

# On the Watch-Tower

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## **Devotion as a Way**

Devotion has been considered one of the principal ways through which a person can have greater understanding and closeness to higher levels of being. But at the lower levels, we find devotion often does not amount to much. Devotion can be to many different things, depending on a person's intelligence. It is said that on the path, some feelings and thoughts which are highly valued, are not of much use if they are taken separately. For instance, if you take devotion, it depends much on what one is devoted to. It can be something of a lower order, in which case the value of that devotion becomes less; not that it does not have value, because to possess devotion at all to anything, even to what is bad, has some value. Sometimes this is indicated in novels.

In one of Dickens' novels there is a bad character, who has a dog attached to him. He is somewhat attached to the dog, but turns upon it and sometimes behaves in a way which one does not expect from a man who loves his pet animal. But it is the one thing which he learns to love, and so has value; it keeps the flame of love alive within him (though burning very low), which is very important. So, whatever devotion a person has to anything,

even to a god made of stone, has a certain value. Dr Besant had two servants who did various things for her: not as she wanted, but as they wanted. One of them had been a criminal but she said that there was some good in him, and she nourished it. My brother and I as small children used to be afraid of him, because he looked rather frightening. Dr Besant was very good to him and probably during that incarnation, he improved because he learnt to have devotion to her.

We do not know what makes a person better, but it is certain that devotion does bring about a change in the character of an individual. And therefore it does not matter to what a person learns to be devoted at his stage in life. But there are various stages. And there are people who are known to have developed spirituality by devotion, may be by devotion to a god to whom they attributed all kinds of fine qualities. But when it comes to one who is more developed, the devotion has to include more things. True religious devotion, which feels the necessity to help all things, high and low, marks a turning point.

In some of his works, Dr Taimni speaks of a very high type of devotion — devotion to an idea. That kind of devotion

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is advocated to spiritually oriented persons. When a person has true devotion, he begins to learn that the life of God is everywhere, in all things, small and big. We know that even small creatures which may appear insignificant to us now, have a role to play in the process of evolution. We can know something of how great a role small insects have. Ants, for instance, learn to work together; and even if we learn a little of the details of its existence, the ant is amazing. One wonders how there can be a creature so small, having a very tiny brain, which has the kind of intelligence it has. Or does it allow the universal intelligence, working through it and the company of other ants like him, to do something which is valuable from a larger view?

It is very enlightening and inspiring to learn, even gradually, about how evolution works. It works in many ways, not in one way alone, and all the time it finds ways to develop intelligence and the qualities necessary for the higher life of various beings. We who are highly developed mentally, from a certain point of view, must learn what elements make for devotion. Devotion is not merely to a single individual, it is much more than that. If it is dedication to a higher being, like one of the Mahatmas, then it must exist for the good of all creatures, because the Mahatmas are not concerned with only one or two people. Sometimes it appears as if they take more interest in one individual, rather than another, because those who are highly developed have choices before them. They are given opportunities

and much depends on whether that individual takes advantage of them or not. The Mahatma does not say this is the opportunity. Opportunity may come in hidden ways. It may be of a kind that is not easily recognizable.

If we believe in Theosophical literature, we know of some individuals who have proceeded very far, and then stop, or even go back. But this does not happen to someone who has devotion in a real sense, because he has devotion not only to a person who may be a teacher, but to one who has shown the way is universal. It is not limited to any one person, even to a Mahatma. Devotion to a person is devotion to that which that person is working for; that is the good of all creatures which I believe every Mahatma represents. There is something in every individual which can take him on the spiritual path, and it is for us to become aware what this is; not to condemn some people because we see that they are not doing what we think they should. We may help them to take a positive interest, perhaps not at the physical level but at a different level.

In one of the talks that Dr Besant gave, she said that in our meditation, we can think of a person who has had difficulties, and pour out, as much as possible, the kind of feeling that will encourage the better side of his or her nature to come up. The help we give need not necessarily be at the physical level. The person may reject our approach to him, but our attitude towards that person can be helpful all the same. So, at the

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back of our mind, there is the good of all.

So in devotion to an individual, you do not remain enclosed. The heart becomes larger. The heart of the Adept is as large as life itself. So if devotion limits a person and he says he is devoted to this or that and everything else is ordinary, there is something wrong. A good teacher is concerned with the good of all, and he who is devoted to the teacher is also concerned with the good of all. The Adepts perhaps do not allow contact with themselves to anyone who has not come so far, because he has not yet the capacity to widen his interests and feelings.

All of us can look at ourselves. We may be devoted in many ways, or only devoted to certain members of our family, and not to all. We may be devoted to one Master, or one teacher, but not to everyone who has the character of a holy person. Tradition often suggests devotion only to a chosen person. This may be fine, but only at a certain stage. Beyond that stage, which may be the beginning of Theosophical life, there must be a devotion towards the good of humanity itself, including all people, the bad as well as the good, animals, birds, in fact, everything. A benevolent attitude must come to the fore, an attitude which does not change according to the behaviour of others, but remains the same.

### **A Brotherhood which is Different**

More than a century ago, HPB wrote certain things which are valuable to us even today. One such thing was concern about the impact that Theosophy could,

and will have, one day on people. She wrote as follows:

On the day when Theosophy will have accomplished its most holy and most important vision, namely to unite firmly a body of all nations in brotherly love — on true altruistic work, not a labour with selfish motives — on that day only will Theosophy become higher than any nominal brotherhood of man.

The brotherhood we talk about, and what most of us practise, is only nominal, not deep. It does not overcome obstacles and is not better than brotherhood spoken about, but not really put into effect. As HPB says, it has a mission, a work, to do, which is most holy and important. It must unite all people who are touched by high ideals into a brotherhood of all men and all nations, so that the world really becomes one at heart.

It is important that brotherhood does not remain a word which conveys only what is superficial. It must be deeply felt and practised, touching all people and all creatures. It should not eliminate the poor and the dirty, and those who err in various ways. To regard all as brothers is a holy, a most holy and important mission. The purpose for which we are working is not merely to create a little friendship between the many people of the earth, but a real bond which is altruistic. Till that day, Theosophy is only nominal but when the brotherhood is real, it will unite not only all human beings but all nations. Nations will have their particular characteristics, but will be united by a common basis of

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altruistic work and absence of selfish motivation. If we see this at all, we see how far away we are from real brotherhood.

Science, Religion and Philosophy, which we speak about in the second Object, must be understood at a deep level. Science, for example, is not merely a matter of knowing and of studying more about how the universe works. It is a question of understanding the meaning of the universe as a whole. It is not a process whose meaning and purpose nobody knows; the real scientist is asking what the universe means while he is studying scientifically who we are.

What is the meaning of our life is a question that begins to touch philosophy. Religion also in its own way asks this question. Is there an element of sacredness which connects all things of which we come to know? Are all parts of that one supreme substance which is Brahman, a unity which is not mechanical and which makes disparity look unreal? Science is not merely a classroom knowledge or indicative of a capacity to invent. It is what unites in thought the world: people, trees

and earth, and fish and everything that we know. What is this interconnectedness and what is the key to it? It is interesting in this connection to learn of the laws which apply to things on this earth and also apply to distant things, to what happens both on the earth and in the universe.

This interconnection may be what is important to know. All of us who are Theosophists know that the smallest creature is still part of a great system; it is growing in awareness, not only in body. This is one of the things that connect us to everything on earth and beyond. The Buddha said that compassion goes to all creatures, feeling the goodness in them, which is a way of feeling unity. People who know this will come upon a different way of looking at things, a different plan of existence.

Brotherhood is brought about in many ways. The second Object of our Society is a way, which we do not usually think of, towards the unity of life. It is the meaning of life, perhaps of life being one. The objects of the Society all point to the same truth. ✧