

Box 863, Johannesburg,  
South Africa  
Feb.-March, 1949

My dear Friends:

Here I am back again in sunny S. Africa. Such a nice number of people came to meet the boat, which was a long time docking, for there were three aircraft carriers in the way. I spent three weeks in the Cape and then came on to Johannesburg where I shall be till the Convention at Easter-time. After that I go to Durban for some time, and then on again to the Cape.

It was lovely to see all the friends here again. The Society seems in a very healthy condition here, and since I have been away many young people have come into the work. The young man who was General Treasurer here during the five years that I was the General Secretary, Mr. Ronald Pizzighelli, is now at Adyar, with his wife, for the great Convention. I am so happy about that. Another S. African, Mr. van Ginkel, is also there. And the English General Secretary, Mrs. Doris Groves, and as some of you know, the ever-helpful Mrs. Sarah Mayes from Wheaton in the U.S.A. The more our members can contact the greatest and most sublime of the Centers of our work, the better for all the work. I can testify to the enormous change that comes over one by a visit to Adyar, and after dwelling awhile in that wonderful and glowing atmosphere. I was never the same again, after two years there, and any good that I am in the work I place to the fact that I was privileged to be there. May it come to some of you before long.

I said I would write on self-discipline in this next letter. I will take as a text a sutra of the great Patanjali at the beginning of his second little book on Yoga. He writes:

"The preliminary practice of Yoga consists in:

1. Whole-souled and ardent self-training (the real meaning of tapas).
2. Deep thought and study.
3. Absolute devotion to Ishvara, making Him the motive for all action."

(Ishvara means a personalized aspect of the Divine Life.)

Now probably to all of us this sounds like Yoga proper, yet Patanjali calls it the preliminary to real Yoga. This is because before the true powers of Yoga can safely develop in a man, his vehicles of consciousness must be purified and controlled. I want to stop a minute over the word, "control." This does not mean a hard forcing of the mind and heart. It means much more the identification of the consciousness with the higher, Eternal Man. He controls the lower because he is above it and the superior. In the words of the Lord Shri Krishna, "Let him control the self by the Self." H.P.B. said that most of us were not yet occultists, but preparing to become such in another life. Many of us are at the preliminary stage. Let us take the three qualifications in turn:

The training of our lower selves must be self-initiated and wholehearted. We may belong to an occult school and obey its injunctions faithfully, but blind and mechanical obedience will not help us as much as intelligent and generous participation. H.P.B. says, in the S.D., that adepts become, they are not made, and they become such by self-initiated and self-devised efforts, "thus ascending through every degree of intelligence." We must train ourselves, much as an athlete trains his body for a race. And as we are three-fold beings, thinking, feeling and acting without cessation, we must learn to train them all three, and drive them, like a three-horsed drosky, towards the supreme goal. We train the mind to dwell on, to take pleasure in, to absorb, true and lovely things, that it may increasingly reflect the attitude and thought of the Higher Self. Indeed, a man cannot find the way to the Path without the active cooperation of that Higher Self. Light on the Path calls it the Warrior within, and says we must attract his attention, and if we do that he will never again entirely desert us, and when the goal is reached (the great "Day be with us."), he will become one with us.



I once asked Bishop Leadbeater how one attracted the attention of one's Ego. "By thinking the kind of thoughts and living the kind of life that attracts him," he replied. It sounds as if we were two people, but the real I finally makes the unreal me one with him. (Does this sound involved?)

Then we train the feelings to respond glowingly to all beautiful and generous motives, growing the power to love, admire; compassionate, and generously sharing with others. One element we should not forget is the faculty of Wonder. The man who has lost the ability to forget himself in wonder at the beautiful and the great, has lost much that would help him. A great German writer once wrote a book called Das Heiliger (The Holy). The Holy is there for us whenever we can see Him in every living thing here as well as in the Archangels. As Browning wrote: "And every bush aflame with God."

Perhaps the training of the body is the easiest to understand, as it consist in doing things. We have to be active most of the time. This is where the third qualification comes in, for every action which is dedicated to God, or to the Master as representing God, becomes a holy action leading us ever nearer to the Heart of the Universe.

H.P.B. says that there are five things in life that seem terribly real to us, but to the Yogi are "unreal:"

1. Places, meetings and partings, expectation and memories.
2. Friends and foes.
3. Possessions.
4. Our own personalities.
5. Our sensations.

It would take a long time to go into everyone of these. Perhaps we can do it another time. Our "self-control" means that we can direct and govern ourselves in the light of higher things and reason. This lower self of ours acquires habits of thought, feeling and acting. To change them takes perseverance and will. And it can only be done by degrees. Suppose we begin with many little things, and learn to say "no" to ourselves, as some of us can so easily say no to others. I remember Mrs. Besant telling us that she once made it a practice to say "no" to herself. If she grew too fond of any possession, she gave it away; if she liked a certain dish, she did not partake of it. St. Therese of Lisieux put bitter wormwood in her favourite dishes. I do not suggest we should do quite such drastic things! There is no reason why we should not enjoy things, but do not let us be held prisoner by them. Do not let us feel that we must have them at all costs, generally at someone else's cost!! Mrs. Besant also told us that she used to meditate on the things she did not like or appreciate, such as black beetles. St. Therese found that her best efforts at self-denial lay in keeping back hard words and expressions of active disapproval. She went further than that; she found true charity consisted in never being surprised at anything and in welcoming the least sign of good in another, in having a patience that knew no end with the stumbling footsteps and little foibles of others. We could well make this a kind of game with ourselves. "Now, my dear," we could say to our very ordinary self, "you must learn to be unselfish, courteous, patient, and controlled by me, not just running riot on your own little account."

Let us "sit loose" about things, and make a practice of surrendering them. Did not St. Paul tell us that our bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit? Let us build a fair and sweet habitation for the God Who is coming to dwell one day in us.

Your affectionate friend,

CLARA CODD