

THE WHISPER OF THE SOUL

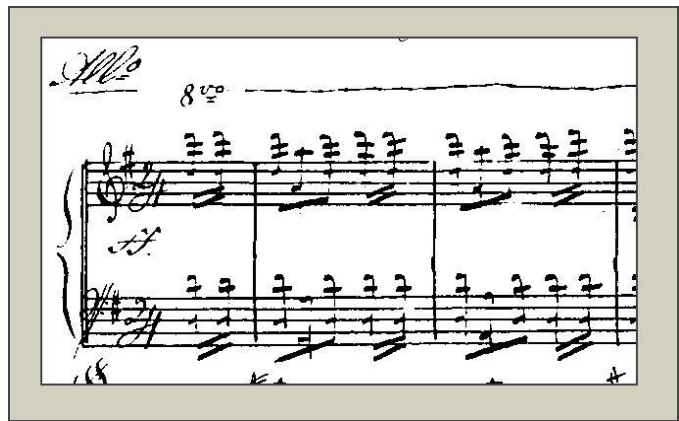
By Rohit Mehta

An excerpt from the book *Seek Out the Way: Studies in Light on the Path* by Rohit Mehta.

The entire problem of our spiritual life centers round two themes—the vision of the whole, and the right adjustment of the parts. The daily struggle of the individual is indeed in the direction of finding a rightful place for every detail of his or her existence. This, in fact, is the problem of choice—the problem of good and evil. For that which is in its rightful place is good and that which is not in its rightful place is evil. But how can one know the rightful place of anything save in the background of the whole? Without the perception of the whole the only method the individual can employ for the adjustment of parts is the method of trial and error.

But this is an endless process, especially because the psychological setting of the person constantly changes. What is right in one setting may not be right at all in a changed setting. Therefore, in the psychological sphere there can be no established code, no set formula, indicating what is right and wrong in an absolute manner—that is, in a manner that could be applied to all circumstances. Thus there has to be a constant perception of the whole. In every setting the whole has to be discovered anew.

The whole can be discovered only in the interval—in the silence—between two sounds. In other words, it is only as we hear the melody that we get the perception of the whole. And when the melody is heard, it is easy to learn the lesson of harmony—the lesson of establishing right relationship between the parts. The question of fundamental importance in the spiritual life is, therefore, that of hearing the melody—of listening to the silence, of being aware of the “interval.” It is the interval that holds the key to the understanding of life. And the interval denotes a discontinuity. So, it is not continuity, but discontinuity, that reveals the meaning and significance of life!



How do we listen to the silence between two sounds? The instruction, which *Light on the Path* gives to the neophyte, is as follows:

*Regard earnestly all the life that surrounds you.
Learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men.
Regard most earnestly your own heart.*

We are asked to regard earnestly all the life that surrounds us—not one particular expression of life, but life wherever it expresses itself. This requires an extraordinary awareness of life at all the various levels of its expression. This is possible only under conditions of physical sensitivity, emotional responsiveness and mental alertness. Unless a person is open and responsive in all parts of their being, they will not be aware of all the life that surrounds them—and without such awareness an earnest regard for all expressions of life would become impossible. To be aware of all life that surrounds us implies extending areas of one's own interest. Without a deep interest in life an earnest regard for its expressions is unthinkable.

Now, usually our interest in anything takes the shape either of identification or of condemnation. It should be noted that condemnation, too, is a form of identification—for it is identification with the opposite of that which we condemn! But if our interest in a thing, a person or an idea is born out of identification, then it is only a reaction from our spheres of habit. Such a reaction may be positive or it may be negative; in the case of condemnation we display a negative reaction.

Needless to say all reactions emerge from certain fixed centers of the mind, and a fixed center of the mind is its habit. A habit invariably dulls the mind as it does the senses, and with this dullness it brings a loss of perspective. An interest born out of habit can have no depth or earnestness about it. A mind conditioned by habit is lazy or indolent—it moves only within the limits of its cable-tow. Nothing outside this sphere is of any interest to it. It is quite obvious that such a mind cannot regard earnestly all the life that surrounds it. The mind that is circumscribed with reference to its sphere of interest loses a sense of proportion and thereby overemphasizes a part. It is prevented from seeing the whole by the conditioning factors of habit.

Spiritual life is essentially a piece of beautiful architecture. In such an architecture there is a harmony—a sense of proportion. No part therein is over-emphasized nor is it under-estimated. Every detail of such an architecture is in its appropriate place. When a part occupies its rightful place, then mysteriously the whole shines through that part. And when the whole shines through it, it becomes tremendously significant. In a harmonious piece of architecture every part—even the smallest detail—is significant because of the presence of the whole. When everything shines with the significance of the whole, then there arises a natural and an earnest regard for all life that surrounds us. It is the whole that imparts significance to the part, and a part becomes significant only when it occupies its appropriate place. Nowhere else can the part shine with the significance of the whole. Needless to say it is the presence of the whole, which calls our

undivided attention to it.

It is not the size of a thing that matters. The thing by itself will remain unnoticed—it will not call out our earnest regard—if the whole is not present in it. And when the whole is present, the same quality will shine out from each detail. The difference between various things will then be only of quantity and not of quality. Thus the instruction given to the neophyte to regard earnestly all the life that surrounds them cannot be fulfilled without discovering an appropriate place for each detail of their existence. And to discover an appropriate place for each detail is to have a vision of the whole. But how does one come to this vision of the whole?

Here *Light on the Path* asks the neophyte to “look intelligently into the hearts of men.” To look intelligently and to look intellectually are two different things. To look intellectually is to dissect, to analyze, to examine a thing or an event from a structural standpoint. Intellect can examine a thing only part by part—it has a static view, it splits up a movement into a number of still pictures. Intelligence, however, has a dynamic view, it can contain several things at a time, it can comprehend movement, it perceives the whole and, therefore, the appropriate place of each part.

Light on the Path says: “Intelligence is impersonal,” but not so the intellect. Intellect has a personal approach to people and things, for it is the product of time. It functions from the past and into the future. It operates within the sphere of continuity, for thought is its instrument and thought is rooted in and motivated by the past. Its conclusions are based on the process of comparison and contrast. It identifies with that which evokes pleasant memories and it condemns that which stimulates unpleasant memories. And so the judgment of the intellect is personal, colored by the memories of the past.

While intellect *reacts* from the past, it is intelligence that *acts* in the present. We can look intelligently only when the judgment of the intellect is put aside. To look intelligently into the hearts of men is to see *what is*. When we see people and things as they are, we cannot help loving them. Intelligence has a direct perception, and therefore, sees the fundamental nature of everything. It sees the whole. It comprehends the source from which life’s expressions emanate. The intellect only sees the outer expressions, that which is manifested. But intelligence looks into the very source and, therefore, its judgment is based on the perception of the whole.

To look intelligently into the hearts of men is to see the source of action and not merely its pattern. In the source is to be found the intrinsic nature of everything. The pattern of action may be crude or refined but the source contains the original nature of everything. Our judgment of any pattern of action is bound to be faulty so long as we have not perceived the original nature of the actor who performs the action. The original nature of the actor is his dharma. An action, which emanates from this center or

source, is a natural and spontaneous action. It is intelligence—not intellect—that enables us to see the original nature of everything.

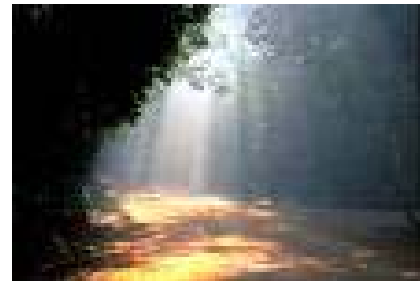
How do we call out this intelligence from within us so that we may be enabled to look into the hearts of others? It is only the person of intelligence who can tread the path. We are led to the understanding of the problem as we examine the third aphorism in this particular group, which says:

Regard most earnestly your own heart.

This instruction appears on a superficial examination to be rooted in selfishness. Is not a regard for our own heart a path of self-interest? But on a deeper examination this instruction is found to throw great light on the problem of intelligence. What does this aphorism, which asks us to regard most earnestly one's heart, mean? It asks the neophyte to be sensitive to the promptings of his own heart. We listen mostly to the mind, but never to the heart.

To listen to the heart is not to become sentimental nor does it mean an emotional or an impulsive reaction to life's environment. We can listen to the heart only when the projections and motives of thought and emotion are put away. Heart speaks only to a purified mind. Everything in its intrinsic nature is absolutely pure—it is only when something clings to it that impurity arises. Thus, mind becomes impure when the residue of an incomplete action clings to it. In other words, it is psychological memory that renders a mind impure. When the corruptible mind puts on incorruption, then does it become sensitive to the promptings of the heart.

Heart is indeed the seat of spiritual intuition. Intelligence is that state of human consciousness which is open and sensitive to the whisper of the spirit. One of the instructions given to the spiritual aspirant is to learn to meditate in the heart. To meditate in the heart is to be sensitive to the promptings of spiritual intuition. To meditate in the heart is to render the mind pure and transparent. It is to this purified mind that the heart conveys its secret and in the light of this secret all things become significant. He who possesses this secret regards all life earnestly—he has profound respect for everything and everyone, for he has learned intelligently to look into the heart of all phenomena.



If, while treading the path, in the midst of one's daily avocations, one could listen to the promptings of the heart, one would never miss the way. But the promptings of the heart must be obeyed. The neophyte must "regard most earnestly" the promptings of

his or her own heart. In a given situation, in the solution of a problem, the heart speaks but once, and that, too, in a whisper. If the mind is insensitive to the whisper of the heart, then the spiritual pilgrim must struggle and toil in the dark, and every such movement in the dark is likely to lead the pilgrim astray. To disregard the promptings of the heart and to reject the guidance of intuition is to follow the path indicated by the projections of the mind. But the mind is caught up in the darkness of continuity. No fundamental spiritual transformation can arise out of its efforts. Its light is only "darkness made visible."

But the light of the spirit shines ever in our midst. We shall perceive this light when the screens of the mind have been put away. It is only when the mind's continuity is interrupted, it is only in that interval, that moment of discontinuity, that one can perceive the Light Ineffable and comprehend the mystery of its shining. If only we can listen to the promptings of the heart in the midst of our daily activities, then the treading of the Path will be an indescribable joy.

Edited by the Department of Education.