

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

‘KNOW THYSELF’ *Jnana Yoga*

Part 2



Complete Works – Volume 18

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Chapter One

Beauty

I

The Master reads the meditation for the day:

‘It is a crime to treat beauty as a prey to be pounced on and captured, devoured and defiled; but it is also a crime not to seek beauty in order to contemplate it. If human beings use beauty as a lure in order to entice others into the abyss, it is not the fault of beauty; it is they themselves who are not sufficiently pure. They kindle a fire within, and then, because of all their impurities, the fire starts to smoke. Beauty should not cause the downfall of human beings; on the contrary, it should lead them to God, elevate them to heaven itself. For my part I would wish to be nourished by beauty alone; in fact, I assure you, if God were not all beauty, if he were only wisdom, love and power, I would not love him so much. It is because he is beautiful that I love him and want to resemble him. Beauty is the only thing that has any attraction for me. But only pure, spiritual beauty, not every kind of beauty. Yes, for my notion of beauty is not the same as yours: very often, where others see splendour, I see ugliness, and where others see nothing, I can often see a hidden splendour.’

If there were no cosmic Principle at work in the universe, if the supreme Mother¹ were not ever-present, working to preserve the harmony and perfection of forms, human beings would have

turned into something repulsively ugly. Considering that they live in a permanent state of disorder and conflict, constantly in the pursuit of pleasure, it is not surprising that they have lost all beauty.

I have sometimes met truly lovely young girls, but more often than not, when I look at them a little more closely, I find out how trite and even how wayward and licentious their thoughts and desires are. By rights, if absolute justice existed, these girls should be outwardly deformed; such inner defects should not be clothed in such a charming exterior. But their exterior is charming and this means that the supreme Mother is making a sacrifice in order to help them; otherwise, by rights, there should be an absolute correspondence between the content and the form. This correspondence exists in animals, vegetables and minerals. It is only in human beings that there is a discrepancy, and this is because, for the moment, thanks to their will-power and intelligence, human beings can prevent the outer form from expressing the inner content. You can see people who seem magnificent; they are good-looking and well built and yet, inwardly, they are swarming with monsters of their own creation. And then there are others, who are externally deformed, wretched and tattered, but who are inwardly beautiful. To be sure, there are also some in whom the form corresponds exactly to the content. You could say that there are four categories of people: those who are inwardly beautiful and outwardly ugly; those who are outwardly ugly and inwardly beautiful; those who are ugly both inwardly and outwardly, and those who are beautiful both inwardly and outwardly.

As I have already explained, this discrepancy between the inner and outer being is due to the fact that the inner life changes much more rapidly than external forms. The discrepancy, therefore, is between the past and the present. From one day to the next human beings can completely change their philosophy and their whole outlook on life, whereas their physical appearance cannot change immediately. Our physical bodies

are made of materials that are far less pliable than the subtle, flexible matter of thought, which can be transformed almost at will. Picture someone, for instance, whose physical appearance is repugnant but who has embraced a divine philosophy: only very gradually will this philosophy seep into their whole being and animate the matter of their physical body until, one fine day, that body becomes radiantly beautiful, truly divine, because it is the exact reflection of their inner life, the life of their soul and spirit. And the opposite can also be true: a very beautiful person can be bent on evil while their physical appearance continues to be beautiful; it will not change overnight. They may be a fiend inwardly, but they will continue to be god-like in appearance. These things happen and, as people cannot see the inner reality, they are misled by the visible form that expresses the past. It is only a question of time, though: sooner or later the outer form ends by reflecting the inner life.²

But, whatever a person's physical appearance may be, there is one thing that cannot lie and that reveals exactly what that person is, and that is their fluidic emanations. If you are capable of perceiving these, the beauty or the ugliness of their outward appearance will not mislead you. A person's emanations are an exact expression of their inner state, and if they are dingy, discordant and unwholesome it is because they reflect their dingy, discordant and unwholesome thoughts and desires. You cannot see the divine world that exists in someone, but you can sense their emanations. And if they really and truly emanate purity and light, you can be a hundred per cent sure that the content is beautiful. Sometimes, in fact, a person's emanations are so powerful that, for all their subtlety, they become visible. There are people, for instance, who are physically ugly and deformed but who, for an instant, suddenly become astoundingly expressive and beautiful. For one brief moment, their emanations change their form. There are three aspects to consider, therefore: the form, the emanations that transpire through this form and that do not always correspond to it, and

the spirit that produces these emanations. As it is virtually impossible to know the spirit, and as forms are deceptive, the only sure way of knowing the truth about someone is through their emanations.

But let's get back to the question of beauty. Human beings have never really understood true beauty because they look no further than the form, and if the form is aesthetically pleasing they exclaim, 'How beautiful!' But behind that form there are other things worth knowing: the expression and the emanations of the inner being, the life that flows within it. And if you can see beyond even these and discern the spirit that dwells in heaven, you will discover a beauty that is even more perfect. In reality, however, the splendour of a person's spirit cannot be adequately expressed even by their emanations, for the physical body is incapable of reflecting such subtlety. This is why, in the text I just read to you, it says, 'My notion of beauty is not the same as yours; very often, where others see splendour, I see ugliness, and where others see nothing, I can often see a hidden splendour.' You were a little shocked by this, to start with, but now you understand why I say it. Yes, and if I see things so differently to others, it is because I have studied and observed, so that I now possess a science.

I have sometimes walked along the beaches with friends and, in order to teach them to see things as I see them, I would point out some of the women and girls we passed. I would say, 'Do you see that girl? You can tell from her skin and her emanations that she is ill. And that one over there is vicious. And that one is superb!' And my friends were astonished to see that I could appreciate something that no one else could see or appreciate.³ Yes, human beings are incapable of appreciating what is divine because they look no further than appearances.

Actually, beauty, true beauty, cannot be explained at all. It is life, a life which streams forth, which emanates. Suppose, for example, you have a diamond; when the sun's rays fall on it you are dazzled by the beauty of the colours you see. Well,

this is true beauty: it is comparable to the light of the sun. And to the extent to which someone emanates beauty such as this, to that extent they come close to true beauty. True beauty is not in forms; true beauty has no form even, for it exists on high, in a realm in which there are only currents, forces and radiances. When a human being succeeds in contemplating this beauty, they are seized by such ravishment that they almost wish for death. True beauty cannot really be found in the bodies or on the faces of men and women; it is in the world above. It is only from time to time, if a man or woman is so closely attuned to the divine world that they allow some of its radiance to shine through them, that their faces can hint at that beauty.

Bear this always in mind: beauty is not in the form, it is in the radiance, the emanations. This is why you must not try to pounce on it to capture and devour it: it is not a form that can be grasped. You must only contemplate and marvel at it; steep yourself in it. This is why men must change their attitude towards women. When a man meets a very lovely woman, instead of wanting to possess and defile her, he must contemplate her and see her as an inspiration, a means by which he can attain the Deity.⁴ I realize, of course, that this point of view is so totally unknown that it may even seem grotesque. Most people behave as though beauty were something to be pawed, possessed, soiled and torn to shreds. They are like children who look at the pictures of a book and then tear out the pages!

Oh, I know that you are still asking yourselves, ‘What on earth is he talking about? Beauty is there for our pleasure!’ Yes, pleasure is the only thing most people are interested in. Eminent scientists have written lots of books explaining the techniques that will give you the maximum amount of pleasure. This is why you have the impression that what I am saying is quite outlandish. And yet these things are true and very real.

Make up your minds, from now on, to improve your attitude towards beauty; to consider it as the language of living nature

and a means by which to draw closer to the Lord. If you want to have some slight idea of what true, pure, luminous beauty is, take a crystal, a prism, and watch how the light passes through it and becomes so beautiful that you could gaze at it for hours, enraptured by the colours in it. This is something I often do. Instead of wasting my time on the stupid pleasures most people indulge in – drinking, playing cards, gambling or kissing the girls – I find joy in the beauty of light. And I advise you to do the same; you will gain a great deal from it. Of course, some of you will say, 'I am not ready for any of that. It is not for me!' but this is faulty reasoning. On the contrary, you should say, 'Even if I am not made for that, even if I am still too weak, I am going to nourish myself on beauty.' Obviously, as long as you use your present state as the yardstick of what you can or cannot do, you will never get any further.

True beauty, therefore, is not on the physical plane but elsewhere. To be sure, the earth is beautiful; plants, mountains, lakes and rivers are beautiful. But I am bound to say that all the beauty of the earth pales in comparison with the beauty of the world above. Beauty is the expression of the highest perfection. Beauty possesses intelligence, light, purity, music, colours and perfumes, and this is why, for me, beauty is always linked to the Deity. The Deity is beauty. And, as I have said, if God were not beautiful, I would not seek him. Many people seek God because he is all-powerful or because he is all-knowing. I seek him because he is beautiful. I have a weakness for beauty – which means that I have a weakness for perfection. So much the better: it is excellent to have such weaknesses! The only weakness you will never be blamed for, in fact the only weakness which is a glory, is a weakness for beauty. But not the beauty that human beings know and appreciate. I tell you frankly, I have seen a great many very lovely girls, and I have also seen some very handsome men, but they have never really dazzled me, because I have always looked for another kind of beauty, a beauty beyond the world of forms. That is what has

always saved me: my love of beauty. And you, too, will be saved if you have the same love of beauty; but, without that love, you will be ready to do anything with anyone who comes along until you are completely degraded and demolished.

The Bonfin, August 7, 1976

Notes

1. See *Angels and other Mysteries of The Tree of Life*, Izvor Coll. n° 236, chap. 10: 'The cosmic family and the mystery of the Trinity'.
2. See *The Powers of Thought*, Izvor Coll. n° 224, chap. 5: 'How thought produces material results'.
3. See *'In Spirit and in Truth'*, Izvor Coll. n° 235, chap. 10: 'The perfume of Eden'.
4. See *La pédagogie initiatique*, Complete Works, vol. 28, chap. 11: 'L'homme et la femme dans la nouvelle culture'.

“Know thyself!” All science and all wisdom lies in knowing ourselves, in finding ourselves, in the fusion of our lower self with our higher self. The symbol of the initiate who has succeeded in this is the serpent with its tail in its mouth. A serpent forms a straight or wavy line, and a line is limited. But the serpent with its tail in its mouth forms a circle, and a circle represents the infinite, the limitless, the eternal. Those who succeed in becoming a circle enter a world without limitations where the “above” and the “below” are no longer separated, because all the powers and all the riches and virtues of the true, higher self have been infused into the lower self. The higher and the lower become one and a human being becomes a divinity.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov



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e-mail: international@prosveta.com