

Gods in Exile

Ch. 1, pp. 3-5

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"The Awakening of the Soul: As long as man, in his pilgrimage through matter, identifies himself entirely with his bodies and follows entirely their dictates, in utter oblivion of his own true, divine nature, he does not suffer, but is contented in an animal way. It is only when the soul in her earthly prison begins to recall the divine home from which she lives exiled, when through love, beauty or truth, consciousness of her own true nature awakens, that suffering begins. We are like Prometheus, chained to the rock of matter, but is not until we become conscious of what we truly are, that we are at all aware of being prisoners, of being exiles.

Thus might one live who, in the days of his youth had been banished from his native land and who, for many years had been among strangers, hardly remembering, in the privations and miseries of his exile, that once he knew different surroundings. But some day, perhaps, he hears a song which he knew in his youth, and in sudden agony remembers all he has lost, realizing in pain that he is an exile, far from all that was dear to him. In that memory the yearning for his native land is born again and becomes stronger than it ever was. It is only then that suffering and struggle begin; suffering because of the knowledge of what he has lost, struggle in the attempt to regain that which once he possessed.

In a similar way, the awakening of the soul, when it comes in the course of human evolution, brings not only joy, but also suffering in its wake. As long as man lived the animal life of his bodies, he knew contentment of a sort; but with the remembrance of his true nature, with the vision of the world to which he belongs, there is born that age-long struggle in which he tries to free himself from the entanglement with the worlds of matter which he has brought about by identifying himself with his bodies. Where up to this moment he was not conscious of his bodies as a limitation, they now become to him as the burning garment of Nessus,

clinging to him the more he tries to free himself from their contact. From now onwards, he is to know himself as two persons in one; he is to be conscious of a higher divine Self within, ever calling him back to his divine home; and a lower animal nature, which is his consciousness bound to and dominated by the bodies."