

the sacred plant of nine and seven stalks, the holy flower that opens and blooms in darkness, out of the pure dew and on the frozen bed of snow-capped heights, heights that are trodden by no sinful foot.

**B. COMMENT.** Verses 161-163 deal with the association of true Wisdom and humility, which is very old, widespread, and important. In an ancient ritual catechism, the question is asked of one called “Most Wise”: “Why Most Wise?” And the answer given is “Because most humble.” True Wisdom is knowing the limits of one’s knowledge, so the English poet William Cowper (1731-1800) wrote: “Knowledge is proud that he has learn’d so much; / Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.”

The word *wise* is related to the Latin verb *videre*, “to see,” and thus to English words like *vision*, as well as to the Sanskrit word *veda*, “sacred knowledge.” The word *humble* derives from the Latin word *humus*, meaning “earth, ground, soil.” The sacred knowledge of Wisdom comes from seeing clearly into the ground of things. Wisdom is not something airy; it is anchored in the earth.

The person who is truly wise has the calm of the deep ocean, as opposed to the turbulence of the stream or river. Streams and rivers are symbols of life in its changing nature, ever flowing on. The ocean is a symbol of eternity in its vastness and peace. Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita is caught in a battle, which is really the stream of life; he learns from Krishna to find the ocean of eternity within himself.

The image of ocean and river brings us to another subject: The question of our identity, of who or what we really are. This is, in one sense, the subject of both the Bhagavad Gita and of *The Voice of the Silence*. Verses 164-170 explore three levels of self-identification: the Eternal, the Divine, and the lower. The lower self is the self of desire and of desire-knowledge, which in Theosophy is called the personality or kama-manasic self. H.P.B. identifies it in a gloss: Gloss 28. Meaning the personal lower self.

The Divine is the higher self — Theosophically, the individuality or buddhi-manasic self. That Divine higher self cannot actually be “soiled” by the lower self. But the experience of the lower self allows the higher self to grow, and if the experience of the lower self is not of such a nature as to promote the growth and development of the higher self, metaphorically it can be said to