

## Some Practical Suggestions for Daily Life

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### PREFACE

THE quotations of which the following article is composed were not originally extracted with a view to publication, and may therefore appear somewhat disjointed.

They were first published as a *Theosophical Sifting*, in the hope that readers might take the hint, and make daily book of extracts for themselves, thus preserving a lasting record of the books read and rendering their reading of practical value. By following this plan, the reader would concentrate in a brief space whatever has appealed to him as being the essence of the book.

The plan of reading a set of quotations each morning, trying to live up to them during the day, and meditating upon them in leisure moments, is also suggested as helpful to the earnest student.

### I

RISE early, as soon as you are awake, without lying idly in bed, half-waking and half-dreaming. Then earnestly pray that all mankind may be spiritually regenerated, that those who are struggling on the path of truth may be encouraged by your prayers and work more earnestly and successfully, and that you may be strengthened and not yield to the seductions of the senses. Picture before your mind the form of your Master as engaged in Samadhi. Fix it before you, fill in all the details, think of him with reverence, and pray that all mistakes of omission and commission may be forgiven. This will greatly facilitate concentration, purify your heart, and do much more. Or reflect upon the defects of your character: *thoroughly realise their evils and the transient pleasures they give you*, and firmly will that you shall try your best not to yield to them the next time. This self-analysis and bringing yourself before the bar of your own conscience facilitates, in a degree hitherto undreamt of, your spiritual progress. When you bathe, exercise during the whole time your will, that your moral impurities should be washed away with those of your body. In your relations with others observe the following rules.

1- Never do anything which you are not bound to do as your duty; that is, any unnecessary thing. *Before* you do a thing, think whether it is your duty to do it.

2- *Never speak an unnecessary word*. Think of the effects your words might produce before you give utterance to them. *Never allow yourself to violate your principles by the force of your company*.

3- Never allow any unnecessary or vain thought to occupy your mind. This is more easily said than done. You cannot make your mind a blank all at once. So in the beginning try to prevent evil or idle thoughts by occupying your mind with the analysis of your own faults, or the contemplation of the Perfect Ones.

4- During meals exercise your will, that your food should be properly digested and build for you a body in harmony with your spiritual aspirations, and not create evil passion and wicked thoughts. Eat only when you are hungry and drink when you are thirsty, and *never otherwise*. If some particular preparation attracts your palate, do not allow yourself to be seduced into taking it simply to gratify that craving. Remember that the pleasure you derive from it had no existence some seconds before, and that it will cease to exist some seconds afterwards; that it is a transit pleasure, that that which is a pleasure now will turn into pain if you take it in large quantities; that it gives pleasure only to the tongue; that if you are put to a great trouble to get that thing, and if you allow yourself to be seduced by it, you will not be ashamed at any thing to get it; that while there is another object that can give you eternal bliss, this centering your affections on a transient thing is sheer folly; that *you* are neither the body nor the sense, and therefore the pleasure and the pains which *these* endure can never affect you really, and so on. Practice the same train of reasoning in the case of every other temptation, and, though you will often fail, yet you will achieve a surer success. *Do no read much*. If you read for ten minutes, reflect for as many hours. Habituate yourself to solitude, and to remain alone with your thoughts.

Accustom yourself to the thought that no one beside yourself can assist you, and wean away your affections from all things gradually. Before you sleep, pray as you did in the morning. Review the actions of the day, and see wherein you have failed, and resolve that you will not fail in them to-morrow. [Theosophist, August 1889, page 647]

## II

THE right motive for seeking self-knowledge is that which pertains to *knowledge* and not to *self*. Self-knowledge is worth seeking by virtue of its being knowledge, and not by virtue of its pertaining to self. The main requisite for acquiring self-knowledge is *pure love*. Seek knowledge for pure love, and self-knowledge eventually crowns the effort. The fact of a student growing impatient is proof positive that he works for reward, and not for love, and that, in its turn proves that he does not deserve the great victory in store for those who really work for pure love. [Theosophist, August 1889 , page 663]

The "God" in us- that is to say, the Spirit of Love and Truth, Justice and Wisdom, Goodness and Power- should be our only true and permanent *Love*, our only reliance in everything, our only *Faith*, which, standing firm as a rock, can for ever be trusted; our only *Hope*, which will never fail us if all other things perish; and the only object which we must seek to obtain, by our Patience, waiting contentedly until our evil Karma has been exhausted and the divine Redeemer will reveal to us his presence within our soul. The door through which he enters is called *Contentment*; for he who is discontented with himself is discontented with the law that made him such as he is; and as God is *Himself* the Law, God will not come to those that are discontented with Him. [Theosophical Siftings No. 8, vol. li, page 9, Hartmann ]

If we admit that we are in the stream of evolution, then each circumstance *must be* to us quite right. And in our failure to perform set acts should be our greatest help, for we can in no other way learn that

calmness which Krishna insists upon. If all our plans succeeded, then no contrasts would appear to us. Also those plans we make may all be made ignorantly, and thus wrongly, and kind Nature will not permit us to carry them out. We get no blame for the plan, but we may acquire karmic demerit by not accepting the impossibility of achieving. If you are at all cast down, then by just that much are your thoughts lessened in power. *One could be confined in a prison and yet be a worker for the cause.* So I pray you to remove from your mind any distaste for present circumstances. If you can succeed in looking at it all as *just what you in fact desired*, ["You" meaning the Higher Self. We are as we make ourselves ] then it will act not only as strengthener of your thoughts, but will act reflexly on your body and make it stronger. [ Path, August 1889, page 131]

To act and act wisely when the time for action comes, to wait and wait patiently when it is time for repose, put man in accord with the rising and falling tides (of affairs), so that with nature and law at his back, and truth and beneficence as his beacon light, he may accomplish wonders. Ignorance of this law results in periods of unreasoning enthusiasm on the one hand, and depressions and even despair on the other. Man thus becomes the victim of the tides when he should be their Master. [Path, July 1889, page 107]

Have patience, Candidate, as one who fears no failure, courts no success. [ Voice of the Silence, page 31 ]

*Accumulated energy cannot be annihilated*, it must be transferred to other forms, or be transformed into other modes of motion; it cannot remain for ever inactive and yet continue to exist. It is useless to attempt to resist a passion which we cannot control. If its accumulating energy is not led into other channels, it will grow until becomes stronger than will, and stronger than reason. *To control it*, you must lead it into another and *higher channel*. Thus a love for something vulgar may be changed by turning it into a love for something high, and vice may be changed *into virtue by changing its aim*. Passion is blind, it goes where it is led, and reason is a safer guide for it than the instinct. Stored up anger (or love) *will find* some object upon which to spend its fury, else it may produce an explosion destructive to its possessor; *tranquility follows a storm*. The ancients said that nature suffers no vacuum. We cannot destroy or annihilate a passion. If it is driven away, another elemental influence will take its place. We should therefore not attempt to destroy the low without putting something in its place, but we should displace the low by the high; vice by virtue, and superstition by knowledge. [ Magic, page 126, Hartmann ]

### III

LEARN that there is no cure for desire, no cure for the love of reward, no cure for the misery of longing, save in the fixing of the sight and hearing on that which is invisible and soundless. [ Light on the Path, Karma, page 35 ]

A man must believe in his innate power of progress. A man must refuse to be terrified by his greater nature, and must not be drawn back by his lesser or material self. [ Comments Light on the Path ]

All the past shows us that difficulty is no excuse for dejection, much less for despair, else the world would have been without the many wonders of civilization.[ Through the Gates of Gold, page 69 ]

Strength to step forward is the primary need of him who has chosen his path. Where is this to be found? Looking round, it is not hard to see where other men find their strength. Its source is profound conviction. [ Through the Gates of Gold, page 87 ]

Abstain because it is right to abstain, not that yourself shall be kept clean. [ Light on the Path. ]

The man who wars against himself and wins the battle can do it only when he knows that in that war he is doing the one thing which is worth doing.

"Resist not evil," that is, do not complain of or feel anger against the inevitable disagreeables of life. *Forget yourself* (in working for others). If men revile, persecute, or wrong one, why resist? In the resistance we create greater evils. [ Path, August 1887, page 151 ]

The immediate work, whatever it may be, has the abstract claim of duty, and its relative importance or non-importance is not to be considered at all. [ Lucifer February 1888, page 478 ]

The best remedy for evil is not the suppression, but the elimination of desire, and this can best be accomplished by keeping the mind constantly steeped in things divine. The knowledge of the Higher Self is snatched away by engaging the mind in brooding over or contemplating with pleasure the objects which correspond to the unruly sense. [ Page 60, Bhagavad Gita ( all quotations are taken from Mohini's translation.) ]

Our own nature is so base, proud, ambitious, and so full of its own appetites, judgments, and opinions, that if temptations restrained it not, it would be undone without remedy; therefore are we tempted to the end that we may know ourselves and be humble. Know that the greatest temptation is to be without temptation, wherefore be glad when it assaults thee, and with resignation, peace, and constancy resist it. [ Molinos, Spiritual Guide. ]

Feel that you have nothing to do for *yourself*, but that certain charges are laid upon you by the Deity, which you must fulfil. Desire God, and *not anything that he can give*. [ Page 182, Bhagavad Gita ] Whatever there is to do, *has* to be done, but not for the sake of enjoying the fruit of action. [ Introduction, Bhagavad Gita ] If all one's acts are performed with the full conviction that they are of no value to the actor, but are to be done simply because they *have* to be done- in other words, because it is in our nature to act- then the personality of egotism in us will grow weaker and weaker until it comes to rest, permitting the knowledge revealing the True Self to shine out in all its splendour.

One must not allow joy or pain to shake one from one's fixed purpose. [ Comments -Light on the Path. ]

Until the master chooses you to come to him, *be* with humanity, and unselfishly work for its progress and advancement. This alone can bring true satisfaction. [ Path, December 1886, Page 279 ]

Knowledge increases in proportion to its *use*- that is, the more we teach the more we learn. Therefore, Seeker after Truth, with the *faith* of a little child and the will of an Initiate, give of your store to him who hath not wherewithal to comfort him on his journey. [ Path, December 1886, page 280 ]

A disciple must fully recognize that the very thought of individual rights is only the outcome of the venomous quality of the snake of Self. He must never regard another man as a person who can be criticized or condemned, nor may he raise his voice in self-defense or excuse. [ Lucifer, page 382, January 1888 ]

No man is your enemy, no man is your friend. *All alike are your teachers.* [ Light on the Path, page 25 ]  
One must no longer work for the gain of any *benefit*, temporal or spiritual, but to fulfil the law of being which is the righteous will of God. [ Bhagavad Gita - Introduction ]

#### IV

LIVE neither in the present nor the future, but in the *eternal*. The giant weed (of evil) cannot flower there; this blot upon existence is wiped out by the very atmosphere of eternal thought. [ Light on the Path. Rule 4 ] Purity of heart is a necessary condition for the attainment of "Knowledge of the Spirit." There are two principal means by which this purification may be attained. First, drive away persistently every bad thought; secondly, preserve an even mind under all conditions, *never be agitated or irritated at anything*. It will be found that these two means of purification are best promoted by *devotion* and *charity*. We must not sit idle and make no attempt to advance because we do not feel ourselves pure. *Let everyone aspire*, and let them work in right earnest, but they must work in the right way, and the first step of that way is to purify the heart. [ Theosophist, October 1888, page 44 ]

The mind requires purification whenever anger is felt or a falsehood is told, or the *faults of another needlessly disclosed*; whenever anything is said or done for the purposes of flattery, or anyone is deceived by the insincerity of a speech or an act. [ Bhagavad Gita, page 325 ]

Those who wish for salvation ought to avoid lust, anger and greed, and cultivate courageous obedience to the Scriptures, study of Spiritual philosophy, and *perseverance* in its practical realisation. [ Bhagavad Gita, page 240 ]

He who is led by selfish considerations cannot enter a heaven where personal considerations do not exist. *He who does not care for Heaven, but is contented where he is, is already in Heaven*, while the discontented will in vain clamour for it. To be without personal desires is to be free and happy, and "Heaven" can mean nothing else but a state in which freedom and happiness exist. The man who performs beneficial acts induced by a hope of reward is not happy unless the reward is obtained, and if his reward is obtained his happiness ends. There can be no permanent rest and happiness as long as there is some work to be done, and not accomplished, and the fulfilment of duties brings its own reward. [ Magic, Intro., page 34, Hartmann. ]

He who thinks himself holier than another, he who has any pride in his own exemption from vice or folly,

he who believes himself wise, or in any way superior to his fellow-men, is incapable of discipleship. A man must become as a little child before he can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Virtue and wisdom are sublime things, but if they create pride and a consciousness of separateness from the rest of humanity, they are only the snakes of self reappearing in a finer form. The sacrifice or surrender of the *heart* of man *and its emotions* is the first of the rules; it involves "the attaining of an equilibrium which cannot be shaken by personal emotion." Put, without delay, your good intentions into practice, never leaving a single one to remain only an intention. Our only true course is to let the motive for action be in the action itself, never in its reward; not to be incited to action by the hope of the result, nor yet indulge a propensity to inertness

Through *faith* [ i.e. knowledge, and this comes by the practice or unselfishness and kindness. ] the heart is purified from passion and folly; from that comes mastery over the *body*, and *last of all*, subjugation of the senses. [ Page 95. Bhagavad Gita ]

The characteristics of the illuminated sage are, 1<sup>st</sup>, he is free from all desires, [ This can best be accomplished by keeping the mind constantly steeped in things divine ] and *knows* that the true Ego or Supreme Spirit alone is bliss, all else is pain. 2<sup>nd</sup>, that he is free from attachment and repulsion towards whatever may befall him, and that he acts without determination. *Lastly* comes the subjugation of the *senses*, which is useless, and frequently injurious as breeding hypocrisy and spiritual pride, without the second, and that again is not of much use without the first. [ Page 61, Bhagavad Gita ]

He who does not practice altruism, he who is not prepared to share his last morsel [ This must be taken in its widest sense also, i.e., spiritual knowledge, etc. ] with a weaker or poorer than himself, he who neglects to help his brother man, of whatever race, nation, or creed, *wherever and whenever* he meets suffering, and who turns a deaf ear to the cry of human misery; he who hears an innocent person slandered, and does not undertake his defense as he would undertake his own, is no Theosophist.

## V

No man does right who gives up the unmistakable duties of life, resting on Divine command. He who performs duties, thinking that if they are *not* performed some evil will come to him, or that their performance will remove difficulties from his path, works for result. Duties should simply be done because commanded by God, who may at any time command their abandonment. So long as the restlessness of our nature is not reduced to tranquillity we must work, consecrating to the Deity all fruit of our action, and attribute to Him the power to perform works rightly. The *true life* of man is *rest in identity with the Supreme Spirit*.

This life is not brought into existence by any act of ours, it is a reality, "the truth," and is *altogether independent of us*. The realisation of the non-existence of all that seems opposed to this truth is a *new consciousness* and not an act. Man's liberation is in no way related to his acts. In so far as acts promote the realisation of our utter inability to emancipate ourselves from conditioned existence, they are of use; after this stage is realised acts become obstacles rather than helps. Those who work in obedience to Divine commands, knowing that the power thus to work is a gift of God, and no part of man's self-conscious nature, attain to freedom from the need of action. Then the pure heart is filled by the truth, and

identity with the Deity is perceived. A man must first get rid of the idea that he *himself* really does anything, knowing that all actions take place in the "three natural qualities," [ i.e. , the three gunas ] and not in the soul at all.. Then he must place all his actions on *devotion*. That is, sacrifice all his actions to the Supreme and not to himself. He must either set *himself* up as the God to whom he sacrifices, or the other real God- Ishvara; and all his acts and aspirations are done either for himself or for the All. *Here comes in the importance of motive*. For if he performs great deeds of valour, or of benefit to man, or acquires knowledge so as to assist man, and is moved to that merely because he thus thinks *he will* attain salvation, he is only acting for his own benefit, and is therefore sacrificing to *himself*. Therefore he must be devoted inwardly to the All; knowing that he is *not* the doer of the actions, but the *mere witness* of them. As he is in a mortal body he is affected by doubts which *will* spring up. When they do arise, it is because he is ignorant about something. He should therefore be able to disperse doubt "by the sword of knowledge." For if he has a ready answer to some doubt he disperses that much. *All doubt comes from the lower nature*, and never in any case from the higher nature. Therefore as he becomes more and more *devoted* he is able to know more and more clearly the knowledge residing in his Sattva (goodness) nature. For it says: "A man who is perfected in *devotion* (or who persists in its cultivation) finds spiritual knowledge spontaneously in himself in progress of time." Also, " A man of doubtful mind enjoys neither this world nor the other (the Deva world), nor final beatitude." The last sentence is to destroy the idea that if there is in us this Higher Self it will, even if we are indolent and doubtful, triumph over the necessity for knowledge and lead us to final beatitude in common with the whole stream of mankind. [ Path, July 1889, page 109 ]

True prayer is the contemplation of all sacred things, of their application to ourselves, our daily life and actions, accompanied by the most heartfelt and intense desire to make their influence stronger and our lives better and nobler, that some knowledge of them may be vouchsafed to us. All such thoughts must be closely interwoven with a consciousness of the Supreme and Divine Essence from which all things have sprung.[ Path, August 1889, page 159 ]

Spiritual culture is attained through *concentration*. It must be continued daily and *every moment to be of use*. *Meditation* has been defined as "the cessation of active external thought." *Concentration* is the entire life-tendency to a given end. For example, a devoted mother is one who consults the interests of her children and *all* branches of their interest in and before all things; not one who sits down to think fixedly about *one* branch of their interests all the day. Thought has a self-reproductive power, and when the mind is held steadily to one idea it becomes coloured by it, and, as we may say, all the correlates of that thought arise within the mind. Hence the mystic obtains knowledge about any object of which he thinks constantly in fixed contemplation. Here is the rationale of Krishna's words. "Think constantly of me; depend on me alone, and *thou shall surely come to me*." Life is the great teacher: it is the great manifestation of Soul, and Soul manifests the Supreme. Hence all methods are good, and all are but parts of the great aim, which is Devotion. "Devotion is success in actions," says the *Bhagavad Gita*. The psychic powers, as they come, must also be used, for they reveal laws. But their value must not be exaggerated, nor must their danger be ignored. He who relies on them is like a man who gives way to pride and triumph because he has reached the first wayside station on the peaks he has set out to climb. [ Path, July 1889, page 111 ]

## VI

It is an eternal law that man cannot be redeemed by a power *external to himself*. Had this been possible,

an angel might long ago have visited the earth, uttered heavenly truths, and, by manifesting the faculties of a spiritual nature, proved a hundred facts to the consciousness of man of which he is ignorant. [ Spirit of the New Testament, page 508 ]

Crime is committed in the Spirit as truly as in the deeds of the body. He who for *any* cause hates another, who loves revenge, and will not forgive an injury, is full of the spirit of murder, though none may know it. He who bows before false creeds, and crushes his conscience at the bidding of any institution, blasphemes his own divine soul, and therefore "takes the name of God in vain" though he never utters an oath. He who desires and is in sympathy with the mere pleasures of sense, either in or out of the married relation, is the real adulterer. He who deprives any of his fellows of the light, the good, the help, the assistance he can wisely give them, and lives for the accumulation of material things, for his own personal gratification, is the real robber; and he who steals from his fellows the precious possession of character by slander, and any sort of misrepresentation, is no less a thief, and one of the most guilty kind. [ Spirit of the New Testament, page 513 ]

If men were only honest with themselves and kindly disposed towards others, a tremendous change would take place in their estimate of the value of life, and of the things of this life. [ Theosophists, July 1889, page 590 ]

DEVELOP THOUGHT. Strive, by concentrating the whole force of your soul, to shut the door of your mind to all stray thoughts, allowing none to enter but those calculated to reveal to you the unreality of sense-life, and the Peace of the Inner World. Ponder day and night over the unreality of all your surroundings and of yourself. The springing up of evil thoughts is less injurious than that of idle and indifferent ones. Because as to evil thoughts you are always on your guard, and, having determined to fight and conquer them, this determination helps to develop the will power. Indifferent thoughts, however, serve merely to distract the attention and waste energy. The first great basic delusion you have to get over is the identification of yourself with the physical body. Begin to think of this body as nothing better than the house you have to live in for a time, and then you will never yield to its temptations. Try also with consistent attempts to conquer the prominent weaknesses of your nature by developing thought in the direction that will kill each particular passion. After your first efforts you will begin to feel an indescribable vacuum and blankness in your heart; fear not, but regard this as the soft twilight heralding the rise of the sun of Spiritual bliss. Sadness is not an evil. Complain not; what seem to be sufferings and obstacles are often in reality the mysterious efforts of nature to help you in your work if you can manage them properly. Look upon *all* circumstances with the gratitude of a pupil. [ Theosophical Siftings, No. 3, Vol. 2, 1889 ] All complaint is a rebellion against the law of progress. That which is to be shunned is *pain not yet come*. The past cannot be changed or amended; that which belongs to the experiences of the present cannot and should not be shunned; but alike to be shunned are *disturbing anticipation or fears of the future, and every act or impulse that may cause present or future pain to ourselves or others*. [ Patanjali's - Yoga Aphorisms ]

## VII

THERE is no more valuable thing possessed by any individual than an exalted ideal towards which he continually aspires, and after which he moulds his thoughts and feelings, and forms, as best he may, his life. If he thus strives to *become* rather than *to seem*, he cannot fail to continually approach nearer his



aim. He will not, however, reach this point without a struggle, nor will the real progress that he is conscious of making fill him with conceit or self-righteousness; for if his ideal be high, and his progress towards it is real, he will be rather humiliated than puffed up. The possibilities of further advancement, and the conception of still higher planes of being that open before him, will not dampen his ardour, though they will surely kill his conceit. It is just this conception of the vast possibilities of human life that is needed to kill out *ennui*, and to convert apathy into zest. Life thus becomes worth living for its own sake when its mission becomes plain, and its splendid opportunities are once appreciated. The most direct and certain way of reaching this higher plane is the cultivation of the *principle of altruism*, both *in thought and life*. Narrow indeed is the sweep of vision that is limited to self, and that measures all things by the principle of self-interest, for while the soul is thus self limited it is impossible for it to conceive of any high ideal, or to approach any higher plane of life. The conditions of such advancement lie *within* rather than without, and are fortunately made independent of circumstances and condition in life. The opportunity therefore is offered to *everyone* of advancing from height to height of being, and of thus working with nature in the accomplishment of the evident purpose of life. Man, [ J.Buck, page 106]

If we believe that the object of life is simply to render our material self satisfied, and to keep it in comfort, and that material comfort confers the highest state of possible happiness, we mistake the low for the high, and an illusion for the truth. Our material mode of life is a consequence of the material constitution of our bodies. We are "worms of the earth" because we cling with all our aspirations to earth. If we can enter upon a path of evolution, by which we become less material and more ethereal, a very different order of civilization would be established. Things which now appear indispensable and necessary would cease to be useful; if we could transfer our consciousness with the velocity of thought from one part of the globe to another, the present modes of communication would be no longer required. The deeper we sink into matter, the more material means for comfort will be needed; the *essential* and powerful god in man is *not material*, and independent of the restrictions laid upon matter. What are the *real* necessities of life? The answer to this question depends entirely on what we imagine to be necessary. Railways, steamers, etc., are now a necessity to us, and yet millions of people have lived long and happily, knowing nothing about them. To one man a dozen palaces may appear to be an indispensable necessity, to another a carriage, another a pipe, and so on. But *all such necessities are only such as man himself has created*. They make the state in which man now is agreeable to him, and *tempt him to remain* in that state, and to desire nothing higher. They may even hinder his development instead of advancing it. Everything material must cease to become a necessity if we would really advance spiritually. It is the *craving* and the *wasting of thought* for the augmentation of the pleasures of the lower life which prevent man entering the higher one. [ Magic, Hartmann, page 61 ]

### Theosophical Glossary

**GUNAS** (Sanskrit) Qualities, attributes (See "Triguna"); a thread, also a cord.

**TRIGUNA** (Sanskrit) The three divisions of the inherent qualities of differentiated matter- i.e., of pure quiescence (*satva*), of activity and desire (*rajas*), of stagnation and decay (*tamas*) . They correspond with Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva.