

Salome

by

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1. Two are the mirrors before the soul: the mirror of perfection and the mirror of incompleteness or imperfection.
2. Wonderful is the mirror of perfection. It is filled with light. It is filled with love. It pours blessing upon every supplicant. It answers prayers. It returns with added enjoyment. It brings growth and power and inspiration.
3. Wonderful, too, is the mirror of incompleteness, although in a different manner. For he who looks into this mirror has the light behind him. He stands before the mirror and his shadow is cast upon the shining black mirror thereof. Therefore when he gazes into this mirror he beholds the faults of whomsoever his thought entertains. By it he gains the gift of analysis and the faculty of discrimination. By it, too, he sees faults clearly. Yet he is unaware that the perception of faults depends upon the completeness of his own shadow.
4. In ancient times the mirror was a mighty symbol, and even to this day is it a symbol in some places. When the soul looks into the mirror of light, all thought disappears and it sees without intervention of mind and body or need thereof. But when the soul looks into the mirror of shadow it employs both mind and body.
5. To each of these mirrors has been given the name Mariam, which is to say, Mary. Mariam or Mary symbolizes "The Great Mother," or rather, "The Great Woman." For to womankind has been given the power of reflection, and of turning toward the light through the flesh. Associated with the mirror of light is Mary, the Pure One, the Immaculate. Associated with the mirror of shadows is Mary, the Harlot, the Magdalen.
6. One has said that there was only one Mary; that she bore the Christ out of wedlock and was therefore regarded by the ignorant as a prostitute, fit to be stoned. But she was saved by Christ who was not so sure of his parenthood. This, however, is symbolical. For the Marys in the life of Jesus were many, even as the mothers of Israel bearing this name were many. But there is a significance in the Lady of Light and the Lady of Shadows bearing the same name.
7. The Romans had a god, Janus, who looked both ways and may have been adopted from the Ptah of the Egyptians. Even to this day the Hindus have a goddess who looks both ways: she faces perfection and becomes Lakshmi, the Queen of Heaven; she faces earth and becomes Kali, the reflection of Heaven in earth and through earth. Lakshmi and Kali are one—or two; Mary is one—or two, as you will. But the mirrors are two: the mirror of truth, and the mirror of falsehood.
8. Whosoever looks to Mary, the Queen of Heaven, or to Lakshmi, verily will be saved and in all things succeed on the paths toward beauty and goodness. But the Kali worshipers and those who fling themselves upon shadows shall have the fate, decreed in the Qur'an, that they shall go from darkness unto darkness, even into greater darkness, and from perversity unto further perversity.
9. Many have there been who have known the truth of this, but few have both accepted its

significance and explained it to mankind through the living example. Holy Sri Ramakrishna sought Lakshmi above and Kali below, nor was he ashamed. He learned that love was the fulfillment of law. He beheld love filling the universe like a giant, pulsating light. But he also discovered that love which is enclosed in atoms and in all forms and all grades of evolution, however concealed by them.

10. To Sri Ramakrishna the priestess of Lakshmi was indeed great, for she served the highest of the highest. To Sri Ramakrishna the harlot was indeed great for she served the lowest of the lowest. Majestic is she who serves the highest and strives unceasingly toward the blessings of the blest. But humble and unknown is she who serves the lowest and confers blessing with the shadows of curses and execration.

11. Who could see the perfection in the mirror of perfection? Sri Ramakrishna. Who could see the perfection even in the mirror of shadow, knowing that the shadows were caused by the ego, and in the soul there is no blot or blotch? Aye, even this same Sri Ramakrishna. How many steps between saint and sinner? How many stages between the Exalted One and the dust of the dust? Even as you turn from one mirror to the other the answer comes.

12. There was once a princess and her name was Salome. Partly from curiosity and partly from disgust at the wild life of the court she sought the seclusion of the desert and became part of the crowd in the desert. The teacher, John, would have none of her. Nor would he baptize her in the waters of the Jordan nor admit her into the band of the elect. So she vowed revenge, and when the time came the head of the Prophet, John, was forfeit to her. Yet when the head was before her she cried: "This was my beloved Teacher. This was he who was bringing me toward God and I knew it not." So terrible was her remorse that she became utterly crushed, and her repentance was sincere and real.

13. Therefore she sought the Master, Jesus, who was friend and kinsman of John, looking for counsel. Now Jesus turned no man aside nor cast any woman from his path. So busily was he engaged in gazing into the mirror of light that he was surrounded in light and veiled in light. He therefore saw no imperfection until a person spoke about himself. Then he saw into that one's mirror of shadow, but of himself he kept no mirror of shadow. He held before himself the single mirror, the mirror of light, which on one side was the mirror he used for God and on the other side was the mirror into which God looked to behold man, as Tauler has said: "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me." Therefore Jesus welcomed Salome even as he welcomed all men, all women.

14. Salome was filled with a mixture of curiosity and repentance, of sorrow and self-seeking. Above all, she hoped to justify herself because she thought thereby she would attain happiness. And right glad was she that Jesus did not condemn her. For Jesus was ever looking direct, which is to say, at the Father; or else he gazed at the mirror of light, which is to say, the Mother, sometimes referred to also as the Holy Spirit. And therefore there is a trinity of Sight, the Father; Seer, the Son; and Seen, the Holy Spirit.

15. Then came the time when it was right for Salome to come before Jesus and inquire. She asked: "When will the Kingdom of Heaven manifest?" He answered: "When women cease to bring forth." Then she declared, "Then I have done well in not bringing forth." For, as aforementioned, Salome desired above all things to justify herself.

16. Then the Lord said to her: "When men shall trample upon the garment of shame, when the twain shall be as one, when the within shall be as the without and the without as the within, when the above shall be as the below and the below as the above, and the male with the female, neither male nor female, then shall the Kingdom of Heaven manifest."

17. Thus declared Jesus, offering the proof of the existence of "The Middle Pillar" so often mentioned by the Kabbalists. For Jesus was so surrounded by the light that he no longer recognized the mirror of shadows as a reality, and did not admit the existence of the transient. Therefore to him there was no above and below, no heaven and earth, but everywhere the Presence of the Father.

18. But these words of wisdom did not register upon the consciousness of Salome, nor upon the minds of the others. They were looking upon the personality of Jesus instead of into their own mirrors of light and Salome was non-plussed for this was something which was not in the shadow mirror, nor yet in her mirror of light. For she was unaccustomed to look into the mirror of light, nor kept it clean.

19. Then Jesus instructed her about the mirrors. He told her the sweet story of the Virgin, his mother, how she had served God, and then man. He told her the sad story of Mary of Magdala, how she had served man, and then God. "There is the light of the sun which can be reflected in the moon, and there is the light of the stars. When the light of the sun reflects purely in the light of the moon, that is the sign of Mary, my mother. When man or woman follows the stars in their courses, it is well, but even the light of those stars is the same light as from the sun. This whole universe is from one light, is nothing but light, and in God there is no darkness at all."

20. Now Salome did not understand this. She did not even like it. She was a princess and accustomed to command. She demanded the right to direct and correct. She did not willingly want to be corrected and had been much spoiled in her life at the court. So there remained before her the choice of being a princess or becoming a pilgrim. She did not make a choice; she desired both. Thereupon she turned back and gazed into the mirror of shadows and saw the shadow of her own self thrown across the personality of the Master. She did not know that she was seeing in shadow and through shadow; what she beheld she took for truth.

21. Thereupon did the Princess Salome go unto Herod the king with her complaint. The King had grown accustomed to it. He looked to Salome for complaints and was quite happy to please her. Indeed it was not her that he was pleasing but himself. For he enjoyed the affliction of others and only needed proper cause and excuse for torturing or jailing the people of the land. Thus the law which had been originally given as a law for the liberty of the people had become, instead, the seed

of fetters.

22. After listening Herod declared: "If thou wished, the head of John, the Ablutioner, so even do I desire the head of this Jesus who rouses the country with his bombastic claims. I will have no more of him." Now the Book of Exodus begins, "And there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph." The name "Joseph" is the symbol of the mirror of lights, and the coat of the many colors that were his means that out of the pure light comes all the colors. And the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph was the man, the ruler, who looked not into the mirror of lights but was intent with shadows and with darkness. And after that Pharaoh, Herod was such a man.

23. This Pharaoh who knew not Joseph was the representative of a new dynasty in Egypt who thought of himself and not of the people. Likewise Herod was the representative of a kind of new dynasty in Israel, and he thought of himself and not of the people.

24. Salome did not ponder then, nor later. It was not until after the crucifixion that she did ponder and relent and it was too late. She could not undo. What she wanted, she gained. She was the princess of the king of this world, who was master of the mirror of shadows and who could conjure all things in this world of shadows but who had no power over the light. And the king did not even think of the light, being a veritable Klingsor, while Salome was to all respects and in all respects a living Kundry.

25. And when the years had passed there was no happiness for her. Three men had she known in her life: her affianced husband, whom she had sacrificed; John, her teacher, whose head she had demanded; and most of all, Jesus, whom she called Lord and Master. Of the first the world knows nothing and cares less, of the second the world knows a little and cares a little; of the third, not too much can be said. But time had passed and all were gone. There was no happiness for Salome on earth....

26. The years rolled on. The centuries paraded by. Nations were born and matured and died. Strength of power manifested in one land now and then in another. Even new religions were born and struggled and battled. The scepter of light and learning appeared now here, now there. The masses rose and fell and rose again. And in a new age, in a new dispensation was Salome born, born with the same propensities, the same desires, but with a different knowledge, and quite a different outlook.

27. God is ever gracious. In the long lapse between incarnations did the Gracious Mary come and teach Salome: "This is my mirror. It is the mirror of me which I give unto thee. Whenever thou wishest, look into it. Whenever thou prayest, gaze not elsewhere. It is replete with blessings. It is replete with faculties. It is filled with the love of all. It is the best of wishing wells." And ever and ever again did Salome thank and resolve and resolve and thank. Nothing greater could be given to man, or woman.

28. Now this world is a strange world. What it accepts it rejects and what it rejects it accepts. It

accepts the religion of Jesus and rejects the precepts; it rejects folk-lore as superstitious while it accepts the precepts. Jesus said: "Let your light shine before men," for Jesus knew the mirror of light. The world wants the lamp of Aladdin, thinking it is somewhere else and ignorant of the simple fact that the lamp of Aladdin means that light which comes through complete faith in God. The shadow-minded people look elsewhere while proclaiming "faith in Jesus."

29. Into this strange world was Salome born. It was a world which she knew, and yet did not know. How much the same and how different! Before she had been a princess, now she was of common rank. But before she had not known the blessings and in the interim how many blessings had been vouchsafed her! So though she did not come to dwell in a palace, yet was she a princess. Hers was to command, hers to have and to hold, hers was to be the power.

30. This time were the parents of Salome humble. They could not give her the things she had known before and of which she still retained the shadows of a transient memory. Born in plebeian estate, she was still a princess.

31. Thus Salome grew. But even as she matured, so did the struggle within her wax. To the mirror of light; to the mirror of shadows; once one minute, twice two minutes. There was no satisfaction, there was no peace. There was only endless struggle, fraught with possibilities. Many of these did not come to pass, though they welled within her. How much welled within her! How little came to manifest!

32. Salome, the reborn, sought peace, Salome sought love, Salome sought renown. Then she was caught in a struggle, believing that peace and love and renown were one, seeing them as one, and then seeing them as different. For all things are one in the mirror of light and all things are at variance in the mirror of shadows. She was right and wrong. She was right when she gazed into the mirror of light and wrong when she gazed into the mirror of shadows.

33. In this newer life Salome delighted in the religion of Jesus. She adored him. She sang her sweetest songs. She forgot her past experiences or was silent thereon. She became both personal and impersonal. In the impersonal sense she looked into the mirror of light and joined the devotees. But in her personal sense she looked into the mirror of shadows and saw the restrictions, the endless and seemingly useless disciplines, the narrow views and the still more narrow life, She could and would never adhere to such a Christianity. She did not remember the living Jesus yet did remember, so she adhered, yet did not adhere.

34. Then she gazed again into her mirror of light and saw the figure of Sri Ramakrishna. It poured new life into her mould. It revised her vistas. She could now look beyond. Was God of the Orient or the Occident? Of the East or West? No, the traditional religion would never hold her. Nor did it admit of her mirrors. Some Christians adored Mary and then fenced her in. The others practically ignored her. None of this was for Salome. She sought a larger field.

35. Now was Salome the new attracted to Sri Ramakrishna, to his personality, to his message.

Limitations could not restrain her. She did not wish to be restrained at all, either by herself or by others. Her heart told her that there was more in the world than the churches mentioned. Her heart spoke and addressed her to seek that light which shone in Sri Ramakrishna. And she would have gone but for the discipline.

36. She went to the swamis and did study therewith. But when they mentioned disciplines, she claimed that being an Occidental, she could not follow them, that God was neither of the East nor of the West. And yet would she not return to the Christians because, besides their narrowness, they too, had disciplines and these disciplines did she shun. So she told them that their disciplines did not lead unto God, that she wanted nothing but the highest and she turned away. So Salome, though she dreamed or talked of perfecting herself, was still more concerned with seeking perfection in others.

37. Three were the loves that appeared unto Salome, the new; the one who was to become her husband and yet not be her husband; the one who was called her teacher and yet not permitted to function as teacher; and the one who was one moment adored as master and yet again regarded in another aspect than that of master.

38. First came he who was to become her husband, and he did love her much—at least so he thought. And she did love him much—at least it seemed so to her. She looked into the mirror of perfection and saw a great light. And this, her man, she did identify with that light. And he, in his innocence, looked into the mirror of light, and did behold her. For he was always looking for somebody who might be perfect, albeit he did not dream then of becoming perfect himself. And she, too, although she did dream of becoming perfect, was still more adept in seeking perfection in others.

39. Salome, the reborn, had her mirror of light and often looked into it. Therein she beheld the beauty and majesty of the universe, and its many and various denizens. But she did not cease with all the blessings that were vouchsafed her, nor with the knowledge she had acquired under the tutelage of the Cosmic Virgin. She must look, too, into the mirror of shadows. Whether it was curiosity, whether it was selfishness, whether it was habit, she would look.

40. Salome regarded not that the mirror of shadows was faced only toward the past. It held nothing of God's endless possibilities in it, it was associated and based upon man's imperfections. She chose to ignore that because of Adam's sin all men are imperfect. She knew yet did not know that we can become perfected by turning toward the light. She would, however, turn her man's face toward the light. Indeed she demanded this of her husband. And he, not knowing where was the light and seeking the light in others, could not do it. Therefore that marriage which was born of love and peace and blessing became a series of torrents and torments, which covered all the light with darkness and which led nowhere.

41. Even before she was sure of herself in marriage did Salome seek a teacher. She did not know for assuery that God alone was the Teacher. Having had John the Lustrator for her teacher once,

he would only return to her again in another guise, with another body, but with many of the same habits and mannerisms. What was before would be again, though on a different plane. Now would he teach her anew that which she refused to assimilate in the past. He would give her the same lesson, and no other lesson would she have but that lesson.

42. When Salome first saw the teacher again she saw only the light. She did not see then the imperfections. She had beheld before the imperfections when she gazed into her shadow-mirror. She did not fully realize that it was a spiritual sin to call one “teacher” and then look at him through the mirror of shadows. She failed to see that the teacher was required always to look at the pupil through his mirror of light. But this she demanded, that the teacher look at her through the mirror of perfection while she looked at the teacher through whichever mirror pleased her fancy at the moment.

43. When the teacher looked at Salome through the mirror of light he saw all the blessings. He saw the blessings of Mary the Saint, and the blessings which God had showered through His Grace. He saw that great as the imperfections of Salome were, a myriad times greater were those blessings. Therefore though he saw the “sun-spots,” these spots were small compared to the area of the sun, and not of great importance, if Salome would glance at the light continually.

44. Salome waxed proud because of what her teacher saw. And from that pride she turned to envy. Why could she not see what he saw? She forgot God. She forgot that God was the only Teacher and that this new John-in-the-flesh was looking at and through the mirror of light, and that he was wanting her to look at and through the same mirror. And in her pride Salome did turn to her mirror of shadows, because the proud have difficulty in restraining themselves from that mirror. And as she stood before the mirror and her shadow-of-self got in the way, she saw all the imperfections that were there, and all the imperfections that had been there. She forgot God, and forgetting God, lost her way in the light. Then she was oblivious of the sainted Mary, she forgot even what with her own eyes she had seen in the teacher or what with her own mouth she had said about the teacher.

45. Salome became envious. She did not realize the great Moses had issued a commandment against this. For her it was all right. Besides, she had seen and what she had seen she had seen. What was true was true, and the rest did not matter. She did not pray for light. She did not concentrate upon the mirror of light. She basked before her own mirror of shadows and what she saw there was true, though it was only the shadow of truth. The shadow of truth was for her ever so much beyond the shadow of untruth, so she stayed attached to the shadow of truth.

46. In the former life Salome did demand the head of John, which is to say, his reputation and his life. Now she demanded the same in another form. Therefore she turned to intrigue and connivance. She did not consider that walls have ears and thoughts are penetrating. She had not really learned that the finer vibrations transcend space; yes, in an intellectual way she had recognized it, but not in any practical manner. And now she was so delighted with her mirror that all else did not matter—much.

47. Then there was the third man, who was her master. At least he became master of her thoughts and hopes by her own doing. And if the teacher had been as John, so was the Master as Jesus. Formerly Salome had gone to John and then demanded his life; then she had gone to Jesus in repentance but ultimately demanded his life, too. So in this life she was again, in another fashion, demanding.

48. Only in this one thing was forgotten, that there is a moral law. What we sow, we reap. All the self-justification cannot change this. Moreover, there is the light of God in all things, which makes all things straight.

49. Then that Salome who had turned to her teacher from her husband with all kinds of complaints, and then turned from her teacher to the master with divers complaints, was ready to turn even to God to complain about her master. To God she did not turn when it was within her scope, when it would have helped herself and others. Now she turned with all the force that comes from looking into the shadows of things. And though she did not know, it was not to God she was really turning. It was to the devil.

50. For one who looks into the mirror of shadows cannot see God. Though the word "God" be continually in the mouth, yet it is not God. For the light of God resteth in the heart and is not in the mirror of shadows and is unaffected by self-thought.

51. Now the teacher of Salome, the reborn, himself reborn, may have had all the faults ascribed to him by her mirror of shadows, and even many more. Nonetheless was he a seer. God had made him a seer, and God had not made him a saint, for God doeth whatsoever he will according to his own wisdom. For a seer is not necessarily a saint, nor even is a saint necessarily a seer.

52. Salome's husband was of the same nature as a saint, wherewithal undeveloped. He had none of the qualities of the seer, so she had forsworn him. Now her teacher was too much of a seer, too little of a saint, so she had forsworn him. And she looked instead to her master hoping to find in him all the virtues of both saint and seer. Yet for all that, did she not ask herself whether she was worthy of such a one who might be both saint and seer.

53. The teacher, being a seer, could see. Sometimes he saw in the world of spirit, which is to say, heart. Sometimes he saw in the world of mind. More often he saw only with the eye of flesh.

For the nature of things is such that when God gives one a gift he does not deprive the one so blessed of that gift on any plane. So the clairvoyance of the seer was not separated from his daily experience, nor his daily experience from his clairvoyance.

54. Therefore the seer knew all things in the life of Salome. And sometimes Salome did not believe that this was possible. Again, she did believe, and became sore afraid. And having transgressed the laws of Moses, she would say that she was following Jesus even as before, when offered the teachings of Ramakrishna, she, afraid of the disciplines attendant thereon, said she would not

depart from Jesus. Yet on matters in question the laws and teachings of Jesus are much harder.

55. This is the nature of the world. It says that Jesus is loving and Moses is stern. Yet Moses would permit divorce and Jesus did not willingly countenance it. Moses opposed adultery by and large, but Jesus opposed adultery even in the mind. Therefore the one who does not and cannot follow Moses, does not and cannot follow Jesus. Only some, looking into the mirror of shadows, make claims and build up thought-forms to which they add the name “Jesus Christ” and follow them. But no thought-form is greater than the one who conceives it, whereas Jesus is greater than all. And this is his real crucifixion.

56. And this is the nature of crucifixion that, having touched Jesus once, it touched Salome’s master. The same forces, driven by an inexorable Karma, worked on. She thought to cling to him, only to betray him. She betrayed him in the world of flesh, she betrayed him in the world of thought, she betrayed him in the world of spirit. And yet she did not really betray him—and she was only betraying herself in the highest degree. God had been left out of the reckoning, easy in thought, impossible in deed. Look at her mirror of shadows, there was no God.

57. So her teacher thought and thought and said: “Little does she know of the nature of teacher and teaching. Look at the marvelous Sri Ramakrishna who worshipped Lakshmi and Kali, and bowed to priestess and prostitute alike. Such is the nature of the ‘arrived ones.’ Those that have not arrived never understand the ‘arrived ones’ so they condemn. This is the history of the world, from the first to the last. But Salome does not know this, nor does she know me. She knows only what she sees in the mirror of shadows. All else has been taken away from before her eyes, and I can not dissuade her.”

58. Then Salome, fearing her teacher, and having herself transgressed the greater and lesser commandments, vilified her teacher and accused him of all manner of things, and mostly falsely. She did that, thinking that others witnessing her strictness would say, “She is a marvelous woman with high ethical ideals.” But the one with the highest ethical ideals has a different outlook, as it is said: “The eye sees much. The seer sees ever so much more. The friend sees ever so much less.” Only this Salome could not understand. She was thinking that her teacher was thinking about her with that same force of accusation. So hard was she now bound with her shadows, she thought all else shadow-bound.

59. Then the teacher prayed. For seven long nights he kept his vigils and prayed. For he knew that howsoever Salome condemned, she, too, would be condemned by the Law. He knew that Salome had not only betrayed him, but she had also betrayed her husband and her master; and—most of all—herself. And the doom was otherwise nigh.

60. Then it was for Salome to make account of herself, and to take account of herself. For God “so loved the world” that He forgave, but she was condemning. And even as she was condemning the brood of Satan and of Beelzebub strengthened their hold upon the world. Their hosts pursued the friends of righteousness far and side. The blessings of the Holy Virgin were turned from the

Fiery Flame unto the base lightning. Victory was becoming theirs on all fronts, on land and sea and air, and the whole world was moving further down into the abyss.

61. Then the teacher cried; "Condemn me if you will, but remember your mirror of light. Condemn me if you will, but remember the sainted Mary. Turn from the black Mary to the one of Pure Light. Turn from becoming the Great Harlot toward your true station of World-Mother. Me ye know not even in the hour ye think most. Covered are you by covers. How can you see the nature of the Holy Ones under covers, which are even greater than the covers of the ones in the flesh? Once you know the dance of the veils, now you have forgotten even the meaning of veiling."

62. And a prayer flew out and sought its sanctuary. A wish went out and sought its haven. A love-ray sped through the world seeking a resting spot. And the dove of peace set out from the Ark.