

November 2017

A Reflection on *the Voice of the Silence*, No. 11

“The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life—has lived in vain.”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

Although these two sentences are aimed at disciples, it may be profitable to consider the second in a more general context, asking ourselves what lessons it may hold for us—not as devotees of a particular path or school of thought, but in the broader sense of simply being receptive to wisdom, regardless of where it may be found.

Taking it at face value, the second sentence tells us three things: (1) we have a purpose for being here; (2) once we acknowledge that purpose, we need to act upon it; (3) if we fail to act accordingly, we will have squandered the opportunities of that incarnation.

Who can say what purpose this particular incarnation holds for you? Unfortunately, no one can provide you with that information. If only it were that simple! The truth is that you have to discover it for yourself. While it is a fact that some individuals find theirs early in life, others struggle for years and years before getting a sense of what theirs might be. Sadly, there are those who never seem to find it, perhaps being ignorant of the fact that their life *does* have a purpose beyond just making a living and getting by. One can surmise from watching and observing that the vast majority of people fall within this category. It is unfortunate, because without this knowledge we are simply drifting along the currents of life—getting out of bed in the morning, going through the motions, carrying out the daily routines—but with no real understanding of where we are going, other than chasing some illusive and ephemeral measure of happiness.

The above citation suggests that if we avoid our life’s designated work, we will have lived in vain. That is a very sobering thought and one that should give us pause. Yet, we may wonder if this passage should be taken literally. If we don’t find our life’s purpose, will we *really* have lived in vain? Perhaps, this warning is meant for those who *know* their purpose, but *fail* to pursue it. Another possibility is that *The Voice* is simply using hyperbole for effect. It’s difficult to imagine a life from which nothing useful could be salvaged. In any event, the reality is that each incarnation involves a finite amount of time. What we do with that limited amount of time is something for which Karma will hold us accountable.

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