

Transcript ~ Awakening Theosophia

Imagination, Ideation and Intuition

A Podcast by Kirk Gradin

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“Reason is the clumsy weapon of the scientists — intuition the unerring guide of the seer.”

H. P. Blavatsky

Isis Unveiled, p 433

Warmest greetings to everyone and many thanks to ITC for holding these yearly conferences and for asking me to say a few words on this very profound and challenging topic. Most of what I can offer is due to the inspirational influence and magnificent foundational literature of the Theosophical Movement, most especially in the writings of H.P. Blavatsky and Raghavan N. Iyer.

In *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P. Blavatsky explains that the “very old book”, or series of books, from which both *The Voice of the Silence* and the Stanzas of Dzyan are derived, was originally taken down in Senzar, a language still unknown to modern linguists. She says it is a record of the words of Divine beings, who dictated it to the “Sons of Light,” in Central Asia, roughly one million years ago. Like a mighty river of celestial light, the greatest Initiates of every nation were carrying forth a knowledge passed down eons before by god-like beings present even at the dawn of the first Races of our globe.¹ And it is from this radiant stream that all the historically known sages have branched off.² An unbroken lineage of Masters of Wisdom stood behind the mystery schools of ancient Egypt and Greece, behind Krishna, Buddha, Pythagoras, Jesus and many others. “These founders were all transmitters, not original teachers.”³ In other words, what we call *Theosophia* has an origin that cannot be traced or encompassed by any history book, sacred text or known tradition. “Dzyu” she wrote, inherited by the whole of humanity “dealing with eternal truths and primal causes” is “the expression of the collective Wisdom of the Dhyanibuddhas”.⁴ Phonetically she relates it to *Djan* or *Jnana* meaning “to reform one’s self by meditation and knowledge,”⁵ by means of which a second or inner birth is possible.

¹ *The Secret Doctrine*, i, xliii

² *Ibid*, i, 207-8

³ *Ibid*, i, xxxvi

⁴ *Ibid*, i, p. 108

⁵ *Ibid*, i, xx, fn

So before speaking glibly about “awakening Theosophia,” we should understand that we are referring to progressive stages by which we may begin to re-join this ever-present spiritual current of primeval wisdom, resonating with the most advanced and benevolent guardians and guides of the human race from which we have become self-exiled. This re-awakening to our inheritance and return to our true nature is the prospect held out for us by the Bodhisattva path. As described in *The Voice of the Silence*, this small old path, is defined by seven guarded gates known as *paramitas*. Though all seven must be eventually mastered, our theme today pertains most specifically to the 6th gate, that of *Dhyāna*, “the Bodhi portal.”⁶

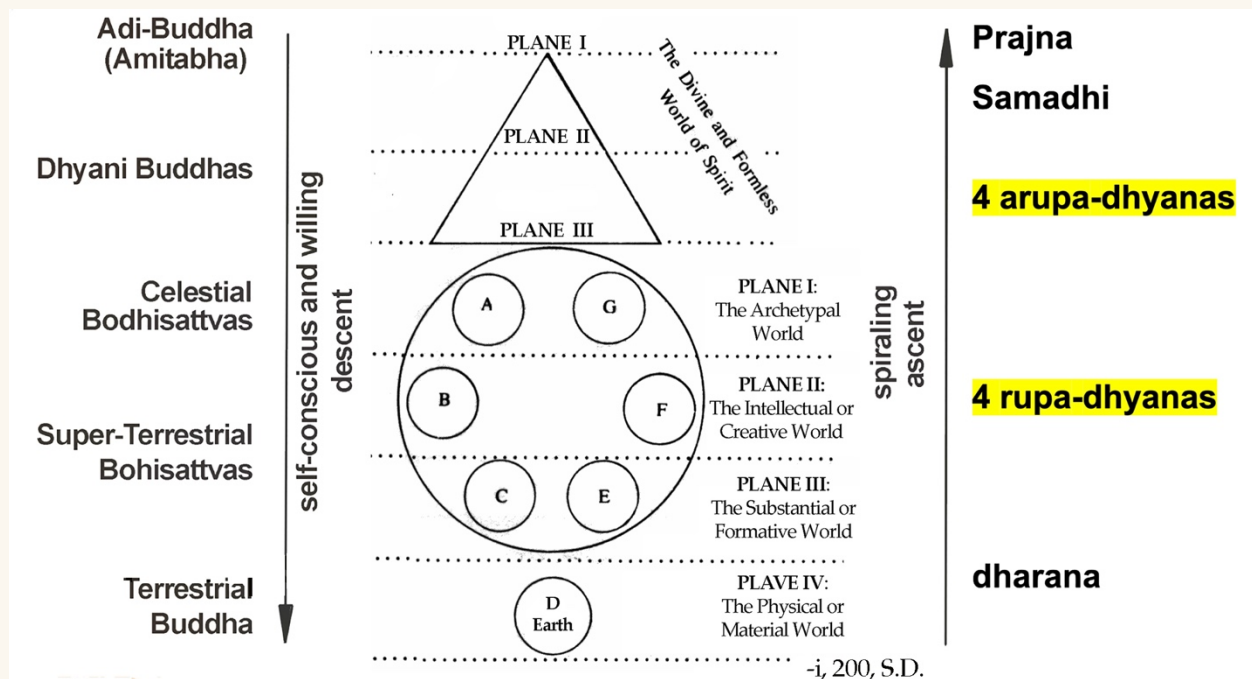
Dhyāna, is summarily described in the *Voice*, as that “golden gate” which once opened leads toward “the realm of Sat eternal and its ceaseless contemplation.” *Sat* in Sanskrit is Truth, Purity and Goodness, but in the Upanishads is linked with knowledge of Brahman, embracing both Being and Non-Being. Called “Be-ness” in *The Secret Doctrine*, It is the All, the One Reality. The path of *dhyāna* that leads towards its realization is traditionally said to be composed of eight stages, four *rūpa* and four *arupa dhyānas*. What begins with the intense concentration of the mind upon a single interior object called *dharana*, progresses through multiple stages of ever-deepening and more continuous states of meditative abstraction and culminates in *samādhi* as the capacity for complete, selfless absorption. The faculties and virtues awakened through this training, also involves at least seven stages of initiation, wherein the seventh *paramita*, that of *prajñā*, is realized. *Prajñā* also has many layers of meaning. At its pinnacle is “that which makes of man a God, creating him a Bodhisattva, son of the Dhyanis.”⁷ In that sense, the highest form of *dhyāna* is inseparable from the highest form of pure knowledge: direct, unbroken, and self-conscious union with the All and with *Adi-Buddha* or universal Buddhi, involving the effortless mastery of creative logoc essences.⁸ The column on the left of the diagram summarizes the hierarchies of descent such a being passes through in its return into incarnation as given by H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine*.⁹

⁶ *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 70

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 53

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 65 fn. Also, see “Aquarian Axioms” compiled by H.P.B in 1890, #8: “Spirituality is not what we understand by the words ‘virtue’ and ‘goodness’. It is the power of perceiving formless spiritual essences.”

⁹ *The Secret Doctrine*, i, 572



And while the ideal of the Bodhisattva is certainly the highest imaginable, all are invited to prepare to approach the threshold. No robes or monasteries, no degrees or physical postures are required. It is open to electricians and carpenters, blue-collar secretaries, accountants, trash collectors and house cleaners. All that is needed, as Plato said, is the turning around of the soul from darkness to light. As Shantideva said, it begins when one discovers the precious jewel of *bodhichitta* within, the wisdom seeking mind pervaded by a love for all consecrated by an irreversible commitment.

Yet we find this initial unlocking of the heart is no simple feat, itself requiring the unfoldment of the higher faculties of both moral and metaphysical imagination. For example, we will be asked at the threshold: "Hast thou attuned thy heart and mind to the great mind and heart of all mankind?"¹⁰ Have we imaginatively identified with both the worst and the best, the most degraded as well as the most advanced and exalted of beings? The most fallen, as the *Voice* describes are the "living dead" or those on the verge of soul-destruction. "Behold the Hosts of Souls. Watch as "they hover o'er the stormy sea of human life, and how, exhausted, bleeding, broken-winged, they drop one after other on the swelling waves."¹¹ Here the widespread suffering of which the Buddha spoke is not physical, but the tragedy of mental and moral isolation. Fundamentally, it is a crisis of identity, a misguided search for happiness based on

¹⁰ *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 55

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 9

ignorance and attachment to a false sense of self. It is “mental woe unspeakable” as the soul becomes enrapt in a collective vortex, inverting human purpose and destiny.

At the same time, we are encouraged by the *Voice* to imagine the boundless compassion of beings who are capable of calmly assessing the enormity of the problem and who possess the skillful means and precise wisdom needed to assist and alleviate. We are not only given a portrait of the ideal practitioner of meditation, like, “an alabaster vase” in which the golden “flame of *Prajñā*”¹² burns with unflickering radiance, but those Mahatmas who have reached the peace and bliss of Nirvana and repeatedly renounced it on behalf of humanity. The mind, “like a becalmed and boundless ocean, spreadeth out in shoreless space.”¹³ With no more to gain or learn from terrestrial life, the Bodhisattva incarnates for Kalpas without number so that even the lame may walk and the blind may see, that even the most fallen may rise again with confidence in the promise of self-redemption. So great is the hidden impact of such a being returning from “the further shore,” that all of nature “thrills with joyous awe and feels subdued.” Even stately pines join the symphonic chorus and “mysteriously whisper: “A Master has arisen, a MASTER OF THE DAY.”¹⁴

Every page of *The Voice of the Silence* is replete with such bija sutras. When repeatedly imagined and meditated upon, they will solicit Buddhist intuitions and soul memories. Each is a truth with layers of meaning, designed to draw consciousness towards the Diamond Soul.

The 18th century writer and theologian, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote of imagination as it operates in men of genius. He called it “a Living Power and prime agent of all human perceptions”, a “synthetic and magical” capacity “organic and active” which “assimilates, dissolves and recreates...synthesizes, and unifies”. “The primary Imagination I hold to be...a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.”¹⁵

Coleridge carefully distinguished between imagination and fantasy as “two distinct and widely differing faculties.” Fancy he wrote, is mechanical and passive, it “associates, aggregates, collates, juxtaposes...and rearranges”¹⁶, without any true creativity taking place. Theosophically, we would categorize fantasy as a psychic mental production, morally colored

¹² *Ibid*, p. 70

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 71

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 71

¹⁵ *Biographia Literaria* (p. 49) Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶ *Biographia Literaria* (p. 15) Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Kindle Edition.

by the false self. Captivated by lower levels of the astral light, the ceaseless generator of the mind serves the terrestrial persona, becoming the delusional but evil genius in each of us.

By contrast, the mystic and Irish Theosophist G.W. Russell, spoke of the purified imagination as the means by which we grasp archetypes perpetually manifesting in everyday experience. Speaking of the great sages of the past and present, he wrote:

“The meditation they urged on us has been explained as 'the inexpressible yearning of the inner man to go out to the infinite'. But the Infinite we would enter is living. It is the ultimate being of us. Meditation is a fiery brooding on that majestic Self. We imagine ourselves into Its vastness. We conceive ourselves as mirroring Its infinitudes, as moving in all things, as living in all beings, in earth, water, air, fire, æther. We try to know as It knows, to live as It lives, to be compassionate as It is compassionate. We equal ourselves to It that we may understand It and become It. . . . 'What a man thinks, that he is: that is the old secret,' said the wise. We have imagined ourselves into this pitiful dream of life. By imagination and will we re-enter true being, becoming what we conceive of.”¹⁷

We don't know if Russell had knowledge of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of DeityYoga, but it sounds as though he had a clear grasp of the fundamental discipline. As defined by Matheau Riccard, this practice is not the imaginative visualization of blissful but illusory realms and states of being, but “the purification of perception”¹⁸ by which we become aware of our true nature, like a pauper who discovers the pot of gold buried beneath his hut.

According to the late professor Henry Corbin, who spent his life devoted to studies in comparative philosophy, religion and esoteric Islam, the vast and complex idea of Imagination and its field of activity is called “*alam al-mithal*”¹⁹ by the Sufis. It is a multi-layered metaphysical world between the phenomenal and that of pure Mystery. It is composed of “Idea Images”, essential meanings, and “confraternities of spiritual beings...by which divine realities are made intelligible.” As a faculty of mystic perception, it is activated through the divine quest which does not so much create, as discover. In Sufi, Christian mystics and the theosophists of the

¹⁷ *The Candle of Vision*, George William Russel, Unity Press, 1990, p. 14

¹⁸ Sand Mandala....

¹⁹ *Alone with the Alone, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, Henry Corbin, Bollingen 1998, p. 21 and chap. 34.

Renaissance, Corbin wrote, we “encounter the idea that the Godhead itself possesses the power of Imagination.” By imagining the universe, God brought it into manifestation through the eternal virtualities and potencies of his own being. The more the active imagination in the gnostic is aligned with truth, the more it becomes a self-conscious organ of this deific, cosmogonic imagination.

Similarly, in the Gupta Vidya, ideation corresponding to levels of *Akasha-Vach*, may be said to be four-fold: latent, pre-cosmic, cosmic and human, each of which is oceanic and ultimately ineffable. We imagine it first as a boundless circle of deathless radiance, mirroring Absolute Unity as the One Sun of Truth. Periodically, the unmanifested logos initiates the manifested and out of boundless compassion, the One Mind substance becomes two and three. At the cosmic dawn, the descent of the pre-cosmic triad into cosmic ideation, from *arupa* to *rupa* is accompanied by the seven Dhyanis. These seven Divine Rays of the one Sun, manifest the plan latent in the divine mind. Emanating through a process akin to what we call *Dhyāna*, wrote H.P.B.²⁰, each sacrificially gives of their own essence. Each emanates and then incarnates into theatres of evolution in which every spark of monadic life has the same opportunity to become a self-consciously divine, logoic center of the highest creativity and universal good. Purified ideation in humanity would both mirror and participate in this salvific activity through pure love, ceaseless renewal and spiritual self-transformation.

For the beginning aspirant, the reformation of thought, will and feeling also involves both deductive and inductive, discursive and non-discursive ideation nurtured by gratitude, an overflowing benevolence, and over-arching conviction regarding the One Life. Spiritual truths, principles and Aquarian Axioms can be used to combine dialectical inquiry with self-alchemy. Daily mental breathing can mirror the spiraling descent and ascent of the Great Breath fusing metaphysics and ethics. Can one imaginatively follow the train of continuity from the formless into form, from the One Monad to the countless monads cycling through every plane and every form of experience possible in our chain of globes? Can we begin to sense the omnipresence of divine thought and divine being in every point of visible and invisible space? Can we begin to see the continuous relevance of the seven Dhyanis manifesting in seven kingdoms through seven Rounds and Races by making credible correlations with a cycle of seven years in human life, with the cycle of seven days of the week, as well as with the various states of consciousness we use or mis-use over the course of a single day? What would it mean to truly experience each

²⁰ *The Secret Doctrine*, i, 572

dawn as the logoic dawn of a manvantara and noon (instead of just “lunch”) as the descent of the gods into human form, the awakening of manas? Can we fearlessly deepen our awareness of our own misalignment and inversion of these universal forces? Can we activate the spiritual will in order to repeatedly purify and self-correct? At the end of the day, can we noetically work our way back from our seemingly individual experiences, resolving all sense of separateness and differentiation on each plane into the universal quantum field of joyous identity with the whole of humanity and the One Life? Everything returns to that divine plenum of Absolute Light and Sound enjoyed by every human being in dreamless sleep and is consciously sought by the meditator in deepest reverie.

The more ideation of this type is cultivated in combination with all the paramitas, the more intuition will waken. What we currently call intuition appears as a fleeting flash of insight, a partial glimpse of a higher truth. Studies have shown intuition operating at critical breakthroughs in many arenas of human endeavor. On the spiritual path, it must be tested through higher forms of reasoning and through moral embodiment before it becomes a reliable and indispensable means of knowing. Moral states precede mental states and the vision of one Adept is not accepted until verified through the experience of many others. In the psychospiritual physiology of the Gupta Vidya it is the opening of the wisdom eye, the Eye of Dangma, the means by which the true Seer apprehends nature’s most hidden mysteries. Here, the soul of things is seen. No veil of matter, time or space offers obstruction to either vision or action. And because microcosm and macrocosm self-consciously unite, the being progressively becomes a channel of Alaya, the absolute compassion, fohatic energy and universal intelligence behind all of nature. This direct and unmediated form of knowing that is without bias or error says H. P. Blavatsky, is *Theosophia*: “God-knowledge.” And it is one of the great purposes of the Theosophical movement in whatever form it has taken through the ages, to keep the possibility and promise of this potential alive in the human heart.

Kirk B. Gradin