

## Comments on the Idyll of the White Lotus

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The interesting story published under the title "**The Idyll of the White Lotus**" has already attracted considerable attention. It is instructive in more ways than one. It truly depicts the Egyptian faith and the Egyptian priesthood, when their religion had already begun to lose its purity and degenerate into a system of Tantric worship contaminated and defiled by black magic, unscrupulously used for selfish and immoral purposes. It is probably also a true story. Sensa is represented to be the last great hierophant of Egypt. Just as a tree leaves its seed to develop into a similar tree, even if it should perish completely, so does every great religion seem to leave its life and energy in one or more great adepts destined to preserve its wisdom and revive its growth at some future time when the cycle of evolution tends in the course of its revolution, to bring about the desired result. The grand old religion of Khem is destined to reappear on this planet in a higher and nobler form when the appointed time arrives, and there is nothing unreasonable in the supposition that the Sensa of our story is probably now a very high adept, who is waiting to carry out the commands of the Lady of the White Lotus. Apart from these speculations, however, the story in question has a very noble lesson to teach. In its allegorical aspect it describes the trials and the difficulties of a neophyte. It is not easy, however, for the ordinary reader to remove the veil of allegory and clearly understand its teachings. It is to help such readers that I proceed to give the following explanation of the characters that appear in the story in question and the events therein related.

(1) *Sensa*, the hero of the story, is intended to represent the human soul. It is the Kutashtha Chaitanyam, or the germ of Prajna, in which the individuality of the human being is preserved. It corresponds with the higher and permanent element in the fifth principle of man. It is the ego or the self of embodied existence.

(2) *Seboua*, the gardener, is *intuition*. "They cannot make a phantom of me", declares Seboua; and in saying so this unsophisticated but honest rustic truly reveals his own mystery.

(3) *Agdmahd*, *Kamen-Baka* and the nine other high priests of the temple, who are the devoted servants of the dark goddess whom they worship, represent respectively the following entities:

- (1) *Kama*.....Desire
- (2) *Krodha*.....Anger
- (3) *Lobha*.....Cupidity
- (4) *Moha*.....Ignorance
- (5) *Mada*.....Arrogance
- (6) *Matsarya*.....Jealousy
- (7, 8, 9, 10 and 11).....The five senses and their pleasures

(4) The female characters that figure in the story are the following:

- (1) The dark and mysterious goddess worshipped by the priests;
- (2) The young girl who played with Sensa;
- (3) The grown up girl met by him in the City;
- (4) The Lady of the White Lotus.

It must be noticed here that the 2nd and the 3rd are identical. Speaking of the fair woman of the City, whom he met apparently for the first time, Sensa says, that as he gazed into her tender eyes, it seemed to him that he knew her well and that her charms were familiar to him. It is clear from this statement that

his lady is no other than the young girl who ran about the temple with him.

Prakrti, say the Hindu philosophers, has three qualities, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The last of these qualities is connected with the grosser pleasures and passions experienced in Sthulasarira. Rajaguna is the cause of the restless activity of the mind, while Sattvaguna is intimately associated with the spiritual intelligence of man, and with his higher and nobler aspirations. Maya, then, makes its appearance in this story in three distinct forms. It is Vidya, a spiritual intelligence, which is represented by the Lady of the White Lotus. It is the Kwan-yin and the Prajna of the Buddhist writers. She represents the light or the aura of the Logos, which is wisdom, and she is the source of the current of conscious life or Chaitanyam. The young girl (mind of man) above referred to is the Mind of man, and it is by her that Sensa is led gradually into the presence of the dark goddess, set up in the Holy of the holies for adoration by the priesthood whom we have above described.

The dark goddess herself is Avidya. It is the dark side of human Nature. It derives its life and energy from the passions and desires of the human soul. The ray of life and wisdom, which originally emanated from the Logos and which has acquired a distinct individuality of its own when the process of differentiation has set in, is capable of being transformed more or less entirely into this veritable Kali, if the light of the Logos is altogether excluded by the bad Karma of the human being, if the voice of intuition is unheard and unnoticed, and if the man lives simply for the purpose of gratifying his own passions and desires.

If these remarks are kept in mind, the meaning of the story will become clear. It is not my object now to write an exhaustive commentary. I shall only notice some of the important incidents and their significance.

Look upon Sensa a human being, who, after running his course through several incarnations, and after having passed through a considerable amount of spiritual training, is born again in this world with his spiritual powers of perception greatly developed, and prepared to become a neophyte at a very early stage in his career. As soon as he enters into the physical body, he is placed under the charge of the five Senses and the six Emotions above enumerated, who have it as their place of residence. The human soul is first placed under the guidance of his own intuition, the simple and honest gardener of the temple, for whom the High Priests seem to have no respect or affection, and, when it has not yet lost its original purity, gets a glimpse of its spiritual intelligence, the Lady of the White Lotus. The priests, however, are determined that no opportunity should be given for the intuition to work, and they therefore remove the child from its guardianship and introduce him to their own dark goddess, the goddess of human passions. The very sight of this deity is found repulsive to the human soul at first. The proposed transfer of human consciousness and human attachment from the spiritual plane to the physical plane is too abrupt and premature to succeed. The priests failed in their first attempt and began to devise their plans for a second effort in the same direction.

Before proceeding further I must draw the reader's attention to the real meaning of the Lotus tank in the garden. Sahasrara Chakram in the brain is often spoken of as a Lotus Tank in the Hindu mystical books. The "Sweet sounding water" of this tank is described as *amrtam* or nectar. See page 349 of the second volume of *Isis Unveiled* for further hints as regards the meaning of this magic water. Padma, the White Lotus, is said to have a thousand petals, as has the mysterious Sahasraram of the Yogis. It is an unopened bud in the ordinary mortal, and just as a lotus opens its petals, and expands in all its bloom and beauty when the sun rises above the horizon and sheds his rays on the flower, so does the Sahasraram of the neophyte open and expand when the Logos begins to pour its light into its centre. When fully expanded it becomes the glorious seat of the Lady of the Lotus, the 6th principle of man; and sitting on this flower the great goddess pours out the waters of life and grace for the gratification and the regeneration of the human soul.

Hatha Yogis say that the human soul in *Samadhi* ascends to this thousand-petalled flower through

Susumna (the *dath* of the Kabbalists) and obtains a glimpse of the splendour of the spiritual sun.

In this part of Sensa's life an event is related which deserves attention. An elemental appearing in the guise of a neophyte of the temple tries to take him out from his physical body. This is a danger to which a man is liable before he acquires sufficient proficiency as an adept to guard himself against all such dangers, especially when his internal perception is developed to a certain extent. Sensa's guardian angel protects him from the danger owing to his innocence and purity.

When the mental activity of the child commences and absorbs its attention, it recedes farther and farther from the Light of the Logos. Its intuition will not be in a position to work unshackled. Its suggestions come to it mixed up with other states of consciousness which are the result of sensation and intellection. Unable to see Sensa and speak to him personally, Seboua sends him his beloved lotus flower surreptitiously through one of the neophytes of the temple.

Mental activity commences first by way of sensation. Emotions make their appearance subsequently. The opening mind of the child is aptly compared to a little girl playing with Sensa. When once the mind begins to exercise its functions the pleasures of sensation soon pave the way for the strong and fierce emotions of the human soul. Sensa has descended one step from the spiritual plane when he loses sight of the sublime lotus flower and its glorious goddess and begins to be amused by the frolicsome little girl. "You are to live among Earth-fed flowers", says this little girl to him, disclosing the change that has already taken place. At first it is the simple beauty of nature that engrosses the attention of Sensa. But his mind soon leads him to the dark goddess of the shrine. Avidya has its real seat in mind, and it is impossible to resist its influence so long as the mind of man is not restrained in its action. When once the soul gets under the influence of this dark goddess, the high priests of the temple begin to utilize its powers for their own benefit and gratification. The goddess requires twelve priests in all, including Sensa, to help her cause. Unless the six emotions and the five sensations above enumerated are banded together she cannot exercise her sway completely. They support and strengthen each other as everyman's experience clearly demonstrates. Isolated, they are weak and can easily be subdued, but when associated together their combined power is strong enough to keep the soul under control. The fall of Sensa now becomes complete, but not before he receives a well merited rebuke from the gardener, and a word of warning from the Lady of the Lotus.

Addressing Sensa, Seboua is made to utter the following words: "You came first to work; you were to be the drudge for me; now all is changed You are to play, not work, and I am to treat you like a little prince. Well ! Have they spoiled thee yet, I wonder, child?" These words are significant; and their meaning will become plain by the light of the foregoing remarks. It must be noted that the last time he went into the Garden, Sensa was taken, not to the Lotus Tank, but to another tank receiving its waters from the former.

Owing to the change that has come over him, Sensa is unable to see the Light of the Logos by direct perception, but is under the necessity of recognizing the same by the operation of his fifth principle. It is in the astral fluid that he floats and not in the magic water of the Lotus Tank. He sees, nevertheless, the Lady of the Lotus who pathetically says, "Soon thou wilt leave me; and how can I aid thee if thou forgettest me utterly?"

After this occurrence Sensa becomes completely a man of the world, living for the pleasures of the physical life. His developed mind becomes his companion and the priests of the temple profit by the change. Before proceeding further I must draw the reader's attention to the possibility of eliciting from a child any desired information by invoking certain elementals and other powers, by means of magic rites and ceremonies. After the soul gets completely under the influence of Avidya, it may either succumb altogether to the said influence, and get absorbed, as it were, in the Tamoguna of Prakrti, or dispel its own ignorance by the light of spiritual wisdom and shake off this baneful influence. A critical moment arrives in the history of Sensa when his very existence is merged up for the time being with the dark

goddess of human passion on the day of the boat festival. Such an absorption, however short, is the first step towards final extinction. He must either be saved at this critical juncture or perish. The Lady of the White Lotus, his guardian angel, makes a final attempt to save him, and succeeds. In the very Holy of the holies, she unveils the dark goddess; and Sensa, perceiving his folly prays for deliverance from the accursed yoke of the hated priesthood. His prayer is granted, and relying upon the support of the bright goddess, he revolts against the authority of the priests, and directs the attention of the people to the iniquities of the temple authorities.

It is necessary to say a few words in this connection as regards the real nature of soul-death and the ultimate fate of a black magician, to impress the teachings of this book on the mind of the reader. The soul, as we have above explained, is an isolated drop in the ocean of cosmic life. This current of cosmic life is but the light and the aura of the Logos. Besides the Logos, there are innumerable other existences, both spiritual and astral, partaking of this life and living in it. These beings have special affinities with particular emotions of the human soul and particular characteristics of the human mind. They have of course a definite individual existence of their own which lasts up to the end of the Manvantara. There are three ways in which a soul may cease to retain its special individuality. Separated from its Logos, which is, as it were, its source, it may not acquire a strong and abiding individuality of its own, and may in course of time be reabsorbed into the current of Universal Life. This is real soul-death. It may also place itself *en rapport* with a spiritual or elemental existence by evoking it, and concentrating its attention and regard on it for purposes of black magic and Tantric worship. In such a case it transfers its individuality to such existence and is sucked up into it, as it were. In such a case the black magician lives in such a being, and as such a being he continues 'til the end of the Manvantara.

The fate of Banasena illustrates the point. After his death he is said to live as Mahakala, one of the most powerful spirits of Pramadagana. In some respects this amounts to acquiring immortality in evil. But unlike the immortality of the Logos it does not go beyond Manvantaric limits. Read the 8th chapter of *the Bhagavad-Gita* in this connection, and my meaning will become clear by the light of Krishna's teaching. The occurrence in the boat of Isis, depicted in the book under consideration, gives some idea of the nature of this absorption and the subsequent preservation of the magician's individuality.

When the centre of absorption is the Logos and not any other power or elemental, the man acquires Mukti or Nirvana and becomes one with the eternal Logos without any necessity of rebirth.

The last part of the book describes the final struggle of the soul with its inveterate foes, its initiation and ultimate deliverance from the tyranny of Prakrti.

The assurance and the advice given by the Lady of the White Lotus to Sensa in the Holy of holies marks the great turning point in the history of his career. He has perceived the light of the Divine Wisdom and has brought himself within the pale of its influence. This light of the Logos, which is represented in the story as the fair goddess of the sacred flower of Egypt, is the bond of union and brotherhood which maintains the chain of spiritual intercourse and sympathy running through the long succession of the great hierophants of Egypt, and extending to all the great adepts of this world who derive their influx of spiritual life from the same source. It is the Holy Ghost that keeps up the apostolic succession or Guruparampara as the Hindus call it. It is this spiritual light which is transmitted from Guru to disciple when the time of real initiation comes. The so-called "Transfer of Life" is no other than the transmission of this light. And further, the Holy Ghost which is, as it were, the veil or the body of the Logos and hence its flesh and blood, is the basis of the holy communion. Every fraternity of adepts has this bond of union; and time and space cannot tear it asunder. Even when there is an apparent break in the succession on the physical plane, a neophyte following the sacred law and aspiring towards a higher life, will not be in want of guidance and advice when the proper time arrives, though the last Guru may have died several thousands of years before he was born. Every Buddha meets at his last initiation all the great adepts who reached Buddhahip during the preceding ages: and similarly every class of adepts has its own bond of

spiritual communion which knits them together into a properly organised fraternity. The only possible and effectual way of entering into any such brotherhood, or partaking of the holy communion, is by bringing oneself within the influence of the spiritual light which radiates from one's own Logos. I may further point out here, without venturing to enter into details, that such communion is only possible between persons whose souls derive their life and sustenance from the same divine ray, and that, as seven distinct rays radiate from the "Central Spiritual Sun" all adepts and Dhyani Chohans are divisible into seven classes, each of which is guided, controlled and overshadowed by one of seven forms or manifestations of the divine wisdom.

In this connection it is necessary to draw the reader's attention to another general law which regulates the circulation of spiritual life and energy through the several adepts who belong to the same Fraternity. Each adept may be conceived as a centre wherein this spiritual force is generated and stored up, and through which it is utilized and distributed. This mysterious energy is a kind of spiritual electrical force, and its transmission from one centre to another presents some of the phenomena noticed in connection with electrical induction. Consequently there is a tendency towards the equalization of the amounts of energy stored up in the various centres. The quantity of the neutral fluid existing in any particular centre depends upon the man's Karma and the holiness and purity of his life. When evoked into activity by being brought into communication with his Guru or Initiator it becomes dynamic, and has a tendency to transfer itself to weaker centres. It is sometimes stated that, at the time of the final initiation, either the hierophant or the "newly born", the *worthier* of the two must die (see page 38, *Theosophist*, November, 1882).

Whatever may be the real nature of this mysterious death, it is due to the operation of this law. It will be further seen that a new Initiate, if he is weak in spiritual energy, is strengthened by partaking of the holy communion; and for obtaining this advantage he has to remain on earth and utilise his power for the good of mankind until the time of final liberation arrives. This is an arrangement which harmonises with the Law of Karma. The neophyte's original weakness is due to his Karmic defects. These defects necessitate a longer period of physical existence. And this period he will have to spend in the cause of human progress in return for the benefit above indicated. And, moreover, the accumulated good Karma of the period has the effect of strengthening his soul, and when he finally takes his place in the Sacred Brotherhood, he brings as much spiritual capital with him as any of the others for carrying on the work of the said fraternity.

If these few remarks are born in mind, the incidents related in the last five chapters will soon disclose their real significance. When Sensa gains his power of spiritual perception through the grace of his guardian angel, and begins to exercise it knowingly and voluntarily, he has no occasion to rely on the flickering light of intuition. "You must now stand alone", says the gardener, and places him in possession of his beloved flower, the full meaning of which Sensa begins to understand. Having thus gained the seat of spiritual clairvoyance. Sensa perceives the hierophants who preceded him and into whose Fraternity he has entered. The Guru is always ready when the disciple is ready. The initiation preceding the final struggle for liberty from the bondage of matter is pretty plainly described. The highest Chohan reveals to him the secrets of occult science, and another adept of the Brotherhood points out to him the basis and nature of his own personality. His immediate predecessor then comes to his assistance and reveals to him the mystery of his own Logos. "The veil of Isis" is removed, behind which the White Lotus, his real Saviour, lay concealed. The Light of the Logos enters his soul and he is made to pass through the "baptism by Divine Fire". He hears the final directions given by his Queen and recognises the duty cast upon his shoulders.

His predecessor, whose soul is so "white and spotless", is commanded to give him a portion of his spiritual strength and energy. The three great truths which underlie every religion, however, disfigured and distorted, through ignorance, superstition and prejudice, are then taught to him for the purpose of being proclaimed to the world at large. It is needless for me to explain these truths here as their

enunciation in the book is sufficiently plain. Thus fortified and instructed Sensa prepares for the final struggle. During these preparatory stages the passions of the physical man are, as it were, dormant, and Sensa is left alone for the time being. But they are not entirely subdued. The decisive battle is yet to be fought and won. Sensa beings to enter on the higher spiritual life as a preacher and spiritual guide of men, directed by the light of wisdom which has entered his soul. But he cannot pursue this course for any length of time before he has conquered his foes. The moment for the final struggle of the last initiation soon arrives. The nature of this Initiation is very little understood. It is sometimes represented in vague terms as a terrible ordeal through which an Initiate has to pass before he becomes a real Adept. It is further characterized as "the baptism by blood". These general statements do not in the least indicate the precise nature of the result to be achieved by the neophyte or the difficulties he has to encounter

It is necessary to enquire into the nature of the psychic change or transformation which is intended to be effected by this Initiation before its mystery is understood. According to the ordinary Vedantic classification there are four states of conscious existence, namely Vishwa, Taijasa, Prajna, and Turiya. In modern language these may be described as the objective, the clairvoyant, the ecstatic, and the ultra-ecstatic states of consciousness. The seats or *upadhis* related to these conditions are the physical body, the astral body, the Karana Sarira or the Monad and the Logos. The soul is the Monad. It is, as it were, the neutral point of consciousness. It is the germ of *prajna*. When completely isolated no consciousness is experienced by it. Its psychic condition is hence compared by Hindu writers to Sushupti - a condition of dreamless sleep. But it is under the influence of the physical body and the astral body on the one side, and the 6th and 7th principles on the other. When the attraction of the former prevails, the Jiva becomes Buddha and is subject to all the passions of embodied existence. The power of these passions grows weaker and weaker as the neutral point we have indicated is approached. But as long as the neutral barrier is not crossed their attraction is felt. But when once this is effected, the soul is, as it were, placed under the control and attraction of the other pole - the Logos; and the man becomes liberated from the bondage of matter. In short he comes an Adept. The struggle for supremacy between these two forces of attraction takes place on this neutral barrier. But during the struggle the person in whose interest the battle is fought is in a quiescent, unconscious condition, almost helpless to assist his friends or strike hard at his enemies, though the result of the fight is a matter of life and death to him. This is the condition in which Sensa finds himself in passing through the last ordeal, and the description of the said condition in the book under examination becomes clear by the light of the foregoing explanations. It can be easily seen that the result of the fight will mainly depend upon the *latent* energy of the soul, its previous training and its past Karma. But our hero passes successfully through the ordeal; his enemies are completely overthrown. But *Sensa* dies in the struggle.

Strangely enough when the enemy is defeated, the *personality* of Sensa is destroyed on the field of battle. This is the final sacrifice which he makes, and his mother Prakrti - the mother of his personality - laments his loss, but rejoices at the prospect of the resurrection of this soul. The resurrection soon takes place; his soul rises from the grave as it were, under the vivifying influence of his spiritual intelligence, to shed its blessings on mankind and work for the spiritual development of his fellow beings. Here ends the so-called tragedy of the soul. What follows is merely intended to bring the story in its quasi-historical aspect to a proper conclusion.

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