

THE SECRET OF OUR DAILY TASKS

By
C. JINARAJADASA



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The Conquest of Spirit and Matter

By C. JINARAJADASA, M. A., Cantab.

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THE LECTURES herein by Mr. C. Jinarajadasa were two given publicly at Olcott (Headquarters of The Theosophical Society in America). This little volume is a companion to the larger volume reporting the many valuable contributions by our distinguished guest, and by others, throughout the period of the Olcott Summer Sessions of 1935.

The Secret of Our Daily Tasks

Many of you must be familiar with the exquisite and pathetic little poem of Charles Kingsley — *The Three Fishermen*. As I pondered over this lecture of mine — *The Secret of Our Daily Tasks* — I thought of those striking lines which in many ways describe life and work for so many millions in the world.

“For men must work and women must weep,
For there is little to earn and many to keep,
Though the harbor-bar be moaning.”

Our life is set on all sides in a framework of tasks. Most of these tasks give us little inspiration, and I think probably most of us would heartily endorse the classical statement of one of Dickens' characters, Mr. Mantalini, who said when he described life that it was “one demnition horrid grind.”

Now it is exactly that for most of us. There is a quality in our daily task, of crushing out the spirit of expansiveness which seems natural to us. The organization of men's lives is to call forth from each the best that he can give to the community, while giving to him that which he needs, all that he needs. In this process, tasks are obligatory upon us, and more and more the spirit of modern civilization is that of the assignment of special tasks. These tasks you will find in your experience are first interesting, so long as they are fresh. Whatever is the work which you are called upon to do in the beginning, there is an attractiveness because of novelty, but after a while when it is the same piece of work time after time, day after day,

something mechanical enters into the problem, and then afterwards something oppressive, like the description of Mr. Mantalini.

When you look at the lives of men you will find that there is an attempt on their part to make the best of it. This best which they are striving to make out of their daily tasks consists in erecting a kind of framework into which to place the various tasks of life. This framework varies according to the temperament of the individual. There are two main types which you can find with regard to this problem, those who make a framework of only this life — for they cannot believe in any other life beyond the grave — and others who accept the religious standpoint with a kind of framework of eternity, within which to set their daily tasks.

Consider the first group of people and the way that, within this limited life, they strive to make the best out of their daily tasks. Many of them will strive to gain out of the tasks of life a sense of contentment so that at least they may cull, as it were, a little, a few of the flowers that life here and there can be made to produce, if one cultivates life. They understand that if one cultivates life it is possible, by an adjustment to such tasks as destiny gives one, and to one's environment, to derive a modicum of contentment in spite of so much that is opposing the realization of one's desires.

Others go a step further than mere contentment. They strive, if possible, to give usefulness to life, so that in addition merely to being contented they want to add something of a creative quality, so that they shall have given to life something noble, something that shall delight the hearts and minds of others.

There are a few who look upon life from a somewhat different standpoint, as a part of a larger whole, an opportunity to express their character. They feel that there is within them a message to be given, something to be in spite of the difficulties of environment, some new

invention in the world processes, some modification of civilization which shall bear their stamp, and so they purposely plan to express their character through work. While not believing that there is any kind of futurity of personal life beyond the grave, they still take up life from a masterly standpoint and go through that life trying to mold it to express character.

Such a conception of expressing character through life is one of the most striking in the Hebrew faith. You will find that in them the powerful impulse given to the imagination is a sense of righteousness. In old Judaism there is no vision, at least nothing clear of any kind of a life beyond the grave. The vision is concentrated on the expression of the individual's character, so that in all that he does the spirit of righteousness may be made manifest, a righteousness pleasing unto the Lord. That is a very wonderful way of expressing the character. That form of expression of the character is characteristic of the idealist, and there are hundreds of variants of idealists, who do not believe in the framework of the future, but out of their daily tasks strive to create something noble to offer, try to give to the world a kind of worship of a great ideal. This group takes life as it is. They do not question what is going to be the ultimate result of this life, because they do not believe in one to come, beyond the grave, but they do limit themselves to contentment or usefulness, a noble idealism within the framework of this one life.

But there is also another framework which I call the framework of eternity, for when a person believes in the life beyond the grave it is a continuing life. All the religions which proclaim to you a continuing life beyond the grave have a general vision of eternity, but what is the relation of the tasks of this life to that eternity in which they believe? Their relation towards their tasks is not that of the idealist, but is far more that of the individual who is going to escape from the burden of this

life into a world, a condition, where that burden shall not be. The gospel of the religious life which is proclaimed in the religions of the East and West is a gospel of escape. I mean by that, that the daily tasks are to be done with a view of escape from the limitations of today. Many find their daily tasks possible only because there is a vision of eternity.

This daily acceptance, into which so many are forced by their environment, can at least be borne if you surround such a life with a kind of atmosphere of eternity. You may have dreams of heaven, and a condition of happiness which has nothing to do with such tasks as you have here every day.

When you examine this vision of eternity, this framework within which the majority of men set their daily tasks, you find that there is no connection between life in eternity and the tasks they have to do here. The tasks of men cease with the casting aside of the body, and those tasks are not wanted in eternity. What are the tasks of the majority of people in this country? Business in one form or another. Most people are working at some kind of business. Take the ordinary business man. He has to go to the office daily, or he has to go out into the fields to farm. He may be religious and therefore his business of daily life is set in a framework of eternity, but obviously there is no business in heaven, no farming that needs to be done. Becoming an expert in business, a successful farmer is laudable, but what connection is there between the success which he makes against competition, against hardship, against difficulty, what relation between that success and the life he is to live in eternity? You will therefore find, as you examine those who believe in the framework of eternity, and the lives which they live at their tasks, that there is no connection.

What is the future of the doctor to be when he is in heaven? We shall all have perfect health in heaven, and yet he has constantly, for a whole lifetime, to become ex-

pert in the understanding of the physical body, and in the understanding of human nature in connection with it. It is all to be thrown aside when he begins his life in eternity. Again, the journalistic profession is one of the most vibrant, but not needed in heaven, obviously.

Take the whole make-up of life, the mother who spends her time looking after her family, and seeing to the family's needs, who sometimes makes a wonderful success, whose character grows, who stands shining with a measure of contentment, of duties nobly done, because she has learned how to work with a spirit of sympathy and efficiency. What shall be the framework of eternity, after she leaves what she has learned here? And so in one profession after another. One of the greatest professions today, so necessary in the world's reorganization, is the engineer. But nothing of what he learns is wanted in heaven. What of the teacher? Teachers may be required in heaven. There is a faint possibility. What of the preacher? What of the soldier? That is a profession which brings out very high attributes, not merely in the department of the army and fighting, but in the power to organize, to handle men, to bring out of men a quality of heroism. Is this perfect soldier to drill the angels? You will see as you examine daily life from the religious standpoint that it has no relationship to eternal life. As a matter of fact most people do not analyze life in terms of eternity because the religious teaching given to them does not give any such vision.

When I have said that most religions preach the gospel of escape I include also the great faiths of the Orient. They believe in reincarnation, and that there is a law of justice, of cause and effect, the teaching of karma, yet fundamentally, as they proclaim the finality of liberation, it is a freedom from such tasks, as the series of lives on earth gives them, and yet the character is made perfect. When the character, therefore, has been brought to the threshold of liberation, all this great process of the uni-

verse ceases to have further meaning, and so we have, once again in that framework of eternity, this quality of escaping from such life as this universal process has created.

It is possible for us to make another type of framework, which shall be intellectually more satisfying, which shall prove itself to our hearts and minds as having a greater power of inspiration, either than the religious framework of eternity or the ordinary framework of idealism of one who does not believe in eternity. I think it is possible. And it is such a framework that I want to outline to you. It is this framework which becomes inevitable to you as you study certain fundamental ideas known to men as Theosophy, although they are not restricted to The Theosophical Society and its activities, nor to this age. They have always existed. What has been done by the Theosophical movement is to gather these ideas and present them to the modern mind, but fundamentally it is a framework of ideas that has existed always.

In this framework there is a conception of man which is designated as Theosophical, different from the religious conception. The religious conception regards the individual as one who has to go through certain tasks, by which he is going to perfect himself, before he is fit to enter into a condition of salvation or liberation. But the opportunity of the individual lies in the fact that he is living in the midst of an opportunity he is always creating. The individual is then a center of creative force, creating even now by his attitudes, his vision, not only a liberation from this life, but something that is eternity now, a heaven which he will continue creating in heaven. Even in heaven the creative quality in you will go on creating, and you will be a dynamo to transform the here and the now, which are imperfect, to something which will be more perfect in eternity. The individual as a center of creative force is, in this conception, very God, so that he is not seen as separate from the great Author of the

universe, but linked in an intimate way, so intimate that it is difficult to describe except in terms of similes. A favorite simile is that of a great flame arising, and if you have seen a flame made of logs, you know that within the flame are tiny sparks. Each tiny spark is a tiny flame, not different in substance from that of the great flame, and if it were to light on dry material it would itself become a flame.

Another simile equally expressive is that of the rough diamond dug up from the earth which is a genuine crystal, but rather yellowish and not very attractive. But place it under the diamond cutter's stone, using powdered diamond with which to cut it, and finally you have the perfect stone.

Thus is man related to God in a similar way. Within him is perfection, within him divinity, but both perfection and divinity are to be realized. Clearly this conception of man is different from the ordinary conception of man, the sinner bound to the wheel of birth and death, from which he has to escape.

In the West I should call the conception of God in religion that of a static God, Who once brought the universe into being, then stands apart from the creation. He is static. He is offering you opportunities for salvation, but He is not intimately related to this world and all its affairs, for He is a God in heaven. Similarly in the Eastern standpoint the sub-stratum of all things is the Absolute. It is the sum total of all possibilities and yet is not involved in those possibilities as they manifest themselves. In other words a static God made the universe once, but now is apart from it, and watches.

It is obvious as we look at the universe, even when we accept the creation of a Creator, that the universe is not perfection. There is scarcely ever perfection, naturally, and yet it can be made perfect. There are so many imperfections in Nature's leaves and flowers, and yet here and there everything can be educed, drawn out, in perfection. And similarly it is that, as you examine the universe in

all its phases, you are bound to admit that a perfection is possible, but it requires a Perfection from outside, a Guidance to call forth such perfection.

Hence in the framework I am offering is the conception of God Who is a Creator of an imperfect universe. But as He fashions His world it is equally plain that He has a Plan, not crystallized in the beginning of creation, but to be realized by Him through man whose latent divinity is to be released as is the perfection of the rough diamond. That divinity in every human being is called forth by God as each individual releases the perfection of the universe in himself in his cooperative participation.

Man, then, has a role in eternity, not of salvation, not of escape, but rather of qualifying himself, of equipping himself, to work with the great Master, in order to shape the universe into ever greater and greater perfection. In other words our goal is to release, to call out that universe as it is now and will be, the perfection which has been innate, hidden, because it comes from God, Who is perfection.

Our daily tasks, then, are related within this framework which I offer to a work for perfection, for which we are called to work in eternity.

How are we being taught to cooperate in releasing the perfection of the universe? We are taught by life as it is. Life, using that word in the broader sense, has existed ever since the first savage man and from that first day life has been a progress of organization of activity. The first activities which we note are those of the savage, hunting or fighting. Slowly uniting himself to a few, to make the unit, the family, the tribe, the larger body, etc., the work of unifying went on. Slowly civilization appears in each epoch, something more refined, with a greater quality of organization, greater possibilities — a perfection to be released in the home life through some kindness, through a quality of sacrifice of one towards another; perfection in the community, as the community organizes itself for

work and for play. The appearance of all the delicate, lovely things of life in a perfection is an element, then, in the organization of the universe, bit by bit, through the cooperation of the people who compose that universe.

In the beginning the tasks for life are simple. Since the individual is to cooperate in eternity, to release the perfect universe, you must propound for him an eternal life at work. Not one lifetime for work, and then eternity in heaven, when he does not work. He must cooperate all the time at higher and higher tasks. If you do not accept the law of reincarnation you must postulate that, in that life beyond the grave, you must be free to release your own perfection, free to express the divine or perfect universe. It is easier, intellectually, as you look at man who develops one capacity after another, to see that it is more reasonable for man to release the capacities required in eternity, by his coming back again and again since the conditions are here, ready for his learning. Here I am as a lecturer, but there are so many things I would like to do. Who will give me music lessons in heaven when I have the music teachers here? Surely it is more sensible, if I am to fulfill that aspect of myself, that I should come back here to work where the conditions are already prepared. You will find if you think along that line that reincarnation becomes the only sensible idea for the perfection of character. The individual is to be a creative force, steadily creating more and more perfection in eternity. He has here, then, the opportunity for the organization of his character along dozens and dozens of lines which are necessary for that process of perfecting.

Now in the first organization he is given work to do, and in most of that work he agrees with the character in Dickens that life is "a demnition horrid grind." But as he comes back life after life he begins to realize that there is a kind of loyalty possible to the work. After being in that grind again and again he becomes so bound to it that in making the best of it he achieves a kind of release

from the grind, not by escape but by an inner release, for the moment you have a sense of loyalty to the work a new quality of spirituality touches you and, as you are busy at your daily and tiresome tasks, life clears for you.

You bring about this quality of loyalty to the work first through dissatisfaction. There is a dissatisfaction rooted in us, so that we are restless, but it is that very restlessness and dissatisfaction which teaches us that quality which I have called loyalty.

This same message, exquisitely put by George Herbert, one of the Elizabethan poets, is very beautiful. He does not call it loyalty, but he writes the poem called *The Pulley*:

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessing standing by,
Let us (said he) pour on him all we can:
Let the world's riches which dispersed lie
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour,
pleasure;
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone, of all his treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should (said he)
Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gift instead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness:
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast.

That is the great problem in one aspect of our daily lives, our daily tasks. The poet calls it weariness. I call it loyalty for out of that weariness you begin to discover that there is a nobility possible in your work, that it is not chains which bind you, but that it is possible for you to discover yourself as something noble and different, as you do the work.

As life after life you go on learning this lesson of loyalty, when you have learned the lesson of loyalty to some task, then it is that there is given to you the opportunity of doing some great and significant piece of work which in some way is related to the great scheme that we call beauty. Look at the lives of men and you will find that here and there an individual gets a striking opportunity. It is as if the whole tide of Nature's forces were with him. And then a man like Lincoln gives a message of a work to be done, a loyalty of a nation to certain tasks. Every great individual, artist, composer, teacher, giver of any message, stands out dominant, inspiring, true, and work is done by him which links him to the great scheme of the perfection of the universe in a way he could not have been linked in other stages.

After such a man does a great work — there are many instances in the lives of men who have given great contributions — so often it happens that somehow life seems to pass him by. The task is taken from his hands by others, and he is, to use a trite phrase, laid on the shelf, and he feels a sense of dissatisfaction that he can no longer give the great message he once gave. That, too, is a part of his becoming a great center of creative force in eternity. After you have created some one thing there must be a period when you must judge what you have created, and decide in what way it can be rectified, for none of us create the perfect thing. We may think it is perfect, but it is deficient in some way, and it is necessary for us to know in what way. So it is a part of the scheme that men shall have these periods of quiet, when they are put aside to

work out their private individual reactions to something. Ill health, disappointment, being ignored by those who once looked up to them for leadership, in all kinds of ways life seems to leave them stranded, and they are utterly dissatisfied, not understanding that in this period they are to examine their work, and determine in what manner that work has to be rectified, for they will have to do it again, on a larger scale, but more beautifully, and it is necessary that there shall be self-examination.

This quality of self-examination is forgotten in western civilization. That self-examination must be a necessary part of your growth and life today, is a fact your feverish civilization does not understand.

In the Indian scheme where they understand this great framework of eternity, there is a definite plan in the life of the individual of the higher castes for this period of rectification. The first twenty-one years is that of the student who must understand the work to be done. Then another twenty-one years, or perhaps thirty years, as the man of family who marries, accepts the obligations and work of life, taking up its tasks, developing it, creating out of life what the civilization of his time requires. Then comes the third stage. This is the stage called the hermit-dweller, the dweller in the forest and in the homestead: he and his wife retire to some small hut within the family estate and there they are anchorites, no longer dwelling with life's problems, and in that stage of retirement there is a summation of that which they have done. In this dwelling, still vaguely in touch with their family, which supplies their needs, provides for them and their daily life, the husband and wife have a period of examination, of rectification.

Since there is no opportunity given you for rectification, the great scheme arranges, let us say, that an accident happens, which takes you to a hospital, sometimes a long illness, sometimes a great emotional shock, which gives you a time to dwell in seclusion, and from this feverish

longing for things you are suddenly withdrawn. It is in order that you may examine dispassionately, stand apart from your work, and discover in what way you could do your work more nobly. You can only do that work efficiently when you train yourself to look at your work and your life, not as will, not as calling forth, not as creative, but as idea. The world must be seen by you no longer in this dynamic creative way, but you must extract out of the world the divine plan behind it. You must extract out of your own life the idea behind it with regard to the work you have done and the work which has been done by others. When you can separate yourself from this dynamic will, and from the result of the will which is the fruit and enjoyment and honors which come to you, and stand dispassionately, then you can for the first time discover the mysterious things in life. You begin to see how you can work artistically, how you can bring in the quality of perfection, how you can take up all your tasks and do them well, giving them this wonderful quality. Slowly you discover in yourself, something like the worker, who is also an artist. Having discovered that, because you have stood apart from your work, then it is that you begin to discover yourself, as the eternal worker. When you know what you are to be in eternity as a creative worker, then for the first time life begins. When you discover according to that inner temperament of yours what you are, then life reveals itself for the first time.

Man has each his own framework. Each has some quality of perfection to release from himself. Are you to be a great giver of life? Is that your mission? So that from out of your nature there shall stream forth a quality of tenderness, of understanding, a quality of love for all things, so that you stand out enriching simply and beautifully the lives of all others?

Are you going to be a creator of beauty in music, song, poetry, the arts, the creator of beauty, taking this universe, molding it and giving new forms of beauty as it passes by?

Or are you to be a Nature lover, wherever you go, so that you are full of sympathy, of attachment to every blade of grass, so that you give a wonderful sense of sympathy to all that you contact?

Or are you going to be an organizer of good-will? Are you going to bring all men into a bond of good-fellowship and brotherhood? They are few who can do this.

Or are you to be a revealer of the wisdom, one who can mirror forth here below that exquisite perfection and inspiration and that creative divine mind?

Or are you to be the saintly type who unifies God and man, who stands at the center, the mediator between God above and Nature below?

It does not matter what is that vision of yourself, that vision will come when you have developed loyalty to your work, when you have released something of that vision of that work, with the quality of the artistic which you can put into it, so that you can be given that work to do once again. And that work will be given to you once again, as little by little, growing in character you will release more and more perfection from within, and all life will daily discover that you are linked to this perfection which is waiting to be released in the universe.

For this way of proceeding with your daily tasks you need a philosophy. Select out of the world's ways of thought that special line of philosophical thought which will inspire you to change your attitude to your daily tasks. There is one very noble philosophy, Theosophy, which grows in grandeur, but Theosophy exists in many forms. Select your own. Create your own living framework, selecting such ideas as inspire you, as give you a sense of rightness.

What will be the end, as you go on with your daily tasks? You will discover your philosophy; see eternity in each task and find an eternal work, which is expected of you, so that in the great scheme you vision yourself as the perfect character. When once you have gained that

vision, then whatever may be the hardships of life, always around the difficult task there will be the atmosphere of eternity.

And then what will life be? Like the first piece of music from Bach, your whole life will be described by a melody, for there will be perfection all the way from the first to the last. When you have found your framework each task will be seen by you, not as a burden, but rather as a part of life, as an opportunity for loyalty, as an opportunity for shaping a master instrument, through which you are going to release your beauty for the universe. Even when you are burdened by suffering, you wait in patience until that particular task is finished, to be taken up once again as a heavier task before you. It is then that you create from it a lovely task.

I would like to read you a few lines written by Keble, who wrote so beautifully along the line I have tried to place before you:

“There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime,
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holy strain
repeat.”

Life can be like a great anthem or a great symphony, something which you know intimately, and which is always with you. And then, having so discovered it, you come to your last great discovery, and it is that everything, every task and the joy of it, the creative beauty of it, is an opportunity of offering. To whom? To what? That you will discover for yourself. It is not necessary that a label shall be given to it. You will discover to what, to whom, your offering is to be given, and then life becomes an offering all the time.

It has been put very, very beautifully in this exquisite phrasing of the hymn written by Frances R. Havergal:

“Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
Only as Thou dost approve;
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart; it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all, for Thee!

Instead of using the word Lord in this hymn one can use anything else. There is a Someone you will discover to Whom to offer all the time, just as the rose is exhaling a perfume as it opens. “Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”

And you will discover that the finest secret of your daily task is that some beauty, something not far away, but so near you, some inspiration, some glorious message from this Someone, can be with you, even in your direst pains. That discovery will give you strength to go through with the struggle for life, will give you courage, will teach you how to place a touch of beauty in every task, how to commune with yourself. That is the perfection that will stand before you, and to bring that perfection down into daily life, the daily task of life, is possible, and that is the greatest gospel which everyone of the greatest of mankind has tried to reveal, that our daily lives can be sanctified, beautified, permeated by the one Will, the one Beauty. Not only release but understanding will come to you through the ways of science, of art, of poetry, and if you understand truly what is the meaning of your daily task, then loyalty to it will also come. Little by little the vision of yourself as God's archetype, that perfected soul, who is dreaming all the time, and who will begin his true work in order that he may become one with every other soul, will become clearer to you, and you will find yourself linked to that great work in eternity, that work of perfection.

This is a vision of our daily life, our daily task, which we can all discover, through which we all can look at that eternal beauty and perfection in which everything exists. And so we strive to leave on our work our mark of loyalty to that work, our mark of tenderness, of renunciation, of beauty, our mark of perfection. This makes life for us, beyond the bounds of the creed which each one of us holds. Each one of us can discover for himself a greater creed which will lift him up on high, and this discovery begins with our daily task, with a perfection to be created in this daily life, here and now, every day and every hour.

The Conquest of Spirit and Matter

All of you who have been brought up in the Christian tradition remember those very striking words of St. Paul — when he describes the struggle within himself. These are the words:

“I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

This struggle in our natures of two opposing influences, one ever seeking to express ideals and the other of being dragged into actions which shame us — this experience is common to us all.

The mystery of this duality is half suggested by Shakespeare, and these are the words he uses in *Twelfth Night*:

“The web of our life is of a mingled yarn,
good and ill together; our virtues would be
proud, if our faults whipped them not; and our
crimes would despair, if they were not cher-
ished by our virtues.”

This complexity is facing us all the time. In these modern days man is deeply interested in what is called psychology, which is the science concerning the psyche, that mysterious part of man which is the invisible. I think all the problems of modern psychology have been summed up wittily in two lines:

“From much corroding care I should be free
If once I could determine which is me.”

Now this duality which confuses us so far as the individual is concerned, is also a duality which exists in the world. Indeed the moment you awaken to true realization of real religion given not by someone else, but discovered within your own heart, then you ask the very difficult question, "Why does God tolerate evil?" You are then confronted on all sides with a problem which resolves itself into two halves, spirit on one side and matter on the other.

Wherever any problem is in two opposing halves the solution is not to be found, for it is only by uniting the problem in some way into a whole that light begins to enter. That to a very great extent is the message of modern science. Scientists have been puzzled by a good many things as for instance, the relation between mind and matter. So long as mind was contrasted to matter, there seemed to be no real solution, but they are beginning to find a solution today, and such a leader as Jeans says, that from the scientific standpoint, if mind and matter are not the same thing, at least they are two ingredients of one single system. Similarly, so long as space and time were seen as two separate things in the universe, they could not understand them, could not explain the great problem, but now that space and time are blended together, space-time has some kind of a mysterious unity, through which they are beginning to explain the operations of matter.

In the same way we shall understand life in its essential truth as we build some kind of a bridge between spirit and matter, as we diminish the division between two incompatibles. That is my problem today, and I want to suggest to you how it can be done. I have taken a curious title — *The Conquest of Spirit and Matter*. I say curious because, while the conquest of matter is understandable, the conquest of spirit seems the very negation of sense, since it is spirit that conquers, not is conquered. However I shall explain at the proper time.

The keynote of modern civilization is the conquest of matter: by means of all the wonderful equipment which has been created by our inventors and leading scientists, man is conquering matter. He digs into the bowels of the earth and derives substances he requires. He invents airplanes and air is conquered. All the elements seem to have been conquered. We have ascended into the air, we have the radio, so that distance is diminished, we have conquered the sea with our magnificent steamers. On all sides, then, man seems to be conquering matter.

In this conquest of matter there is one outstanding fact, and that is the increase of comforts. There never was a time, as today, when man was surrounded by so many comforts. Yet still, as this process goes on, one wonders sometimes whether all is well, whether, indeed, it is a conquering of matter by man, or the conquest of man by matter. For look! Take for instance the radio. It is very useful, very entertaining, and now and then an inspiration, but while these waves of ether bring you music, it is not the kind you might always wish to hear, not the same kind of music which is being presented at a concert hall where the musicians are creative. How much have we lost? Most of the public would not know that we have lost anything, but those more sensitive know that no kind of a sending of music through the air is exactly the same as the music which is there when the musicians are creating it, where their invisible auras have expanded, where we are communing with their auras. It is not the same thing at all.

Then, too, while indeed much of the beauty of music is disseminated in certain ways, so that the taste of the public is slowly being uplifted, still it is also, I think, very much dragged down into lesser things because, as you know, the radio shouts forth all kinds of things, all day long! What happens then to our inner natures? We are not aware, because we have become rather thick-skinned, in our modern civilization, to so many sounds which are

annoying. We do not take much notice, we become unresponsive.

In these days we are especially proud of the speed of travel, but we have not realized how much we lose. I can give you an incident from my own experience. Some years ago I had to go several times into the city of Madras from the Adyar Headquarters of the Society, just outside its boundaries, and I always got some kind of a lift in somebody's car. I had an engagement one day to attend a meeting, and arrangements were made so that I could go into the city but in some way that I do not recall the car did not appear, and no other car was available. Then, finally, I had to send to the village and my servant brought me a little cart drawn by a horse, a little pony, trotting along at the magnificent speed of about eight miles an hour.

There I sat, going along the road over which I had traveled hundreds of times in a motor car, but, for the first time, I could see the shapes of the branches of the trees that lined the road. My eyes took a delight in the things before them, and I could note the color of the clothes which the men and women wore as they passed by, and I began to see that road in a new way. But all that, as you know, is being old-fashioned.

In 1924 there was one of those great steamers for tourists, and this is what happened. They came to Palestine to see the country of our Lord. When they reached Palestine they dashed off in motor cars to Nazareth, in an hour and a quarter. Then they went to the Lake of Galilee, and from there through Samaria, had dinner in Jerusalem and next morning caught the steamer to Egypt, having "done" Palestine in one day!

The whole problem of the conquest of matter is not along the line of merely creating things by machinery or of speeding up. The true conquest of matter is when matter reveals the idea. That is probably a new thought and I must explain.

What do I mean by saying that matter is conquered when matter reveals the idea? Take as an illustration what happens when an architect plans an edifice. He creates the idea of the building, and then from the hillside they must cut out stone which will fit in with the building; from the foundries they must shape the metal which will reveal the idea. Then, slowly, and with the help of the workers the edifice rises, and that edifice when completed, if it is rightly done, reveals the idea.

This revealing of the idea in architecture can be understood in its deepest significance, its most beautiful inspiration, if you go to see certain great buildings in the old world. Why is it that people from here go to Europe, and feel a fascination in the cathedrals of Europe? Because everyone of those cathedrals was intended to reveal an idea, and sometimes so powerful is the idea that even though ages have passed it is as if through the stone an idea were being released, and that is what you sense. There is a unity of something indescribable. This indescribable quality is, I think, from my own experience, most clearly to be seen or sensed in the Taj Mahal at Agra. That great mausoleum was intended to be a monument to a queen. It was built by the Emperor Shah Jehan for his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal. It is placed in a wonderful garden on a great river side, and the building is supported by other buildings, and there is a great gateway, which is in itself a magnificent thing.

This great mosque is the central edifice of a great conception, which consists of buildings and gardens and a park with many buildings, but when you come to consider the central structure of the Taj Mahal, of which you have seen so many pictures, then you have an indescribable wonder. It is built of white marble with lovely minarets and dome, but as you see this building in the morning light, or in the evening light, or especially when the moon is full, it is as if it were not a thing of matter, but far more like some kind of a great divine thought which had descended

and veiled itself in physical form; and as you watch, it is almost as if the whole building might rise and vanish, so transcendent is the whole idea, so translucent the impression: the form seems to fade away and you stand before an indescribable descent from on high.

It is something of that same secret quality of the idea which is all the time revealed in matter, which is also characteristic of one of the greatest monuments of the world, a great Buddhist monument in Java. This time the monument is of granite, dark in color and with many beautifully carved statues, niches and arches rising clear to the top. In the evening twilight this majestic edifice with all its intricacies seems like a unity which has descended from above and veiled itself in stone. It is when substance is so arranged by man that a great idea is revealed, that matter is conquered.

In another department you will see the conquest of matter, and that is in bridge-building. There are concrete bridges, which tell you merely of materiality, but take in contrast some of the bridges spanning small rivers in Japan. Each bridge is thought of not merely as bridging the two halves of earth, but in another way, so that the bridge is regarded almost like a symbol of the bridge between heaven and earth of which you have read. The physical bridge is there for use, yes, but the artist's thought of the bridge perfected out of, released from, the material substance, almost a divine thought of a bridge, creates something wonderful, full of a great significance. One of the very great bridges which exists today is that which spans two sides of Sydney Harbor in Australia. From a great distance it is almost ethereal in appearance, something fairylike, but as you drive over the bridge there is the solid structure, dense and coarse, and nothing of the fairy vision you saw at a distance remains.

In modern construction the mystical concept that matter should reveal the idea has not yet come to us but it was a part of the essential work and thought of artists

in past generations and was revealed in beauty and poetical imagination. It is when matter reveals the idea that civilization begins for the first time, for what is real civilization? Certainly not in a multiplicity of objects but rather where each object reveals an idea.

Look at your own civilization, at your own typical home, full of a certain number of objects. Or let me, better still, take you to your own kitchen. What are your sauce-pans like? Well, one will pack itself inside the other. But they are all identically the same in construction, and have been turned out by the thousands from some factory, in a most commercial way. Many of them are ugly. Can you sit in front of one of them, one of those sauce-pans, and meditate? There is nothing there to inspire you! When it is finished what do you do? You throw it away onto the rubbish heap.

Now come to India, into a poor man's hovel, and you will find there very few things. You will find perhaps three or four pots, all made of clay, whose total value will be perhaps ten cents, or even less, but every one will have been fashioned by hand. You will also find a certain shape, a lovely traditional curve, a proportion, a beauty, which shines forth in each pot in that poor man's hovel, and there in daily use are beautiful objects so that the Indian who is poor, who has a few things, yet lives in ideas of another realm all the time. In the west to make real to you these ideas which inspire you, you must go to a museum.

Let us take for illustration your chair. There is one man doing nothing but making its front legs in a carpenter's work shop. One is working on the back legs, and another on another portion of the chair. Then all these parts are put together — I do not think a single man puts the whole chair together — and the object comes out of the workshop with no unity in it. Why is it that people go to Europe from America to the old world chairs? Because they are made by hand, put together by hand,

and the idea of the chair is there. In the old world the conception of life is different, the idea, as released by matter is fully, or at least as fully as possible, expressed.

Therefore, what a great deal must be achieved in civilization, if matter is to be conquered. It is when man thinks of the things of daily use, as being related in some way to the mysterious realm above, so that each thing shall reveal the idea, it is then that he will truly reveal, will truly live the simple life, but a life of exquisite intensity.

This thought of matter revealing the idea is being brought out by science today. You will find all the great scientists are reaching after the unity which Jeans, one of their leaders, has thus stated with regard to matter. He says that as matter is understood in its finest structure atoms, electrons, the movement of the stars, it seems to consist of pure thought, or thought of what for want of a better and wider word must be described as mathematics. Now along the lines of science we are coming to the ancient realization of the Greeks that in the universe as a whole we have a material release of the divine mind. It is because of this thought that the Stoics looked at the heavens and the stars and the planets and their movements as a revelation of the divine mind. They looked at these heavenly bodies, and in their striving to escape from the boundaries of their purely human nature, saw the divine mind at work, and they said the divine mind was something not extraneous to man, but that if a man were to perfect himself, if he would control himself in ways of purity, the divine mind would reveal itself through him. There you have the Stoic philosopher, typical in such a great leader as Marcus Aurelius, emperor, statesman, organizer, philosopher, inwardly in heart and mind standing quietly still, communing with the divine mind.

The idea of the whole universe, a universe of beauty, its happiness expressed in revealing the divine mind, in other words the Logos, is an ideal which came into

Christianity, into Christian thought, two thousand years ago, in the opening words of the first chapter in the Gospel of St. John:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

And then for several phrases afterwards he speaks of the Logos, of His shining forth, and they did not understand; but after beginning with those majestic chords of a sort of wonderful music in verse he leaves the subject entirely, and begins to talk about St. John the Baptist. Why was this? Because to him the greatest thing in the personality of Jesus Christ was that He was the Logos, made manifest as flesh. And so he gives you the clue, and as he writes a history he speaks of Christ the Man, the Divine Reason, manifesting in earthly things, manifesting majestically in a physical body, living a great drama of the baptism, living a great drama of the temptation, living a great drama of the crucifixion and the ascension. It is only when matter is so used as to reveal the idea that matter is conquered, and that is one part of this great mystery.

There is another aspect of this mystery which is important to us as individuals, and it is this. Each of us has this challenge to face of dealing with the matter, the forms which are ours, you in your physical bodies and I in mine. As we also learn to reveal the idea through this matter of ours so shall we conquer the body.

Today there is a great gospel of health, of beauty. We have many doctors telling us of all kinds of schemes for perfect health, and then we have the sun-bath, the nudist colonies, vitamins, numerous directions telling us to be healthy, to be vigorous, to radiate health. But as you look at the bathing beaches and try to find in the men and women, disporting themselves there, people who half seem to be telling you something of the return of the Gods, you cannot help feeling that they are little more than superior animals. Why do I say that? Because they constantly think of themselves in terms of the body. There

is no realization of the body as an idea, that it is an instrument of the soul, that it should be thought of as a mirror of the soul; this they have not yet discovered, and so they live as glorified animals, reveling in things of the body, splashing about on the beaches in the sunlight.

And yet what is this body of ours for? For that? No, for something greater still. Something which was suggested by Emerson in a very striking phrase, when he said:

“That every great boy and great girl
with good sense is a Greek.”

What is this good sense which every great boy and great girl should have? I will not attempt to tell you now, as it is a large subject, but I will give you an instance of the way the body is regarded as the revealer of thought in the civilization that is in India.

You have often heard about caste. The mystery of caste is simple. It is that the body is to be an instrument for the soul. Perhaps you remember this in the case of the Brahmins. They are the priests who stand midway between man and God, those who are supposed to bring down divine influences for men; hence the gospel of perfect purity of thought, perfect cleanliness requiring that they bathe three times a day, strict vegetarianism, eating only such and such objects, not even touching anything which might have an extraneous magnetism. It all seems silly, does it not, to you, but look at it differently, please. This Brahmin is taught that his body is the instrument for doing a certain piece of work, and so when he goes to perform his daily spiritual functions within the temple you have something very striking happening.

In the West when the priest goes to perform his functions he *puts on things*. He is not really dressed, he is *encased!* He must wear a cassock, an alb, and so on and so on, that and another thing he must put on, and finally he comes along with all these things, with gold thread, etc., to convey the etheric forces.

But with the Hindu priest he takes one thing after another *off*, until finally he is there in very little more than a pair of shorts, and then he goes into the holy of holies for all the work he is to do, which is going to be done through his *body*. And therefore his body is known by him as revealing an idea.

A day will come when we shall look upon the body as the revealer of the soul. Then this body will give us the revelations of certain mysteries and we shall understand that "all nature is the garment of God." That this is a fact you can know by your own bodies. This body of yours will be the instrument on which will be played the great chords of eternity.

Now I come to the second part of my subject — the conquering of spirit. Why do I speak of conquering here? For a very simple reason. Much passes in the world as the spirit which is not so. You can never receive the spirit at second-hand. You must discover it directly for yourself. You have to challenge what others have said is the spirit, and challenge it again and again. Why? Take the instance within your own religion, of what was once considered extremely spiritual, and that is the idea of the Inquisition, when men tortured the body to save the soul. They were not all of them at heart cruel, but they had a certain idea of what they thought spiritual, and they considered that they were doing a great service to the spirit as they crushed the body, in order that the body might be thrown aside and the spirit released to do its work. Today we do not call this action spiritual, but devilish, and yet they thought it was of the spirit. Even when you are told that such and such a thing is spiritual you must examine it. Always it is essential to try in what way you can to get straight back to the spirit, to know what things are truly of the spirit.

Is it by prayer? No. Prayer will not tell you what the spirit is, in its essence. Is it by any kind of meditation? No. Eventually it is by action, so they said in mediaeval

Europe "to work is to pray." It is then in work that you will discover the mystery of the spirit.

Let me refer you to three great leaders in the realm of the spirit. What is the message that they came to bring?

First let us consider the Christ. He came for what? To do a work, was it not? A work which was ordained from the beginning of time for the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. He came then to open a doorway for salvation, to do a work.

Look into the life history of the Buddha. He founded Buddhism, and tells us that for five hundred or more lives he had planned life after life to do a work. And that work was to come to the world with a great message of salvation; in the last of those many lives when He did come after traveling for forty-five years in India, giving His message, He had done a great work.

So, too, with the great teacher of Hinduism, Shri Krishna. "Whenever unrighteousness prevails in the world I come again to establish righteousness."

These three great Representatives of the realm of the spirit are characterized by the fact that all the time They were doing a work, and so it is that I suggest that you, too, will find what is truly spiritual as you do a work. But what work? Are we not all at work? What is your true work you must discover? Your true work is that which you can do with full consecration, never planning or dreaming of any reward or recompense. It is only with the great ideal of doing something for the sake of the world, without thinking of any kind of a heavenly or an earthly reward that you are beginning to discover your work. Even when the saint is thinking of a heavenly crown he is not truly spiritual. He is a religious pioneer, of course, definitely so, but it is only when he offers his definite streaming forth to the feet of God, with no thought of return, that he is truly spiritual. When in life you discover something that you can do with deepest consecration, and in the doing of which you completely lose

all thought of reward or recompense, then you have discovered your work.

It is this message of working without any thought of wages or recompense and thereby fulfilling your true spirituality, your true spiritual purpose, which was given in the most exquisite way in two phrases of Tennyson in the poem quoted:

WAGES

Glory of warrior, glory of orator,
glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost
on an endless sea —
Glory of virtue, to fight, to struggle,
to right the wrong —
Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no
lover of glory she:
Give her the glory of going on, and
still to be.
The wages of sin is death: if the
wages of virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for
the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no
quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask
in a summer sky;
Give her the wages of going on, and not
to die.

If all you ask of life is to be permitted to go on, to create more work, as I said before, your life is truly spiritual.

All that you should ask of life in connection with your work is that you may be permitted to go on creating more work, doing more work. If you never dream of any kind of a reward, of recompense from man or God, then you

have found your work, and that is the first step toward the discovery of the spiritual. When you have discovered your work and in some mysterious way through ways of intuition that it is part of a larger work, you will know that you are wanted in your work, that you are a part of the Great Plan, that your work is very much like the stone of a pedestal or a pillar, or an arch, that small or great it is wanted, in this work then you will find fulfilment. You will find that in some way there is, as it were, a great building or edifice, and the Builder asks you to bring your stone, your offering, which He desires and without which the building will not be complete.

But it is not enough to work. It is not the true conquest of the spirit. The true conquest of the spirit begins when you create perfection through the work which you are doing, when to the work, whatever you have undertaken, you give your own mark of perfection. The real release of the spirit comes when you call forth perfection, the perfection which is latent, and bring your own note, your own latent qualities of beauty and service to that work of your hands and heart. That is the final hallmark of the spirit.

You have, in other words, then, to create perfection, but what is this creation of perfection? What is its mystery? Ah! That is our lack, that is what our education fails to teach. We must slowly discover it for ourselves. There are some who could teach it to us, but they do not. These are the artists. They are so bent upon creating perfection, through music, painting, poetry, science, that they do not think very much about us, they do not realize that their work would become more fruitful if they would turn to us, if they would descend from their music, their art, their various studios and teach us, who are longing for perfection, how to sing, how to draw, how to dance, how to create the great dances. If they would descend in their mysteries of perfection, and teach all men the glory and wonder and mystery of it — but until

that day, when the artists will fulfil their true mission, you and I have to achieve something of perfection alone, unaided by them.

Happily for us we can do something. For perfection is really within ourselves, it is not far away. It can be released by us, as it is given to the artist to release it within himself. By control of our feelings, by purifying them we can release it. By massing our thoughts in such a way that out of them there rises a great thought which reflects something from on high.

It becomes easier as we become intuitive, for with the intuition we will be able to add our own mark of perfection to the world's beauty. It is here that if you wish to create perfection it is almost essential that you should be, in the beginning, something of a philosopher. You must therefore seek one thing which will inspire you on your road. Find some one philosophy out of many philosophies, for you must have some philosophy, some teacher who will be the master craftsman, who will, in the beginning, lead you ever towards greater and greater perfection, who will teach you the first elements of the technique.

Here the real value of Theosophy is, that it is a gospel, not of salvation, but of idealism, idealistic action. You will find suggestions for the perfect thought, perfect tenderness, perfect action. On all sides the idea of perfection is inseparable from Theosophy. Also you can get it through the service of man, though you must find the philosophy which will inspire you to that service.

Then you will add a touch of perfection to all you do or think. Everyone of us has perfection latent within him, and none will be nearer to it than the child. Do we not note the perfect gesture, or the wise saying of the child? The exquisite movements, the perfect tone in his voice. And especially the wise saying, for the child is in touch with the real world. Later on "the shadows of the prison-house begin to close around the growing boy," but until that happens he is communing with perfection.

However most artists today are not thinking of releasing the idea. They are playing with their own phantasies, something which they call individuality, and through which they wish to express themselves. Some is fundamentally ugly, and some is fundamentally evil. But whenever an artist rises to the true level of his art, then it is that you stand before his work and it becomes a window through which you are looking into perfection. In all kinds of ways, then, the artist, in so far as he reveals the idea, teaches perfection. But everyone of us, who has found his work and is longing for perfection, will have an opportunity to achieve, to bring it forth.

I will give you an incident which occurred in Brazil, to show you what a wonderful thing perfection in action can be. It concerns the heroic deed of Vasconcellos. He was and is, still an officer in the Brazilian army and at the time it was a part of his duty to instruct a squad of soldiers in the use of hand-grenades. The deed of Cadet Humberto Pinheiro des Vasconcellos which thrilled all Brazil was described by him as follows, after his recovery.

"When I observed that nearly all my class were present, I opened the cupboard, but did not see in its usual place the hand-grenade which I was accustomed to use to explain how to manipulate it. But I saw on a shelf above another grenade, and thinking it was unloaded, I took hold of it, but unfortunately in such a way that the security catch fell. I saw then that the bomb was set going, and would explode in a few seconds. Some of the men saw this, too, and fell flat on the ground; but others, dumfounded, remained standing, not knowing what to do.

"Horried I thought of throwing the bomb through the window; but to the right was a squad in charge of a lieutenant, and on the left was the army radio station full of sergeants; in the hall in front was Lieutenant J. C. David, with his company, and beyond was the corridor and the staircase with men going up and down. I saw that I was in a terrible dilemma; if I threw the bomb in

any direction I should be slaying many; if I held it, it would explode in my hand.

"All this passed in an instant, within four seconds. In this ghastly situation, I shouted to the recruits that were still standing to lie down, and quickly passed the bomb to my left hand, and held it up high, and grasped it tight to lesson as much as possible its terrible effect. I had hardly passed it from the right hand to the left when the room was filled with a deafening crash. Some of the men fainted.

"I did not feel any pain at the moment, and half-dead with the crash I went quickly down the stairs towards the surgery. On the way I met Sergeant Lourival, and begged him to grasp my arm so as to stop the blood which was gushing in spouts. In this way I walked to the surgery, where Dr. Bruno attended me."

The days of heroism are still with us, and naturally all of Brazil has insisted that this young man, although he has lost his left arm, be an officer of the army, and there he is. He performed this action because in so many lives in the past he had planned to do things perfectly, had achieved perfection in little things, and then came the time when he could do a perfect thing and leave a great message as well.

And so it is, friends, that all the time perfection is within us, and if we will go on creating it now it will come in ever increasing measure in the future. It may be a perfect action which only God sees, it may be an action of self-sacrifice revealed to none, or of a great forgiveness, but perfect; because it is perfect, out of the perfection will come a unity with all the inner and outer perfection of the world.

Let all this aid you to see the relation which you have with the eternal spirit, and the things of matter. The whole problem has been reversed and you stand with Plato, puzzling, because you are of that perfect world, that there should be a world of imperfection. It is then

that you understand that great mystery of life. The puzzle is that you should have a body which sometimes seems to drag you down, yet all the time you stand a little higher, and in patience in the center until in the working of the great mystery, the shining of God, you shall be released. You are like some child who stands before the gates of some exquisite garden, looking through the bars, hungering to be allowed to enter, and the time finally comes when the gates are opened and you spring forward to meet what may be there.

This spirit of deathlessness, of beauty, is yours, as you find your work, and as you add to that work perfection. It is our role in life to bridge spirit with matter, and matter with spirit. It was to teach this that the Great Ones came. Why did Christ walk in Palestine? To show us that we could be like Him. He put on humanity, our humanity, in order that He might release the Christ in us all.

Why did Buddha toil for forty-five years in that last life of His on earth? Because He wanted to bring His perfect life of tenderness, of harmlessness, of aspiration, into the world of men. So it has been with every one of the Great Ones Who have come to us, and will come to us as the ages pass. They wish to teach humanity these great lessons.

This can be learned by each one of us in the little things of life. It is a mistake to think of all these things and to feel that they can be achieved by us only some far-off day. The perfect renunciation, the perfect control, the perfect purity, however impossible these may seem to be — absolute ideals and nothing more — can be applied by us in the little things of life, and when we so apply them, we then stand in life, brother to the pebble, but also brother to the star.

This is the final mystery of our humanity, that as we go about as human beings, we are all the time calling forth the idea of perfection in the matter which is going to be

shaped, calling forth from all that lives all that is latent of beauty and truth.

All this is our real task, my brothers, our daily tasks, with many a hardship on the way, here and there along the road, but also with much inspiration as well. Tasks which have been done by those who have gone before, have been blessed by Them for us. If only we will tread the road of the spiritual life, we will find that the spiritual life is not a matter of material life, but rather of finding the spirit within, and of releasing in our daily life the perfection that is latent in heart and mind. This is possible for you, each one of you, here and now, and it was to teach you this that the Great Ones came.

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