saw their condition.

He wasn't threatened by it, he wasn't afraid of it, and furthermore, he took his vows seriously. That's the path. What can I do to help these people who are the most wretched people, who have no one, who are living in chaos, who are, where girls are not safe, children are not safe, drunkenness is everywhere, they don't have food on a regular basis, food is dropped off, and then people run.

Their families are suffering for them at a distance because it was assumed it was all caused by some form of sexual misconduct. So all the things that went against those who were very conservative in the church, or people of just ordinary morality, shunned them, and they were terribly afraid of them, just like we have been with the pandemic. But here you have an individual who says, wait a minute, what does it mean to say that Jesus' doctrine of love is real? You're to love thy neighbor, you're also to love thy enemy.

What about the destitute? Why can't someone go and help these people and take the risk that goes with it? What else is, it's unconditionality that makes the path possible, that converts love and time into knowledge, and makes knowledge luminous. So that he goes there and uses his knowledge of how to build a church, how to build a school, but more importantly, he goes to understand how to link people to link people, to connecting. He understood that unless people are connected, they're going to be terribly lonely, terribly desolate, in addition to having the disease.

So their psychological condition was terrible, but by his example, his warmth, and his also insisting on certain rules, he was able to win them over, win their trust. And once you have people's trust, because you are taking risk on their behalf, and you're unconditional about it, and you're also being direct about it, it does its magic. And look what happened in time.

He took a terrible situation and transformed it into a situation which was quite the opposite of where it had been. And they had some solace, some degree of happiness, some degree of resignation, before they had to meet their fate. And as we know, he also contracted the disease.

And the doctor said, when he finally had to tell him, a mainland doctor told him, I have to tell you, Father Damien, I'm so sorry to tell you, but you now have, you know, leprosy as well. And he said, I can tell you that he nodded and then he smiled. He didn't show one ounce of regret or fear.

He says, I'm with the people. And he went back. And if you look at a picture of him in his coffin, you'll see that his posture and his face is a peaceful look, even a smile.

So to him, catching the disease meant that he completely identified with their law. One can understand why HPB says, if we had money, we'd make a statue of gold to Father Damien, because he exemplifies sacrifice and he built community. Because you're not the doer, the spirit of the doer, and you're just the vestige that carries it out.

Yes, about consecrating one's life to Krishna, that is a very deep act. Furthermore, it would seem that it calls for an awful lot for it to be genuine and sustainable. It's not merely a matter of saying, I believe in Krishna and I'm willing to do everything for Krishna, because doing everything for Krishna is extremely challenging.

When you have a difficult day, you have a challenged relationship, you have a challenged position at work, you have a disease, you have all kinds of things that become impediment and distract our attention totally. The amount of devotion and discipline that goes with it naturally, like the discipline of music or the discipline of athletics, if

you're committed to it, this is what the whole challenge is about. To become truly devoted to Krishna in that high sense requires a great deal of agency before that.

One is like saying this, you know, how Gandhi used to say, you know, we need to reduce ourselves to zero. You know, the self-cancellation is essential to the practice of truth and non-violence. Well, you've got to have a self to reduce to a zero.

You have to have a strong sense of being a person who's trying to seize what seems to be best and right and trying to do it in the world as lovingly, non-violently as possible. That takes a lot of stand-up attitude, it takes a lot of personal responsibility, and it requires you to continually cleanse and set aside the ego, which is itself a challenge. But what it seems to be saying is, if one consciously, in the appropriate moment in mental state, thinks of Krishna not only as a being and a guru, but as a spark in oneself and in all other selves, and then one goes about trying to understand how does one honor that in a day? How can one act in a way that's more in concord with the luminous, benevolent glow of the Krishna spark in the heart? How does one go about that, unique to each one? What can you do? Gaining control of oneself, self-control, self-regulation, becoming more thoughtful, becoming less reactive.

When sitting down to eat, giving a moment to think of those who made the food possible, think of Krishna then. When bathing, as it says, think of Krishna as cleansing the body, cleansing the mind, cleansing the psyche, purifying the heart, letting all the dust and dirt down the drain, in many ways as one can, without forcing it and trying to make it mechanical, because then it blows up. One needs to, as was mentioned, meditate and get beyond images and think of Krishna as like the spiritual sun, more luminous than, as Gandhi said, a million suns.

The divine is more luminous than a million suns. And he said, the moments that I've felt it in me, there's just no words that can convey the presence, the sweetness, the calmness, the confidence that you feel when you feel part of something so deep, so oceanic, so connecting to everything beautiful and good. When you have that experience,

said Gandhi, it makes everything else you have to go through in life so much more worthwhile.

And you feel so privileged to be able to do acts that are helpful, that bring about a better condition for other human beings. And then you have the opportunity to see it in the eyes of others, and you see people doing marvelous things that are acts of Krishna, whether they call it Jesus or whatever, it doesn't matter. You see that, because to grow in this regard is to increasingly see it everywhere, and not even thinking about seeing it in oneself.

It becomes spontaneously present. But it takes effort, and it takes self-correction, and it's really about making the teachings of Krishna real. Is sacrifice ingrained in the cosmos as a regular usual thing that we haven't always been aware of? Sacrifice is everywhere.

It's in every being, and in every atom. Because the self is the foundation of everything, and that self in its imminence gives of its substance for there to be a world, even though it's a maya. But if that's the foundation of all consciousness matter, all levels of being of every conceivable kind, from the highest beings down to the most minutest form of life, if they're all reflections of the Atman, and that's a principle of both transcendence and sacrificial imminence, then it's got to be the case that that's a subtle fire that burns without burning.

It's a subtle flame that is so innately powerful, we might say, and luminous, that it's the very heartbeat of everything. That's why no creature's ever really lost, because somewhere there's pulsating that deeper sacrificial heartbeat. George William Russell says, how can you tell by looking at someone who looks like childhood runs in fear whenever they see this being? That's his dramatic way of putting it.

Childhood runs in fear when it sees this being. But how do we know what burns at a deeper level and is obscured by a shadow that that person took on in incarnating in that culture and in that particular set? And therefore, because of the greatness of that being, that being is struggling with something to master it, to transmute it, and to pacify it, and to purify it, even though it might take not one life or anything dramatic, it might take

that being many lives. But that being in the depth of its soul is committed to doing that, and it is willing to take on what comes with it, because it doesn't matter what the world says.

It's what's happening, evolutionarily speaking, at a much more profound level that has an effect on classes of beings in many different directions. So we have these unusual beings, and then you have, on the other hand, the people come down who are golden, who come from another sphere. They are aware of these beings.

They also help these beings, because it becomes a kind of collect, where the hardest pure nature helps. Other beings help. They don't abandon people.

See, this is what the Brotherhood of the Light does. It never abandons. It's always on the side of it.

It respects karma, but at the same time it works with it. It helps someone. It sees something deeper.

And that's the deeper thing about sacrifice, I think. They respond. And it's incredibly beautiful, incredibly meaningful.