

Mysteries of the Soul

Spiritual text 4 - Development in the four worlds

Spiritual text: Hymn of the Pearl

When I was a little child, and dwelling in my kingdom, in my father's house, and was content with the wealth and the luxuries of my nourishers, my parents equipped me and sent me forth, from the East, our home. Of the wealth of our treasury they took abundantly and tied up for me a load large and yet light, which I myself could carry, gold of Beth-Ellaya, and silver of Gazak the great, and rubies of India, and agates from Beth-Kashan, and they furnished me with the adamant, which can crush iron.

And they took off from me the glittering robe, which in their affection they made for me, and the purple toga, which was measured and woven to my stature. And they made a compact with me, and wrote it in my heart, that it might not be forgotten:

'If thou goest down into Egypt, and bringest the one pearl, which is in the midst of the sea around the loud-breathing serpent, thou shalt put on thy glittering robe and thy toga, with which thou art contented, and with thy brother, who is next to us in authority, thou shalt be heir in our kingdom.'

I quitted the East and went down, there being two guardians, for the way was dangerous and difficult, and I was very young to travel it. I passed through the borders of Maishan, the meeting-place of the merchants of the East, and I reached the land of Babel, and I entered the walls of Sarbug. I went down into Egypt, and my companions parted from me. I went straight to the serpent, I dwelt in his abode, waiting till he should lumber and sleep, and I could take my pearl from him.

And when I was single and alone and became strange to my family, one of my race, a free-born man, and Oriental, I saw there, a youth fair and loveable, the son of oil-sellers; and he came and attached himself to me, and I made him my intimate friend, an associate with whom I shared my merchandise. I warned him against the Egyptians, and against consorting with the unclean; and I dressed in their dress, that they might not hold me in abhorrence, because I was come from abroad in order to take the pearl, and arouse the serpent against me.

But in some way or another they found out that I was not their countryman, and they dealt with me treacherously, and gave their food to eat. I forgot that I was a son of kings, and I served their king; and I forgot the pearl, for which my parents had sent me, and because of the burden of their oppressions I lay in a deep sleep. But all these things that befell me my parents perceived, and were grieved for me; and proclamation was made in our kingdom, that every one should come to our gate kingdom, kings and princes of Parthia, and all the nobles of the East. And they wove a plan on my behalf, that I might not be left in Egypt; and they wrote to me a letter, and every noble signed his name to it:

'From thy father, the king of kings, and thy mother, the mistress of the East, and from thy brother, our second in authority, to thee our son, who art in Egypt, greetings! Call to mind that thou art a son of kings! See the slavery, - whom thou servest! Remember the pearl, for which thou was sent

to Egypt! Think of thy robe, and remember thy splendid toga, which thou shalt wear and with which thou shalt be adorned, when thy name hath been read out in the list of the valiant, and thy brother, our viceroy, thou shalt be in our kingdom.'

My letter is a letter, which the king sealed with his own right hand, to keep it from the wicked ones, the children of Babel, and from the savage demons of Sarbug. It flew in the likeness of an eagle, the king of all birds; it flew and alight beside me, and became all speech. At its voice and the sound of its rustling, I started and arose from my sleep. I took it up and kissed it, and I began and read it; and according to what was traced on my heart were the words of my letter.

I remembered that I was a son of royal parents, and my noble birth asserted itself. I remembered the pearl, for which I had been sent to Egypt, and I began to charm him, the terrible loud breathing serpent. I hushed him asleep and lulled him into slumber, for my father's name I named over him, and that of my mother, the queen of the East. And I snatched away the pearl, and turned to go back to my father's house. And their filthy and unclean dress I stripped off, and left it in their country; and I took my way straight to come to the light of our home in the East.

And my letter, my awakener, I found before me on the road; and as with its voice it had awakened me, so too with its light it was leading me. It, that dwelt in the palace, gave light before me with its form, and with its voice and its guidance it also encouraged me to speed, and with its love it drew me on.

I went forth and passed by Sarbug; I left Babel on my left hand; and I came to the great Maishan, to the haven of merchants, which sitteth on the shore of the sea. And my bright robe, which I had stripped off, and the toga that was wrapped with it, from Rantha and Reken my parents had sent thither by the hand of their treasures, who in their truth could be trusted therewith. And because I remembered not its fashion, – for in my childhood I had left it in my father's house, – on a sudden, when I received it, the garment seemed to me to become like a mirror of myself. I saw it all in all, and I also received all in it, for we were two in distinction and yet gain one in one likeness. And the treasurers too, who brought it to me, I saw in like manner to be two and yet one likeness, for one sign of the king was written on them both, of the hands of him who restored to me through them my trust and my wealth, my decorated robe, which was adorned with glorious colours, with gold and beryls and rubies and agates and sardonyxes, varied in colour. And it was skillfully worked in its home on high, and with diamond clasps were all its seams fastened; and the image of the king of kings was embroidered and depicted in full all over it, and like the stone of the sapphire too its hues were varied.

And I saw also that all over it the instincts of knowledge were working, and I also saw too that it was preparing to speak. I heard the sound of its tones, which it uttered, saying:

'I am the active in deeds, whom they reared for him before my father; and I perceived myself, that my stature grew according to his labours. And in its kingly movements it poured itself entirely over me, and on the hand of its givers it hastened that I might take it. And love urged me to run to meet it and receive it; and I stretched forth and took it. With the beauty of its colours I adorned myself, and I wrapped myself wholly in my toga of brilliant hues. I clothed

myself with it, and went up to the gate of salutation and prostration; I bowed my head and worshipped the majesty of my father who sent me, – for I had done his commandments, and he too had done what he promised, – and there at his gate, I mingled with his princes, for he rejoiced in me and received me, and I was with him in his kingdom, and all his servants praised him. And he promised that to the gate of the king of kings with him I should go, and with my offering and my pearl with him should present myself to our king.