

DEPRESSION

THE DESPONDENCY OF ARJUNA

From Chapters I & II of **W.Q. Judge's** rendition of the

BHAGAVAD GITA

SANJAYA:

Krishna being thus addressed by Arjuna, drove the chariot, and, having caused it to halt in the space between the two armies, bade Arjuna cast his eyes towards the ranks of the Kurus, and behold where stood the aged Bhîshma, and Drôna, with all the chief nobles of their party. Standing there Arjuna surveyed both the armies, and beheld, on either side, grandsires, uncles, cousins, tutors, sons, and brothers, near relations, or bosom friends; and when he had gazed for a while and beheld all his kith and kin drawn up in battle array, he was moved by extreme pity, and, filled with despondency, he thus in sadness spoke:

ARJUNA:

"Now, O Krishna, that I have beheld my kindred thus standing anxious for the fight, my members fail me, my countenance withereth, the hair standeth on end upon my body, and all my frame trembleth with horror! Even Gandiva, my bow, slips from my hand, and my skin is parched and dried up. I am not able to stand; for my mind, as it were, whirleth round, and I behold on all sides adverse omens. When I shall have destroyed my kindred, shall I longer look for happiness? I wish not for victory, Krishna; I want not pleasure; for what are dominion and the enjoyments of life, or even life itself, when those for whom dominion, pleasure, and enjoyment were to be coveted have abandoned life and fortune, and stand here in the field ready for the battle? Tutors, sons and fathers, grandsires and grandsons, uncles and nephews, cousins, kindred, and friends! Although they would kill me, I wish not to fight them: no, not even for the dominion of the three regions of the universe, much less for this little earth! Having killed the sons of Dhritarâshtra, what pleasure, O thou who art prayed to by mortals, can we enjoy? Would we destroy them, tyrants though they are, sin would take refuge with us. It therefore behooveth us not to kill such near relations as these. How, O Krishna, can we be happy hereafter, when we have been the murderers of our race? What if they, whose minds are depraved by the lust of power, see no sin in the extirpation of their race, no crime in the murder of their friends, is that a reason why we should not resolve to turn away from such a crime—we who abhor the sin of extirpating our own kindred? On the destruction of a tribe the ancient virtue of the tribe and family is lost; with the loss of virtue, vice and impiety overwhelm the whole of a race. From the influence of impiety the females of a family grow vicious; and from women that are become vicious are born the spurious caste called Varna Sankar. Corruption of caste is a gate of hell, both for these destroyers of a tribe and for those who survive; and their forefathers, being deprived of the ceremonies of cakes and water offered to their manes, sink into the infernal regions. By the crimes of the destroyers of a tribe and by those who cause confusion of caste, the family virtue and the virtue of a whole tribe are forever done away with; and we have read in sacred writ, O Krishna, that a sojourn in hell

awaits those mortals whose generation hath lost its virtue. Woe is me! What a great crime are we prepared to commit! Alas! that from the desire for sovereignty and pleasure we stand here ready to slay our own kin! I would rather patiently suffer that the sons of Dhritarâshtra, with their weapons in their hands, should come upon me, and unopposed, kill me unresisting in the field."

SANJAYA:

When Arjuna had ceased to speak, he sat down in the chariot between the two armies; and, having put away his bow and arrows, his heart was overwhelmed with despondency.

SANJAYA:

KRISHNA, beholding him thus influenced by compunction, his eyes overflowing with a flood of tears, and his heart oppressed with deep affliction, addressed him in the following words:

KRISHNA:

"Whence, O Arjuna, cometh upon thee this dejection in matters of difficulty, so unworthy of the honorable, and leading neither to heaven nor to glory? It is disgraceful, contrary to duty, and the foundation of dishonor. Yield not thus to unmanliness, for it ill-becometh one like thee. Abandon, O tormentor of thy foes, this despicable weakness of thy heart and stand up."

ARJUNA:

"How, O slayer of Madhu, shall I with my shafts contend in battle against such as Bhîshma and Drôna, who of all men are most worthy of my respect? For it were better to beg my bread about the world than be the murderer of my preceptors, to whom such awful reverence is due. Were I to destroy such friends as these, I should partake of possessions, wealth, and pleasures polluted with their blood. Nor can we tell whether it would be better that we should defeat them, or they us. For those drawn up, angrily confronting us - and after whose death, should they perish by my hand, I would not wish to live - are the sons and people of Dhritarâshtra. As I am of a disposition which is affected by compassion and the fear of doing wrong, I ask thee which is it better to do? Tell me that distinctly! I am thy disciple; wherefore instruct in my duty me who am under thy tuition; for my understanding is confounded by the dictates of my duty, and I see nothing that may assuage the grief which drieth up my faculties, although I were to obtain a kingdom without a rival upon earth, or dominion over the hosts of heaven."

SANJAYA:

Arjuna having thus spoken to Krishna, became silent, saying: "I shall not fight, O Govinda." Krishna, tenderly smiling, addressed these words to the prince thus standing downcast between the two armies:

KRISHNA:

"Thou grievest for those that may not be lamented, whilst thy sentiments are those of the expounders of the letter of the law. Those who are wise in spiritual things grieve neither for the dead nor for the living. I myself never was not, nor thou, nor all the princes of the earth; nor shall we ever hereafter cease to be. As the lord of this mortal frame experienceth therein infancy, youth, and old age, so in future incarnations will it meet the same. One who is confirmed in this belief is not disturbed by anything that may come to pass. The senses, moving toward their appropriate objects, are producers of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, which come and go and are

brief and changeable; these do thou endure, O son of Bharata! For the wise man, whom these disturb not and to whom pain and pleasure are the same, is fitted for immortality. There is no existence for that which does not exist, nor is there any non-existence for what exists. By those who see the truth and look into the principles of things, the ultimate characteristic of these both is seen. Learn that He by whom all things were formed is incorruptible, and that no one is able to effect the destruction of IT which is inexhaustible. These finite bodies, which envelope the souls inhabiting them, are said to belong to Him, the eternal, the indestructible, unprovable Spirit, who is in the body: wherefore, O Arjuna, resolve to fight. The man who believeth that it is this Spirit which killeth, and he who thinketh that it may be destroyed, are both alike deceived; for it neither killeth nor is it killed. It is not a thing of which a man may say, 'It hath been, it is about to be, or is to be hereafter'; for it is without birth and meeteth not death; it is ancient, constant, and eternal, and is not slain when this its mortal frame is destroyed. How can the man who believeth that it is incorruptible, eternal, inexhaustible, and without birth, think that it can either kill or cause to be killed? As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the dweller in the body, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new. The weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible, and is not to be dried away: it is eternal, universal, permanent, immovable; it is invisible, inconceivable, and unalterable; therefore, knowing it to be thus, thou shouldst not grieve. But whether thou believest it to be of eternal birth and duration, or that it dieth with the body, still thou hast no cause to lament it. Death is certain to all things which are born, and rebirth to all mortals; wherefore it doth not behoove thee to grieve about the inevitable. The antenatal state of beings is unknown; the middle state is evident; and their state after death is not to be discovered. What in this is there to lament? Some regard the indwelling spirit as a wonder, whilst some speak and others hear of it with astonishment; but no one realizes it, although he may have heard it described. This spirit can never be destroyed in the mortal frame which it inhabiteth, hence it is unworthy for thee to be troubled for all these mortals. Cast but thine eyes towards the duties of thy particular tribe, and it will ill become thee to tremble. A soldier of the Kshatriya tribe hath no duty superior to lawful war, and just to thy wish the door of heaven is found open before thee, through this glorious unsought fight which only fortune's favored soldiers may obtain. But if thou wilt not perform the duty of thy calling and fight out the field, thou wilt abandon thy natural duty and thy honor, and be guilty of a crime. Mankind will speak of thy ill fame as infinite, and for one who hath been respected in the world ill fame is worse than death. The generals of the armies will think that thy retirement from the field arose from fear, and even amongst those by whom thou wert wont to be thought great of soul thou shalt become despicable. Thine enemies will speak of thee in words which are unworthy to be spoken, depreciating thy courage and abilities; what can be more dreadful than this! If thou art slain thou shalt attain heaven; if victorious, the world shall be thy reward; wherefore, son of Kuntî, arise with determination fixed for the battle. Make pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, the same to thee, and then prepare for battle, for thus and thus alone shalt thou in action still be free from sin.

JUDGE'S COMMENTS FROM NOTES ON THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Instead of the conflict being a blemish to the poem, it is a necessary and valuable portion. We see that the fight is to be fought by every human being, whether he lives in India or not, for it is raging on the sacred plain of our body. Each one of us, then, is Arjuna.

In the Sanskrit, the first chapter is called "Arjuna-Vishada," which in English means, "The despair and despondency of Arjuna." Some have called it "The Survey of Army"; but while truly an army is surveyed, that is not the essential meaning intended. It is the result of the survey we are to consider; and that result upon Arjuna who is the person most interested—the one who is the chief questioner and beneficiary throughout the whole action of the poem—is despondency.

The cause of this despondency is to be inquired into.

Arjuna, in the flush of determination, and before any analysis of either the consequences to himself or to others who might become involved, entered the conflict, after having chosen Krishna as his charioteer. The forces are drawn up in line of battle, and he rides out to survey them. At once he sees ranged against him relatives of every class, in their turn pre-paring to destroy others, their relatives, friends and acquaintances as well as Arjuna's, who are enlisted on his side. Turning to Krishna, he says that he cannot engage in such a war, that he perceives only evil omens, and that even if the opposers, being ignorant, may be willing to fight with such dreadful consequences in view, he cannot do so, but must give up the battle ere it is begun. Thereupon:

Arjuna, whose heart was troubled with grief, let fall his bow and arrows, and sat down on the bench of his chariot.

Every student of occultism, theosophy or true religion—all being the one thing— will go through Arjuna's experiences. Attracted by the beauty or other seductive quality, for him, of this study, he enters upon the prosecution of it, and soon discovers that he arouses two sets of forces. One of them consists of all his friends and relations who do not view life as he does, who are wedded to the "established order," and think him a fool for devoting any attention to anything else; while the general mass of his acquaintances and those whom he meets in the world instinctively array themselves against one who is thus starting upon a crusade that begins with his own follies and faults, but must end in a condemnation of theirs, if only by the force of example. The other opponents are far more difficult to meet, because they have their camp and base of action upon the Astral and other hidden planes; they are all his lower tendencies and faculties, that up to this time have been in the sole service of material life. By the mere force of moral gravity, they fly to the other side, where they assist his living friends and relatives in their struggle against him. They have more efficiency in producing despondency than anything else. In the poem, it is referred to in the words addressed by Arjuna to Krishna:

"I am not able to stand; for my understanding, as it were turneth round, and I behold inauspicious omens on all sides."

All of us are brought to this study by our own request made to our higher self, who is Krishna. Arjuna requested Krishna to be his charioteer, and to drive him forth between the two armies. It does not matter whether he now is consciously aware of having made the request, nor whether it was made as a specific act, in this life or in many another precedent one; *it was made and it is to be answered at the right time*. Some of us have asked this many times before, in ancient births of ours in other bodies and other lands; others are making the request now; but it is more than likely in the case of those who are spurred on to intense effort and longing to know the truth, and to strive for unity with God, that they have put up the petition ages since. So now Krishna, the charioteer of this body with its horses—the mind—drives us forth so that we may stand with our higher self and all the tendencies connected with it on one side, and all the lower (but not all necessarily evil) principles on the other. The student may, perhaps, with ease face the crowd of friends and relatives, having probably gone through that experience in other lives and is now proof against it, but he is not proof against the first dark shadow of despair and ill result that falls upon him. Every elemental that he has vivified by evil thinking now casts upon him the thought, “After all, it is no use; I cannot win; if I did, the gain would be nothing; I can see no great or lasting result to be attained, for all, is impermanent.”

This dreadful feeling is sure in each case to supervene, and we might as well be prepared for it. We cannot always live on the enthusiasm of heavenly joys. The rosy hue of dawn does not reach round the world; it chases darkness. Let us be prepared for it, not only at the first stage, but all along in our progress to the holy seat; for it comes at each pause; at that slight pause when we are about to begin another breath, to take another step, to pass into another condition.

And here it is wise, turning to the 18th, and last, chapter of the poem, to read the words of the immortal master of life:

“From a confidence in thine own self-sufficiency thou mayest think that thou wilt not fight. Such is a fallacious determination, *for the principles of thy nature will compel thee*. Being confined to actions by the duties of thy natural calling, *thou wilt involuntarily do that from necessity*, which thou wantest through ignorance to avoid.”

In this, Krishna uses the very argument advanced by Arjuna against the fight, as one in its favor. In the chapter we are considering, Arjuna repeats the old Brahmanical injunction against those who break up the “eternal institutions of caste and tribe,” for, as he says, the penalty annexed is a sojourn in hell, since, when the caste and tribe are destroyed, the ancestors, being deprived of the rites of funeral-cakes and libations of water, fall from heaven, and the whole tribe is thus lost. But Krishna shows, as above, that each man is naturally, by his bodily tendencies, compelled to do the acts of some particular calling, and that body with its tendencies is merely the manifestation of what the inner man is, as the result of all his former thoughts up to that incarnation. So he is forced by nature's law—which is his own—to be born just where he must have the experience that is needed. And Arjuna, being a warrior, is compelled to fight, whether he will or no....

Who is the sufferer from this despondency?

It is our false personality as distinguished from Krishna—the higher self—which is oppressed by the immediate resistance offered by all the lower part of our nature, and by those persons with whom we are most closely connected, as soon as we begin to draw them away from all old habits, and to present a new style of thinking for their consideration.

For Arjuna, sinking down upon the seat of that chariot which is his body, fell back upon his own nature and found therein the elements of search and courage, as well as those previous ones of gloom which arise first, being nearer the natural man. Reliance and pressure upon our own inner nature, in moments of darkness, are sure to be answered by the voice of Krishna, the inner guide.

The first consequences of the despondency

Are to make us feel that the battle we have invited ought not to be carried on, and we then are almost overwhelmed with the desire to give it up. Some do give it up, to begin it again, in a succeeding life, while others like Arjuna listen to the voice of Krishna, and bravely fight it out to the end....

In one aspect, the *Bhagavad-Gita* is a personal book. It is for each man; and it is in that way we have so far considered it. Some have called it obscure, and others a book which deals solely with the great principles of nature; with only great questions of cosmogony; with difficult and bewildering questions relating to the first cause; and still others think it is contradictory and vague. But this first scene in the great colloquy is plain. It has the din of arms, the movement of battalions and the disposition of forces with their generals. No one need feel any hesitation now, for we are face to face with ourselves. The weak man, or he who does not care for truth no matter where it leads, had better shut the book now. Unless he can go on reading the poem with the fixed intention of applying it to himself, it will do him no good whatever. He may say, however, that he will read it for what it may seem to contain, but if he reads to the end of time and does not fairly regard this first lecture, his knowledge gained further on will be no knowledge. It is indeed the book of the great mystery; but that problem was never solved *for* anyone; it must be settled and solved *by* each one *for himself*. No doubt it was for this reason that Vyasa, to whom the poem is attributed, placed this conflict, in which the principal characters are Arjuna and Krishna, at the outset. It would have been easier to have made them sit down for a philosophical discourse beforehand in which reasons pro and con regarding any battle would be discussed, and then, after all that was done, to show us Arjuna, encouraged and equipped, entering upon the war sure of victory because he had spent much time in dispelling his doubts. But instead of doing this he pictures the impetuous Arjuna precipitating the battle before he had considered whom it was he had to fight.

It does not appear in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that Krishna had induced Arjuna, as was the case, to make the war for the purpose of regaining his kingdom. While stirring him up to it Krishna had wisely refrained from telling that which Arjuna finds out on the first day, that he had to oppose all these friends, kinsmen and preceptors. It was a wise reticence. If we completely apprehended the enormous power of our passions and various tendencies, most of us would throw up the fight in advance; for nothing would persuade us that any power within could withstand against such overwhelming odds. For us then the incitement to fight is found, not so much in any conversation that we hold now with Krishna, but in the impulses which are carried across, again and again, from incarnation to incarnation.

We take up the gage over and over, life after life, in experience after experience, never completely defeated if we always look to Krishna—our higher self. And in the tale of Arjuna we find this also. For in a succeeding book, called *Anugita*, is an account of the hero walking with Krishna through the Palace of Maya. The battle over, for the time, Arjuna tells his friend that he has really forgotten much that he had told him (in the *Bhagavad-Gita*) and asks for a succinct repetition. This is given to him by the great warrior.

The palace of maya is this body of illusion, built up around us by desire. In our last birth we had all the advice given in this poem, and walking today through the palace, which sometimes seems so lovely, we now and then have reminiscences from the past. Sometimes we stoutly take up the fight; but surely, if we have listened to the guide aright, we will compel ourselves at last to carry it out until finished.

In coming to the conclusion of this first chapter, we reach the *first abyss*. It is not the great abyss, albeit it may seem to us, in our experience, to be the greatest. We are now vis-a-vis our own despair, and doubt its companion. Many a student of theosophy has in our own sight reached this point—all true students do. Like a little child who first ventures from the parent's side, we are affrighted at what seems new to us, and dropping our weapons attempt to get away; but, in the pursuit of theosophy it is not possible to go back.

Because the abyss is behind us.

There is in nature a law that operates in every department whether moral or physical, and which may now be called that of undulation and then that of inhibition; while at other times it reappears as vibration, and still again as attraction and repulsion, but all these changes are only apparent because at bottom it is the same. Among vegetables it causes the sap to flow up the tree in one way and will not permit it to return in the same direction. In our own blood circulation we find the blood propelled from the heart, and that nature has provided little valves which will not permit it to return to the heart by the way it came, but by the way provided. Medical and anatomical science are not quite sure what it is that causes the blood to pass these valves; whether it is pressure from behind communicated by the heart, or the pressure by atmosphere from without which gently squeezes, as it were, the blood upon its way. But the occultist does not find himself limited by these empirical deductions. He goes at once to the center and declares that the impulse *is* from the heart and that that organ receives its impulse from the great astral heart or the akasa, which has been said by all mystics to have a double motion, or alternate vibration—the systole and diastole of nature.

So in this sense the valve in the circulation represents the abyss behind us that we cannot re-pass. We are in the great general circulation and compelled, whether we like it or not, to obey its forward impulse.

This place of dejection of Arjuna is also the same thing as is mentioned in *Light on the Path* as the silence after the storm. In tropical countries this silence is very apparent. After the storm has burst and passed, there is a quietness when the earth and the trees seem to have momentarily ceased making their familiar, manifold noises. They are obeying the general law and beginning the process of assimilation.

And in the astral world it is just the same. When one enters there for the first time, a great silence falls, during which the regulated soul is imbibing its surroundings and becoming accustomed to them. It says nothing but waits quietly until it has become in vibration precisely the same as the plane in which it is; when that is accomplished then it can speak properly, make itself understood, and likewise understand. But the unregulated soul flies to that plane of the astral world in a disturbed state, hurries to speak before it is able to do so intelligibly and as a consequence is not understood, while it increases its own confusion and makes it less likely that it will soon come to understand. People are attracted to the astral plane; they hear of its wonders and astonishments and like a child with a new toy in sight they hurry to grasp it. They refuse to learn its philosophy because that seems dry and difficult. So they plunge in, and as Murdhna Joti said in a former article in this magazine, they then “swim in it and cut capers like a boy in a pool of water.”

But for the earnest student and true disciple the matter is serious. He has vowed to have the truth at whatever cost, willing to go wherever she leads—even if it be to death.

So Krishna, having got Arjuna to where the battle has really begun, where retreat is not possible, begins to tell his loved disciple and friend what is the philosophy that underlies it all and without which success cannot be compassed.

We should not fail to observe at this point, that when Arjuna threw down his bow and arrows, the flying of missiles had already begun. We cannot say that when the philosophical discourse began between these two the opposing forces declared a truce until the mighty heroes should give the signal, because there is nowhere any verse that would authorize it, and we also can read in the accompanying books that all the paraphernalia of war had been brought onto the field and that the enemy would not desist, no matter what Arjuna might do. Now there is a meaning here, which is also a part of the great abyss the son of Pandu saw behind him, and which every one of us also sees.

We enter upon this great path of action in occultism mentally disposed towards final victory. This mental attitude instantly throws all the parts of our being into agitation, during which the tendencies which are by nature antipathetic to each other separate and range themselves upon opposite sides. This creates great distress, with oftentimes wandering of the mind, and adds additional terror to our dark despair. We may then sink down and declare that we will fly to a forest—or as they did once in Europe, to a monastery—so as to get away from what seems to be unfavorable ground for a conflict. But we have evoked a force in nature and set up a current and vibration which *will go on* no matter what we do. This is the meaning of the "flying of arrows" even when Arjuna sat down on the bench of his chariot....

A mighty spirit moves through the pages of the Bhagavad-Gita. It has the seductive influence of beauty; yet, like strength, it fills one as with the sound of armies assembling or the roar of great waters. Appealing alike to the warrior and the philosopher, it shows to the one the righteousness of lawful action, and to the other the calmness which results to him who has reached inaction through action....

Arjuna asks Krishna:

“As I am of a disposition which is affected by compassion and the fear of doing wrong, my mind is bewildered. Tell me truly what may be best for me to do! I am thy disciple, wherefore instruct me in my duty, who am under thy tuition; for my understanding is confounded by the dictates of my duty, and I see nothing that may assuage the grief which drieth up my faculties, although I were to obtain a kingdom without a rival upon earth or dominion over the hosts of heaven.”

Krishna, now the guru—or spiritual teacher—of Arjuna, makes a reply which is not excelled anywhere in the poem; pointing out the permanence and eternal nature of the soul, the progress it has to make through reincarnation to perfection, the error of imagining that we really do anything ourselves, and showing how all duties must be performed by him who desires to reach salvation. The words used by the Blessed Lord in speaking of the soul cannot be added to by me. He says:

“The wise grieve not for dead or living. But never at any period did I, or thou, or these kings of men, not exist, nor shall any of us at any time henceforward cease to exist. As the soul in the body undergoes the changes of childhood, prime, and age, so it obtains a new body hereafter; a sensible man is not troubled about that. But the contact of the elements, O son of Kunti, which bring cold and heat, pleasure and pain, which come and go and are temporary, these do thou

endure, O Bharata! ⁽¹⁾ For that man whom, being the same in pain and pleasure and ever constant, these elements do not afflict, is fitted for immortality. There is no existence for what does not exist, nor is there any non-existence for what exists. . . . Know this, that that by which all this universe is created is indestructible. No one can cause the destruction of this inexhaustible thing*** He who believes that this spirit can kill, and he who thinks it can be killed, both of these are wrong in judgment. It is not born, nor dies at any time; it has no origin, nor will it ever have an end. Unborn, changeless, eternal both as to future and past time, it is not slain when the body is killed. How can that man, O son of Pritha, who knows that it is indestructible, constant, unborn, and inexhaustible, really cause the death of anybody or kill anybody himself? As a man abandons worn-out clothes and takes other new ones, so does the soul quit worn-out bodies and enter other new ones. Weapons cannot cleave it. Fire cannot burn it, nor can water wet it, nor wind dry it. . . . It is constant, capable of going everywhere, firm, immovable, and eternal. It is said to be invisible, incomprehensible, immutable. Therefore, knowing it to be such, thou art not right to grieve for it. ”

This is the same doctrine as is found in the Isavasya-Upanishad: The Identity of all Spiritual Beings, and Resignation. And by “spiritual beings” is meant all life above the inorganic, for man is not admitted to be material. There is only one life, one consciousness. It masquerades under all the different forms of sentient beings, and those varying forms with their intelligences mirror a portion of the *One Life*, thus producing in each a false idea of egoism. A continuance of belief in that false ego produces a continuance of ignorance, thus delaying salvation. The beginning of the effort to dissipate this false belief is the beginning of the Path; the total dissipation of it is the perfection of yoga, or union with God. The entry upon that Path cannot be made until resignation *is* consummated; for, as the Upanishad and the Bhagavad-Gita say:

“All this, whatsoever moves on earth, is to be surrendered to the Lord—the Self. When thou hast surrendered all this; then thou mayest enjoy.”

If this be true, then how necessary to consider philosophy so as to be able to cut off the false belief. And how useless to pursue occultism merely for your own benefit. You may know all about currents and polarities, about any and every phenomenon possible in the astral world, but with the death of your body it is lost, leaving to you only the amount of real spiritual advance you happen to have made. But once resign and all is possible. This will not ruin your life nor destroy any proper ideals; poor and petty ideals had better be at once lost. It may seem that all ideals are gone, but that will be only the first effect of taking this step.

We must be ready to say at any moment under whatever circumstances, whether expected or unexpected: “It is just what I in fact desired.” For only those ideals can be dissipated which rest upon a lower basis than the highest aim, or which are not in accord with nature's (God's) law. And as our aim ought to be to reach the supreme condition and to help all other sentient beings to do so also, we must cultivate complete resignation to the Law, the expression and operation of which is seen in the circumstances of life and the ebb and flow of our inner being. All that can be gotten out of wealth, or beauty, or art, or pleasure, are merely pools of water found along our path as it wanders through the desert of life. If we are not seeking them their appearance gives us intense pleasure, and we are thus able to use them for our good and that of others just so long as the Law leaves them to us; but when that superior power removes them, we must say: “It is just what I in fact desired.” Any other course is blindness. All the passing shows of life, whether fraught with disaster or full of fame and glory, are teachers; he who neglects them, neglects opportunities which seldom the gods repeat. And the only way to learn from them is through the heart's resignation; for when we become in heart completely poor, we at once are the

treasurers and disbursers of enormous riches. Krishna then insists on the scrupulous performance of natural duty.

“And considering thine own duty as a Kshatriya, thou art not right to waver. For there is nothing better for a Kshatriya than lawful war.”

In order to see more clearly the occasion for his insistence upon performance of duty, we must remember that at the opening of the battle Arjuna “threw down his bow and arrows.” This, in India, meant that he then resolved to desert the circumstances in which karma had placed him and to become an ascetic, or, as has been frequently proposed by Western students, he wished to get away from a state of society which offered apparent obstruction to spiritual culture. But Krishna refers him to his birth in the Kshatriya—or warrior—caste, and to the natural duty of a Kshatriya, which is war. The natural caste of Arjuna might have been represented as that of merchant, but wisely it was not, for this is the book of action, and only a warrior fitly typifies action ⁽¹⁾; so his natural duty will stand for whatever be that of any man. We are not to shirk our karma; by abhorring it we only make new karma.

SADNESS AND HOPE

Along the path of the true student is sadness, but also there is great joy and hope. Sadness comes from a more just appreciation of the difficulties in one’s way, and of the great wickedness of the individual and collective heart of man. But look at the great fountain of hope and of joy in the consideration that the Brothers exist, that They were men too; They had to fight the fight; They triumphed, and They work for those left after Them. Then beyond Them are “the Fathers,” that is, the spirits of “just men made perfect,” those Who lived and worked for humanity ages ago and Who are now out of our sphere, but Who nevertheless still influence us in that Their spiritual forces flow down upon this earth for all pure souls. Their immediate influence is felt by Masters, and by us through the latter.

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William Q. Judge

DEPRESSION AND RETURN OF CYCLIC IMPRESSION

From W.Q. Judge’s article, “Cyclic Impression and its Return and our Evolution”

I have a friend who is trying to find out all about theosophy, and about a psychic nature, but I have discovered that he is not paying the slightest attention to this subject of the inevitable return upon himself of these impressions, which he creates. I discovered he had periods of depression (and this will answer for everybody), when he had a despondency that he could not explain. I said to him, you have had the same despondency maybe seven weeks ago, maybe eight weeks ago,

maybe five weeks ago. He examined his diary and his recollection, and he found that he had actual recurrences of despondency about the same distance apart. Well, I said, that explains to me how it is coming back. But what am I to do? Do what the old theosophists taught us; that is, we can only have these good results by producing opposite impressions to bad ones. So, take this occasion of despondency. What he should have done was, that being the return of an old impression, to have compelled himself to feel joyous, even against his will, and if he could not have done that, then to have tried to feel the joy of others. By doing that, he would have implanted in himself another impression, that is of joy, so that when this thing returned once more, instead of being of the same quality and extension, it would have been changed by the impression of joy or elation and the two things coming together would have counteracted each other, just as two billiard balls coming together tend to counteract each others movements. This applies to every person who has the blues. This does not apply to me, and I think it must be due to the fact that in some other life I have had the blues. I have other things, but the blues never.

I have friends and acquaintances who have these desponding spells. It is the return of old cyclic impressions, or the cyclic return of impressions. What are you to do? Some people say, I just sit down and let it go; that is to say, you sit there and create it once more. You cannot rub it out if it has been coming, but when it comes start up something else, start up cheerfulness, be good to some one, then try to relieve some other person who is despondent, and you will have started another impression, which will return at the same time. It does not make any difference if you wait a day or two to do this. The next day, or a few days after will do, for when the old cyclic impression returns, it will have dragged up the new one, because it is related to it by association.

MITIGATING THOUGHTS

Karmic causes already set in motion must be allowed to sweep on until exhausted, but this permits no man to refuse to help his fellows and every sentient being.

The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole number of causes involved in producing the effects.

“Aphorisms on Karma” *The Path*, March 1883

William Quan Judge

ESTABLISHING A NEW CYCLE

Now, this great law of periodical return pertains also to every individual man in his daily life and thought. Every idea that you have, every thought, affects your brain and mind by its impression. That begins the cycle. It may seem to leave your mind, apparently it goes out, but it

returns again under the same cyclic law in some form either better or worse, and wakes up once more the old impression. Even the very feelings that you have of sorrow or gladness will return in time, more or less according to your disposition, but inevitably in their cycle. This is a law it would do good for every one to remember, especially those who have variations of joy and sorrow, of exaltation and depression. If when depressed you would recollect the law and act upon it by voluntarily creating another cycle of exaltation, on its returning again with the companion cycle of lower feeling it would in no long time destroy the depressing cycle and raise you to higher places of happiness and peace. It applies again in matters of study where we use the intellectual organs only. When a person begins the study of a difficult subject or one more grave than usual, there is a difficulty in keeping the mind upon it; the mind wanders; it is disturbed by other and older ideas and impressions. But by persistency a new cycle is established, which, being kept rolling, at last obtains the mastery.

“Cycles and Cyclic Law” Final address by W.Q.J. at Parliament of Religions, 1893

THE BEST CURE

Generally speaking, the habit of drinking intoxicants is due to a desire to get rid of what might be called the present personal consciousness. When people drink to try and drown sorrow, pain, worry, they clearly do it with that motive in view. But others drink without any such ostensible motive, though still with the same actual motive, for they long to get rid of what is to them an intolerable sense of identity, of monotony, of sameness. It is an effort to produce by extraneous aids what can only be done properly and lastingly by interior development. People read trashy novels, gamble and so forth with the same motive, that is to say, with the intention of getting rid of their personal identity for the time being. Ultimately, the race will come to realize that this can only be achieved by identification of the ego with the higher instead of the lower nature. Meanwhile, and for the ordinary person, healthy and interesting occupation is the best cure for such a habit. If possible, he should be made to understand that the desire for drink is now a habit in certain lives in his body whose very existence depends upon their being fed with alcohol. The desire is not in himself unless he is foolish enough to identify himself with the desire. Once he ceases to so identify himself, the desire will lose more than half its power over him.

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William Q. Judge

REGRET NOTHING

The Past! What is it? Nothing. Gone! Dismiss it. You are the past of yourself. Therefore it concerns you not as such. It only concerns you as you now are. In you, as you now exist, lies all the past. So follow the Hindu maxim: “Regret nothing; never be sorry; and cut all doubts with the sword of spiritual knowledge.” Regret is productive only of error. I care not what I was, or what any one was. I only look for what I am each moment. For as each moment is and at once is not, it must follow that if we think of the past we forget the present, and while we forget, the moments

fly by us, making more past. Then regret nothing, not even the greatest follies of your life, for they are gone, and you are to work in the present which is both past and future at once. So then, with the absolute knowledge that all your limitations are due to Karma, past or in this life, and with a firm reliance ever upon Karma as the only judge, which will be good or bad as you make it, yourself, you can stand anything that may happen and feel serene, despite the occasional despondencies which all feel, but which the light of Truth always dispels. This verse always settles everything:

“In him who knows that all spiritual beings are the same in kind with the Supreme Being, what room can there be for delusion and what room for sorrow when he reflects upon the unity of spirit?”

In all these inner experiences there are tides, as well as in the ocean. We rise and fall. Anon the gods descend, and then they return to heaven. Do not think of getting them to descend, but strive to raise yourself higher on the road down which they periodically return, and thus get nearer to them, so that you shall in fact receive their influences sooner than before.

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William Q. Judge