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The Living of the Higher Life**

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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RENUNCIATION OF ACTION

THE FIFTH Chapter of the *Gita* is entitled *Karma-Sannyasa* Yoga, or “Devotion by means of Renunciation of Action.” Many have taken this to mean the complete renunciation of action outwardly. People feel that if they do not act then they will not have to bear the result of actions, good or bad. In India, some people mistakenly believe that to help anyone, or take another’s help, is to get involved and create a tie with that person, which in turn means having to be born again, instead of obtaining the desired freedom from the rounds of birth and death. In the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna that it is not possible for any person to give up actions. “No man resteth a moment inactive.” In fact, Shri Krishna says it is impossible not to act. Everyone is urged to act because we are all made up of three qualities and are propelled by the three qualities—*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and they are “qualities” of *Prakriti*. These qualities are the very constituents of *prakriti*, in the same way as the three strands of a rope are the very substance of the rope. *Sattva* quality is of the nature of truth, light, happiness, and clarity of perception; *Rajas* is of the nature of desire, activity, passion and attachment, and *Tamas* is of the nature of inertia, indifference, confusion, lack of proper judgement and laziness. *Prakriti* is matter or nature, which is “the cause of all action throughout the universe, as it is the basis by which action may take place. There can be no action, unless there is something to be acted upon,” writes Mr. Crosbie.

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Saint Jnaneshwar says that so long as your body is the seat of *Prakriti*, it is no use saying that you will perform this action or abandon that action because the functions of the body naturally depend upon the qualities. Even when a person abandons all prescribed duties, his sense organs will continue to function. The eyes will keep seeing and the ears will keep hearing. His breathing will not stop and nor will his mind stop doubting. Therefore, it is futile to think that “I will undertake action,” or “I will abandon action.” He illustrates this by saying that just as a dry leaf, when caught by the wind, remains whirling in the sky, even if it has no motion of its own, so also an inactive person continues to remain active under the influence of nature, and modifications of his senses.

An active person who is constantly reacting or responding to stimuli from the outside world creates *vasanas*. *Vasanas* are the inherent tendencies or innate bent of mind and are the result of past actions. We act in the present based on these *vasanas* or tendencies, and thus produce *vasanas* for the future, and so on. *Vasanas* are a bundle of tendencies or desires, which drive a person to think, feel and act according to the nature of the *vasanas*. A fisherwoman is at home with the smell of fish, and she fails to appreciate the fragrance of flowers, while it is the reverse situation with a flower-seller. Thus, it would be perfectly right to say that a man is what he is because of his *vasanas*. *Vasanas* create desire, and if a person is not vigilant, but permits the desire to “take root,” then that desire produces agitation in the mind, and ultimately the body is forced to carry out actions to satisfy that desire.

Vasanas are the habitual tendencies which are believed to predispose a person to particular patterns of behaviour in the future. They are subtle inclinations imprinted in the mind, like a stain. If someone smokes, there will be a habitual tendency or an urge to smoke every day, usually around the same time. On a higher level, they explain why some people are kind by nature, and others are cruel. It is a tendency to behave in a certain way that triggers similar actions in future.

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An uncultivated man acts thoughtlessly, propelled by his own wrong tendencies. Prompted by desires a man acts in the world seeking joy, but gets only fleeting happiness, endless sorrow and all the time creating mental impressions or *vasanas*. When the body or flesh is repeatedly impressed with certain impulses through thoughts, it repeats those impulses, mechanically or automatically, and brings back the impulses or temptations. It is not easy for a person who is deeply steeped in evil to undergo a sudden transformation.

Shri Ramana Maharshi says that the obstacles to self-realization are the habits of the mind or *vasanas*, and the latter can be obliterated by learning to concentrate the mind on THAT which is free from *vasanas*; but the process is gradual. Our mind is accustomed to stray outward by the force of the latent *vasanas*. So long as there are *vasanas* contained within they must come out and exhaust themselves. In a sense, this state of total exhaustion of *vasanas* is called actionlessness. Ignorant people feel that to be actionless means to abstain from outward action; but in that case the *vasanas* remain on the inner planes, undisturbed. Therefore, simultaneously with the control of the senses, one must control the mind and heart, lest one becomes a “false pietist of bewildered soul.” It is important to recognize that *ultimately*, it is the *mind*, and not the senses that lead us astray. A virtue, for example, of celibacy, cannot be developed by remaining within four walls of a monastery, without facing any temptation or trial. A spiritually advanced person knows more about evil than a sinful person because while the sinner sinks deep into his vice or sin, a spiritual person is able to remain detached and resists evil in every phase of its manifestation.

Even if we are physically inactive, we are thinking, and *thought is the real plane of action*. Perhaps that is what Jesus wished to convey when he said, “You have heard that it was said... Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (*Matthew*, V, 27-28). “Esoterically, thought is more responsible and punishable than act. But exoterically it is the reverse.

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Therefore, in ordinary human law, an assault is more severely punished than the thought or intention, *i.e.*, the threat, whereas *Karmically* it is the contrary,” writes H.P.B. (*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, p. 142). No doubt, the consequences for the actual act and the thought are not the same. After all, if we utter angry words, then the person at the receiving end feels angry and we have started a chain reaction. But it is quite different when we control our anger. It is one thing to *think* of killing a person or raping a woman and quite another to *actually* kill or rape. However, we must take into account the *quality* of our thoughts. At times, these thoughts are not intense and powerful. When H.P.B. was asked whether our thoughts are punishable, she replied that our still-born (weak) thoughts are not punishable, but we are punished for “silent” but potentially strong and intense thoughts. For instance, if a person wishes for the death of another and if he has a strong Will and imagination then his thought may bear fruit, and bring harm to another person. But in case the person lacks strong Will and imagination, his evil thoughts come back to injure him, like a ball rebounding from the wall.

Man is forever creating conditions which bring him sorrow by his thinking based on false ideas, and it makes him an ever-acting being. It is the false way of thinking and acting that has brought about wars, famines, pestilences, cyclones, earthquakes, diseases, etc. Man can change the harmful nature of other beings by changing his attitude towards them. If there is harmlessness in us, then no harm can come to us, as is said of the Yogis in the East, who remained unharmed amidst harmful creatures. When our thinking is based on false ideas and therefore carries the possibility of harming animals, they instinctively sense the danger from us, and by instinct for self-preservation try to attack us. The nature of beings in the lower kingdoms can only be changed by man.

Our physical existence is dependent on motion. Every atom and molecule is in motion. It is through motion that our body receives impressions of various kinds. The moving molecules and atoms are given direction by the mind, and if the ideas in the mind are personal

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and mean then the atoms in the body are given impressions so as to guide them in the worldly or personal direction. A violin string tuned to a particular pitch, when vibrated, will set in vibration another string tuned to the identical pitch. This is also true of the “lives” or atoms which are impressed with our good or bad tendencies. These “lives” are attracted to another form in tune with them, following the law of consubstantiality, and create a kind of magnetic sympathy. Some of these “lives” are absorbed by our fellow-men, some by animals, and others by lower kingdoms. Thus, “lives” which bear impresses of envy, hatred, anger or passion tend towards a lower level. They are drawn to forms of ferocious and noxious animals, such as lions, tigers, serpents and scorpions, giving them an impulse in that direction. Today, if tigers are *more* ferocious or serpents *more* poisonous, then *we* are responsible for them. Likewise, these “lives” stir human minds to base activities. The “lives” that bear our impressions, good or bad are our ambassadors, who carry our blessing or curse to other living entities. We are continually helping or hindering others in building their character, not only by our actions but also by our thoughts—for good or ill.

“Renunciation of action” does not mean the total abandonment of action. It is a false view. “The whole universe *is* action. First, last, and all the time ceaseless motion lies behind everything that is. Among all creatures the impulse to move on—to progress—is action, and it comes from the very nature of Spirit itself,” writes Mr. Crosbie. Perhaps that is one of the implications of the words of Shri Krishna, who says, “If I were not indefatigable in action...these creatures would perish” (*Gita*, III). It is the God-principle which though inactive Itself, is a substratum for the phenomenal world, and without It, the worlds would perish.

If we look around, we find that the Universe and everything in it is constantly in motion and therefore in action. What is this motion? We are given three symbols to understand One Reality or Absolute or God. One of them is Absolute Abstract Motion, which signifies Unconditioned Consciousness. We can conceive of consciousness

only in terms of change. Motion may be thought of as symbolizing change. This eternal ceaseless motion is symbolised by the “Great Breath.” The appearances and disappearances of the Universe are pictured as an outbreathing and inbreathing of “the Great Breath.” We might say, where there is Spirit or Consciousness—which is present in both organic and inorganic matter—there is life, motion, change and evolution.

In minerals, plants, animals and human beings there is an urge to progress, and an impulse to evolve comes from the Spirit, which is action. *Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali* (Book II, Aphorism 3) mentions *Abhinivesha*, which means “clinging to life” or “tenacious wish for existence upon the earth.” Mr. Judge explains that the tenacious wish for existence is inherent in all sentient beings, and continues through all incarnations because it has self-reproductive power. “There is in the spirit a natural tendency, throughout a Manvantara, to manifestation on the material plane, on and through which only, the spiritual monads can attain their development.”

“I emanate these creatures again and again, without their will, by the power of the material essence” says Shri Krishna (*Gita*, IX, 7). Mr. Crosbie explains that “without their will” implies that no human being is in a body because he, as such, desired to be; nor does he leave his body because he desires to; the impelling force proceeds from the inner self, the real man. It is the indwelling Spirit which evolves the instruments (bodies) for its use and impels them towards higher perfection. Progress or evolution means unfolding from within outward, which is expressed in the Sufi Aphorism: “I died as a stone and became a plant; I died as a plant and became an animal; I died as an animal and became a man; when did I grow less by dying? I will die as a man to give birth to an angel.”

Thus, it appears that the desire for sentient existence, which impels the Ego towards greater perfection flows from *Atma-Buddhi* (Monad). The desire for material existence and sense-life seems to flow from the personal man which can drag down the Ego, and is

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the cause of its entanglement in the wheel of life and death. Freedom from the wheel of birth and death comes from a true understanding of “renunciation of action.” The Path of Action is a means to an end. It helps to prepare one for the Path of Knowledge. The Path of Knowledge leads to the goal directly. Action leads to the purification of the inner instrument, and then by walking the Path of Knowledge one ultimately reaches the spiritual destination of self-development.

We should not stop action, in fact, we are compelled to act by our very nature. If we omit to act when we should act, it becomes an error of omission, and that is worse than an error of commission. We must learn to act for and as the Self of all creatures. There is bodily action but with *inward* detachment or inaction. It is explained by the analogy of light from a projector which causes the projection of all the pictures on the screen, and yet it remains unaffected by various scenes of comedies or tragedies appearing on the screen. So also, the Self within is the cause of all actions, and yet, it is neither affected by nor involved in these acts. A self-realized person or a *Jnani* is identified with the Self within and takes up the position of a witness or an observer when he performs any action.

Mr. Judge remarks that no person will be able to renounce the world until he has learnt the right performance of action. By perfect performance of action through devotion, we are fitted for the next stage of *renunciation of action*, which is renouncing attachment to the results of action and acting as a mere instrument of the divine. “The character of the man himself inwardly is the real test. No matter how many times during countless births he has renounced the world, if his inner nature has not renounced, he will be the same man during the entire period, and whenever, in any one of his ascetic lives, the new, the appropriate temptation or circumstance arises, he will fall from his high outward asceticism” (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 118-19). Even after renouncing wealth, home, love for name and fame, one needs to purify the ego and direct his emotions toward self-realization.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT A PASSAGE TO INDIA—II

INTERESTINGLY, the two English ladies in the novel wish to see “real” India. According to some critics, the imperialists view the “real India” as exotic, alluring and primitive, and in need of civilizing by the English. Theosophy throws light on the glorious past of India. India or rather ancient Aryavarta is called “The Alma-Mater,” or the cradle, not only of civilization but of the arts, sciences and also of all great religions of antiquity (*Isis*, II, 30). Ancient or archaic India was a vast country. “There was an Upper, a Lower, and a Western India, the latter of which is now Persia-Iran. The countries now named Tibet, Mongolia, and Great Tartary, were also considered by the ancient writers as India...It is to India, the country less explored and less known than any other, that all the other great nations of the world are indebted for their languages, arts, legislature, and civilization.” (*Isis*, I, 583 and 589)

Of all the Asiatic cultures only that of old India survives as a living reality. Likewise, “Of all the old races the Aryan Indian alone remains as the preserver of the old doctrines. It will one day rise again to its old heights of glory” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 91, Indian ed.) We are in the Fifth Root-Race or the Aryan Root-Race which started its journey one million years ago. Four sub-races of this Aryan Race have run their course, and we are in the fifth sub-race. *The Secret Doctrine* teaches that India was and still is the home of the parent-stock of the Aryan Root-Race, which acted as a Foster Mother of all the earlier sub-races, by building and nourishing their culture and civilization, and she will continue to play the same role in the future for the sixth and the seventh sub-races. The seeds of the sixth sub-race are being sown and they will flower in America in a few hundred years. The sustenance for this sub-race will come from India. After another 25,000 years the seventh sub-race will come into existence, and it is only after that the evolution of the Fifth or Aryan Root-Race will be completed. The rise of India

coincides with the rise of sub-races, when India imparts necessary knowledge and aid in the establishment of a new civilization, which marks the period of activity, followed by a period of rest and preservation of knowledge.

Egypt and India were the oldest in the group of nations. We read in *Isis Unveiled* (II, 435): "... We are prepared to maintain that Egypt owes her civilization, commonwealth and arts—especially the art of building, to pre-Vedic India, and that it was a colony of the dark-skinned Aryans or those whom Homer and Herodotus term the eastern Aethiopians, *i.e.*, the inhabitants of Southern India, who brought to it their ready-made civilization in the ante-chronological ages..." These eastern Aethiopians or dark-skinned Aryans were a mighty race of builders, and they ruled supreme over the whole of ancient India. Similarly, Babylonian civilization was imported from India. Likewise, the civilizations of Persia, Greece, Rome and Judea, were indirectly borrowed from India, and they all got their wisdom and learning from India. In *Echoes from the Orient*, Mr. Judge draws our attention to architectural marvels in India, describing them as "material works of great magnitude, whose remains to this day challenge our wonder, admiration, and respect; it is doubtful whether we could ever show such triumphs over nature as can be seen at any time in the rock-cut temples of Hindustan."

In a sense, these rock-cut temples are but concrete symbols signifying that India has been a Temple of Knowledge. Mr. Judge mentions the "philosophical, ethical and psychical jewels" of India. All knowledge was divided into three main divisions: (1) Sruti or revelation; (2) Smriti or Laws and Tradition and (3) Itihasa-Purana—History and Mythology. Sruti contains the Vedic lore; Smriti is composed of codes of laws. Epics include the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Both epics are allegorical and contain several important ideas which could be understood only by exercising intuition. The *Ramayana* shows the struggle between Ravana, who represents Atlanteans and Rama who represents early Aryans. Regarding the *Ramayana*, H.P.B. says that every line of it has to be understood esoterically.

Mr. Judge suggests that students of Theosophy while carrying out the second object of investigation of Aryan literature, religion and science, should turn to old India as then they will be aiding the sages of the past in the evolution of old doctrines, which applied to our great new civilization, can alone save it from failure.

According to some critics E. M. Forster has emphasized in this novel a more “unknowable” Orient, rather than drawing attention to its ancient wisdom and mystery. The novel was written at a time when Indians were referred to as “Orientals,” considered at that time to be passive and backward, unable to rule themselves as opposed to the intellectual, civilized, progressive Westerner, who (such as the British Empire) could help them toward civilization. According to Edward Said, a literary professor, the failed attempt at the friendship between Aziz and Fielding is a reinforcement of the perceived cultural distance between the Orient and the West. He suggests that the inability of two men to begin a meaningful friendship is indicative of the irreconcilable otherness of the Orient, something that has originated from the West, and which limits the Western readers in how they understand the Orient. According to some critics, Forster uses the question of the possibility of friendship between an Englishman and an Indian as a framework to explore the issue of Britain’s political control of India. He seems to suggest that the British rule in India could be successful if only the English and the Indians treated each other with frankness and good will, as was done by Fielding and Aziz in the beginning, but ultimately both suffer from the tendencies of their cultures. Forster, though himself an Englishman, is very critical of colonialism in the novel. However, although Forster criticizes the manner in which the British governed India, and even prays to God to establish friendship between the two races and to remove hurdles in this task, he does not question the right of the British to rule India.

The very famous opening line in “The Ballad of East and West,” a poem by Rudyard Kipling, published in 1889, reads: “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” When

interpreted in the context of the entire poem this line only means that East and West have different cultures and ways of doing things, and will never unite in looking at the world in the same way. In Kipling's poem, Britain is the West, India is the East. In saying that the East and the West cannot meet, Kipling seems to suggest the inability of either of them to adapt to the ways of the other. But as is shown in the poem, even men from very different cultures can always admire and respect courage, strength and generosity in men from another culture. There is no denying the contrast in the culture, knowledge and outlook that exists in the East and the West.

In the fourth of her "Five Messages," H.P.B. states that one of the tasks of the Theosophical Society is to draw together the East and the West so that each may supply the qualities lacking in the other and develop more fraternal feelings among various nations, and such exchange and intercourse would prove valuable in "Aryanizing Western thought."

Interestingly, British rule over India was desirable and beneficial for India from a higher point of view. The Indian mutiny of 1857 was a crucial event in the freedom movement of India, the success of which could have paved the way to end British rule in India. But during the great uprising in India that threatened the British rule, the *Nirmanakayas*, who work for man's best and highest good, saw to it that the uprising was not successful, "so that England at last remained master, even though many a patriotic native desired another result." They could see that had the British been driven away from India, some other western nation would have managed to rule over India, taking advantage of internal conflicts, and they would not have hesitated in destroying books and palm-leaf records of India. The failure of the Indian Mutiny led to the protecting shield of England being raised against such destruction.

The Ocean of Theosophy speaks of "the lusty and egotistical, the fighting and the trading West," in describing the western nations that were yet struggling to build their civilization, calling them "Goths and Vandals," meaning barbarians, having no respect towards natural

beauty and objects of cultural value. History shows how vast masses of historical and ethnological treasures of Central and South America were destroyed by the Spanish, and would have done the same with the ancient books and palm-leaf records in India, if they could have accessed them. The roots of materialistic civilization of the west may be traced to materialistic thinking owing to illogical religious dogmas, which deny the existence of soul and spirit.

It is not surprising that characters in the novel find India and Indian society a bit complex, and therefore frequently use the terms “muddle” and “mystery.” We come across statements such as, “But nothing in India is identifiable, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or merge into something else,” or “Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile,” showing that India is so varied and vast that any attempt to grasp it intellectually or geographically proves futile. A muddle implies a meaningless mess or something confusing. A Mystery is something that is strange, which one is unable to understand or explain. In a spiritual context it is a term which implies that there are hidden dimensions to things, people and situations that extend beyond their visible, physical dimensions.

Adela hated mysteries while Mrs. Moore hated muddles. India has been often described as a land of both mysteries and mystics. When Fielding and Adela were trying to find a logical explanation for Adela’s strange experience at Marabar, Adela found herself caught in a muddle, and felt that probably she would never find an explanation. We read: “She was at the end of her spiritual tether, and so was he. Were there worlds beyond which they could never touch, or did all that is possible enter their consciousness? They could not tell. . . . Perhaps life is a mystery, not a muddle; they could not tell. Perhaps the hundred Indias that fuss and squabble so tiresomely are one, and the universe they mirror is one. They had not the apparatus for judging.” In these lines perhaps Forster shows the inadequacy of English rationalism to evaluate mystical India, which needs an awakening of spiritual perception.

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The caves are a very important symbol in the novel. According to some critics they may be regarded as a symbol of all that is alien about nature. Alien means unfamiliar and also hostile. Hence, their alien quality has the power to make visitors confront parts of themselves or the universe, with which they were not familiar so far. Thus, Adela's desire to know "real India," brings her to the caves, leading to a challenging psychological experience, which exposes her barren emotional life. For Mrs. Moore the challenge of the caves is a spiritual one. On the other hand, they may also symbolize emptiness and void. Metaphorically, when one begins to understand the spiritual unity of all, *i.e.*, all things are potentially and essentially divine, then one feels identified with all that lives and breathes. Such empathy and oneness being self-effacing could prove terrifying, and is represented by the sound of the echo, heard as "boum," of the Marabar caves. "The echo in a Marabar cave is...entirely devoid of distinction. Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof." This realization of oneness and negation of plurality and distinction makes Mrs. Moore lose interest in the world of relationships. It leads her to believe that the echo signifies the meaninglessness of the universe. Forster regards such feelings of oneness as the best hope for peace between cultures.

Masters who can see far into the past and also into the future desire that the growth and progress of the West must be based on the knowledge from the East. They say that "the primitive soul-satisfying philosophy of the Aryans" must be taken to the West. What is most urgently needed is the knowledge of the doctrines of Karma and Rebirth, which provide a logical basis for the practice of ethics. This knowledge is expected to have a positive impact on human relations thereby leading to a greater possibility of forming a nucleus of universal brotherhood.

(Concluded)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS MONEY AND POSSESSIONS

MONEY is neither good nor bad in itself. It is a disadvantage if wrongly used; also equally a disadvantage if used for *good* but personal purposes. It is an advantage Karmically for it enables a man to do much good. The highest aspect is of Trusteeship—all one has is held in trust for humanity and for Masters' grand Work. Having renounced, enjoy, says the Upanishad. The whole world is ours, so to speak. Good Karma is that which is pleasing to the *Ishwara* in man. It is not what we possess but *what* and *how* we do with it all that matters. How did *Raja-Rishis* develop? Rama was king; Krishna ruled at Dwarka. This is a big subject and a fascinating one. If Karma brings you wealth it may prove highly advantageous if you use it Theosophically; then it will be a blessing you have earned. But, if immorally used, it proves a curse.

In all these problems the philosophical formula is this: Is the personality acting for itself, or by itself? If so, then Karma is bound to prove disadvantageous. If the personality is being worked through, if it is an avenue for the Inner Ruler, a channel for the Manasic Ego, then the personality itself is the highest blessing. What is the personality of a Master, a Mahatma, a Nirmanakaya? So, to be born in ease and comfort is *not* bad Karma; use it well and wisely, *i.e.*, Theosophically, and it becomes most advantageous Karma.

As for money and Jesus' statement ["It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God"]: Yes, it was difficult for the rich young man to give up the sense of possession and follow him. "He had great possession." Our attitude to money is Kamic, or Kama-Manasic, or Manasic, or Buddhi-Manasic. There are students who think of their own comfort in the present and their own security in the future, and give of money what can be conveniently spared. The Cause comes third or fourth. We are asked to place "Theosophy first" in time, money and labour or work. Altruism is a mental feeling understood by many but not always a heart-energization.

Our own *dharma* in reference to all possessions, including money, is their appropriate use as trustees. We should be careful about what we spend and how. One has to be cautious about giving out knowledge, pouring out affection, or spending money—all these are the Soul's possessions which, under Karma, at this period of time, are in one's hands. Are we to give knowledge with a view to playing the guru, or give love for self-satisfaction and look for a return, or spend money for sense gratification or donate it for self-glorification? Adversity and poverty are one extreme; at the other is the spendthrift who is as wrong as the miser and as unfortunate as the pauper. Crass ignorance is not a blessing; a cold heart is a curse; monetary poverty often breeds vice. In this as in all else—the Golden Mean. What *Light on the Path* lays down about possessions is the right method. The inner attitude to our possessions and to their use is the main thing. Take Gandhiji's view about travelling in the third class. He did this with a noble motive—to identify himself with the poverty-stricken masses; to gain experience of the poor traveller's discomforts. The change has come about because of his agitation, not only because he travelled in the third class.

Are Masters of Life and of Nature exploiters? Of course not. But are They paupers in the face of bountiful Nature? Or do They use it with right knowledge and right motive in the service of all? Yet They will not pour out Their Wisdom and are secretive! They will not practise compassion in the face of Karma! They have sources of gold and silver and wealth and yet will not bestow gifts on the starving or heal the unfortunate person stricken with leprosy! I have written at some length because I would like you to study this point. Again, at our stage of evolution we have to consider the learning of the lesson. How are Raja-Rishis made? How did the Divine Rulers of old act? Masters are *Amirs* and *Fakirs*. Earning of livelihood or living on charity or by inheritance are all acts of Karma. We encounter them as effects and grow wise by looking into the causal side with a view to getting the right remedy. *Vairagya* without *Viveka* proves dangerous.

Of course indulgence is wrong, *i.e.*, personal self-indulgence. But what about Indulgence in and about the Great Self? Can a *Nirmanakaya* be without Self “capture” and centring his “booty” in himself? To struggle against the impermanent and the transitory is our duty, and to all three—knowledge, love and money—there are *maya* and mortality attached. But what about Immortal, Ageless Wisdom? What about Compassion Absolute? What about the never-diminishing and ever-renewing wealth of Nature and of the Lords of Nature? Light and the shadows cast are the real and the unreal.

Our interest in our possessions is personal or Egoic and, philosophically, our involvement in and with them personally strengthens it. In modern civilization the limitations of the personal are not recognized; therefore the use of the possessions remains personal. You return to soul-knowledge and soul-application. The Middle Path in the use of possessions is difficult. What to give the body for food, dress, etc.—there is the middle path. What to give of knowledge on the personal path? Thrift, frugality, etc., are all to be of the Middle Path. To be thought-full about all and every possession as an *Antahkaranic* being is the objective. How we shall use, under any given circumstance, our possession depends upon our philosophy. Poverty begets many vices and yet Lady Poverty represents a power, a *shakti*. To be the owner of many things with which to pamper the personality is wrong; to use them from the ordinary point of view is less wrong; but the correct way is to use them as an Ego. Do I eat for the sake of the Ego or do I eat for the sake of the palate, *i.e.*, for the sake of the personality? Most people do not know about trusteeship. Even when they hear about the idea they do not understand; those who are intelligent enough to understand it do not apply it. So, you see, we return to study and application. Our faith, our love, our power to trust are valuable possessions. How do we use them?

The high ideal of Trusteeship has its own complexities. In this as in all else we have ideals and aspirations, and on the other hand actions and realization of our hopes and inner ideals. Between the

inner and the outer we ever and always find a big gulf and the bridging of the gulf spells application. Charity out of the treasury, if it is to be real, should be complete. Only Adepts rich in wealth physical and not only mental and moral can say, I am an *Amir* and I am a *Fakir*. At our different stages of evolution we are bifurcated. Further, Adepts have knowledge which They will not give us out of consideration for *us*. The same is true about money. Reread Judge's "Advantages and Disadvantages in Life" in *Vernal Blooms*—there, it seems to me, are right principles. The Golden Mean in *all* things sustains our discrimination and dispassion. To sustain, Vishnu-like, and at the same time to renovate, Shiva-like, is a most difficult task.

Serving through earning is a fundamental teaching in the esoteric philosophy which is highly practical. The basic as well as the central idea is—whatever the avenue through which the money comes, what does one do with it? Even in the *Sangha* of the Buddha money was accepted—a great gift from a courtesan. The Buddha's concern was what to do with the gift. He brought the courtesan round afterwards. People want to make money, but for what? Those who make money and do not think of Theosophy are not students of Theosophy though they may call themselves such. But, on our side, we have to make allowances for the foibles and frailties of human nature. Animal-man cannot become human because he reads or even understands Theosophy; transmutation of the animal into the human implies application. The trusteeship idea, though preached by Gandhiji, has been regarded as a platitude. The application aspect has not at all been considered. Pioneering work remains to be done. Students of Theosophy should become pioneers.

What all of us should remember is that an unnecessary change of location or profession or position is not wise. Mere gain of money, uncertain at that, is never a safe guide for us. The lure of money is a great power of delusion, which is the worst form of illusion, for we cast it on ourselves. Now that you are gaining inner equipoise and strength, better for you to make up your mind to hold your job steadfastly; in your own life practise thrift, frugality, and save some

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money for the Work, for you may be suddenly called upon to shoulder a burden. Money is a resourceful weapon in the hand of the true Theosophist and we are trustees of our own earnings. To spend them wisely and well is our *dharma*. Spend every day some time, not only in study, but also in self-examination. Thus application of what we study becomes possible. You have gone forward very well indeed and I am pleased at your zeal, earnestness, as well as effort. Keep it up; sustain it with thought and feeling; cultivate the habit of inner rest, true repose, and memorize the spiritual experiences acquired through pain, error, suffering.

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too:
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise...
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same:
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools...
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much...
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

—RUDYARD KIPLING

METAPHYSICS—SOME REFLECTIONS

IV

WHAT is matter? It exists for us in terms of our sensations. We can touch, feel, see, smell, etc. In that sense, matter or gross matter has no existence apart from our perception. In other words, the gross matter is an illusion except for those who are on this plane, and who are able to perceive it. There is the terrestrial aspect of the matter, and there is the subjective aspect which is the “Transcendentally objective substance” or the *noumena* (*S.D.*, I, 514). The discoveries made by science are based on the investigation of only the physical aspect, and that aspect they have explored in its length, breadth and thickness. Now science must go beyond and search for the reality of the next plane above the physical or must go beyond matter to substance.

The matter that is on the next plane above the physical is called astral matter. H.P.B. writes that if we look at Nature, we find that hidden behind the visible physical nature there is something more important, and that fact, has been revealed to an extent, by the microscope, but there lies a mystery even beyond what the microscope reveals. H.P.B. speaks of an inner world called Astral which means starry, and it is this inner world that “stirs” or guides the outer, “just as a man’s brain guides the movement of his lips.”

According to the Ten Fundamental Propositions of Eastern Psychology, there is an *invisible* side to man and nature. One of the constituents of the invisible man is the astral body, also known as the ethereal double, phantom, doppelganger, and by many other names. The term Astral Body is used because the substance of this form is derived from cosmic matter or star matter. The Sanskrit terms are *sukshma sarira* or *Linga Sarira*, which means design body. It is the model body on which the physical body is built. The model for the growing child in the womb is the astral body, on which molecules arrange themselves until the child is complete.

The astral body of the child in the womb is connected with the

mother's imagination. If the mother vividly imagines that her child would be born without a leg, then her strong imagination would act on the astral leg of the developing baby in her womb, so as to cut off or shrivel it up. As a result, the physical molecules having no model of a leg to work on make no physical leg. But when a person feels the presence of a limb, which the surgeon has cut off, it is because its astral counterpart (leg, arm or fingers, as the case may be) have not been interfered with. This is because a knife or acid cannot injure the astral model. Thus, it is not surprising that a man whose physical arm or leg has been cut off still feels pain, because the astral arm or leg is still present, and can be affected by thoughts because the astral body has a complete system of nerves and arteries of its own. Also, the real senses, through which the pain is felt, have their seat in the astral body. Such pain is called "phantom limb" pain. Even medical authorities are not aware of the real cause of such pain.

Vilayanur Ramachandran, director of the Centre for Brain and Cognition, at the University of California, San Diego, conducted a series of experiments to better understand why these feelings of pain arise and how they might be eliminated. Ramachandran has found that an amputee could be "cured" of a phantom limb pain by tricking the brain into reacting to the sight of someone else performing soothing, massage-like gestures. One of the subjects reported that when he watched someone rub his hands together, it helped to stop the cramping pain in his amputated hand for fifteen minutes. He is of the opinion that if this is done often enough perhaps this pain will go away for good, and seeks to explain the phenomenon on the basis of "mirror" neurons in the brain. The fact that astral limbs, and hence, the phantom limbs could be affected by *imagination*, might explain how pain in the phantom limb could be cured by the sight of a soothing massage being performed on the limb of another person.

H.P.B. observes that physiologists have recorded such incidences of children born with missing limbs. There have also been weird

instances of children born with skin and nails resembling that of a bear, another one born with a turkey's wattles and yet another with a head like a frog. While some have described them as "curious coincidences," only a few have been honest enough to admit their ignorance. Many have been too proud and have said: "*There is no reason to believe that imagination of mother can have any influence in the formation of these monsters*"; besides, productions of this kind are daily observed in the offspring of other animals and even in plants." (*Isis*, I, 385-87)

The astral body is the guiding model for the physical, and this astral model is present in vegetables, minerals and animals. It is only on the basis of the astral model that one is able to explain how mango seed produces mango tree only and nothing else, and likewise, all animals and human beings bring forth their like. Moreover, a fertilized egg divides into cells that are identical to one another, but later differentiate themselves to form eyes, legs, etc. How do the cells know what to do? In 1981, Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, a British plant physiologist, in his book, *A New Science of Life*, attempted to answer this. He argued that if all the cells have the same DNA code, and yet perform different functions by arranging themselves differently, then there had to be some other factor that guided the cells of the embryo. According to him, there must be, as it were, an already existing blueprint for the form of, say, a cat, and the cells of a cat embryo would grow according to that. He applies this concept to all types of forms that an object takes up. Thus, he hypothesised that every object or part of an object, has a particular field associated with it, a field whose nature was determined by the form of that object, just as the nature of a magnetic field depends on the magnet causing it. However, this field cannot be seen, felt, touched, heard or smelt, but its effects were discernible. He called these fields morphogenetic fields. Unlike magnetic fields that depended on the existence of the magnet, the morphogenetic field persisted whether the original object remained in existence or not.

The morphogenetic fields give form and structure to a developing

organism, their structure is derived from the actual structure of similar organisms in the past. These fields represent a kind of cumulative memory of the species. For instance, the form of a growing cat embryo would be shaped by a cat morphogenetic field, and that morphogenetic field would derive its structure from the actual forms of previous cats. So, there is a connection between similar things across space and time by a process that he calls “morphic resonance,” or the effect of like upon like. He applies this also to crystals. The moment at which a chemical crystal is about to take up a particular form, a morphogenetic field from crystals of that chemical formed in the past, steps across time and space and guides the molecules towards the same form. He says that these morphogenetic fields may constitute time and space themselves.

What else can be the “already existing blueprint” or the “morphogenetic field,” for every form, but the “astral body,” which is the guiding model for every physical form? He says that once something, say a poem, has been learnt by somebody somewhere, others will find it easier to learn it than the first person. And the more often it is learnt, the easier will it be for subsequent learners to memorize it. All these people, including the first one, could be separated from one another by thousands of kilometres or by decades and centuries; yet the results would still be the same, says Sheldrake.

Sheldrake explains the inheritance of behaviour and learning, on the basis of the “Motor Fields.” According to him, while the morphogenetic fields are related to form, the motor fields are related to movement. Hence, all human tasks are associated with their respective motor fields. And according to the theory of formative causation, regular activities such as farming, or even riding a bicycle, become progressively easier as the motor fields from the previous occasions “resonate” with the effort of prospective farmers and cyclists.

And what are the motor fields which Sheldrake relates to the behaviour and learning if not to the astral light, on the indestructible tablets of which is stamped the impressions of every thought we think and every act we perform?

Theosophy teaches of the existence of the universally diffused and highly ethereal medium, called “Astral light.” Astral light in nature corresponds to the astral body in man. Mr. Judge calls astral light a photographic plate and a reflector, which retains all impressions of our thoughts, actions, feelings and events. We are walking about completely hypnotized under the suggestions made by thoughts and actions, impressed on the astral light. Under the law of like attracts like, or the law of similarity, we are helped not only in learning but also in making good or bad habits, acquiring moral qualities, etc. Since we are all interconnected on the invisible plane, we are continually helping or hindering others in building their character. By not resisting the temptation to take bribes or tell a lie, or by allowing a material or sensual thought to enter the mind, we are giving an impulse to some weak person with a similar tendency to indulge in sin through the impressions made in the astral light. The converse is also true. Every attempt to overcome vices in us sends out an impulse for good that strengthens another individual who may be fighting similar weaknesses. Clairvoyance (*clear seeing*) or seeing things that are happening at a distance or in the past or future is the faculty of seeing in the astral light with the astral or inner sense.

The astral body is electromagnetic in nature and enmeshed in the physical body like the fibres of the mango are all through that fruit. We are told that the earth is a magnetic body charged with one form of electricity, say positive. All the organic and inorganic bodies on the earth are charged with the opposite form of electricity, *i.e.*, negative. Hence, there is an attraction between the earth and all the bodies on earth. Changing the electrical polarity of the object on the earth, from negative to positive could counteract this attraction. This change of polarity can be achieved by a well-regulated Will. The juggler determines beforehand that he will levitate, for how long a time and to what height, and regulates the occult forces accordingly. However, there could also be unconscious levitation, as has been observed in the case of somnambulism or in some patients of epileptic fits, who are seen to rise two to three yards from their beds, during seizures. Thus, the Law of

Gravitation known to science is only half of a law. The other half is Levitation or repulsion.

Some scientists who have admitted the existence of an electric and magnetic pattern body interpenetrating the physical are those who have been able to picture the astral body of vegetation by using Kirlian photography. In 1939, the Russian inventor Semyon Kirlian conducted experiments in which a photographic film was placed on top of a conducting plate, and another conductor was attached to a hand, a leaf or other plant material. The conductors were energized by a high-frequency, high-voltage power source producing photographic images typically showing a silhouette of the object surrounded by an aura of light. He believed that an energy field or aura surrounds living things. In the article, “Mesmerism,” Mr. Judge writes that there is an astral substance around everyone, and by some this astral substance is called the *aura*.

Could Men have existed 18,000,000 years ago? Occultism affirms that man inhabited our earth 18,000,000 years ago. But men, earth, atmospheric conditions, etc. were very different from what they are today. Just as cosmic dust and matter of the earth differs from matter of the earth a few million years ago, so also humanity on earth at present, must also be different from the humanity in the far back past, and so also present humanity must be different from the humanity that will evolve in the distant future. Consciousness can function through any form of matter. However, geologists do not believe in the existence of human races in the distant past, because they are unable to find their fossils or relics. But occultists say that these relics can be found through geological research. Even if they are not found, geologists should not deny the possibility of the existence of the early races of humanity because their constitution was such that they needed no warm blood, no food, no atmosphere, etc. “*The whole issue of the quarrel between the profane and the esoteric sciences depends upon the belief in, and demonstration of, the existence of an astral body within the physical, the former independent of the latter.*” (*S.D.*, II, 149)

(*To be continued*)

CHRISTOS—THE INNER RULER

CHRISTOS is a Greek term that was in use in ancient Greece many centuries before the advent of Christianity. The terms Christ, and Christianity are derived from the Greek original, *Christes*, which is the designation in Greek culture of one who is a soothsayer, a prophet, one who explains oracles, a god. In the early centuries of Christianity, when philosophical and mystical Gnostics and Neo-Platonists flourished, and to which some of the early Fathers of the Church belonged, the term *Chrestes* was the designation of a disciple on probation for admission to the *Mysteries* leading to Adeptship, through long and arduous trials, initiations, and suffering. When the candidate successfully passed the onerous trials and became enlightened, he was called *Chrestos* in esoteric or mystery language. The term *Christos* connotes that the candidate has trodden the path of liberation and attained the lofty goal of uniting his purified personal lower self with the divine Individuality, the immortal Ego. *Chrestos*, the “man of sorrow,” became *Christos*, the Man-god.

The term Christ, in fact, is not a proper noun at all but is the designation of the presence of an impersonal divine Principle latent in everyone. Many a saying in the epistles of St. Paul, despite being corrupted over time, retain the original inspiration in phraseologies which bear the stamp of Gnostic mysticism and testify to the fact that he was an initiate, a *Christos* himself. “My little children,” says he, “of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (*Galatians*, 4:19), which means, until you form Christ within yourself through holy striving. Again, in *Ephesians* (3: 16-17) Paul refers to Christ as “spirit in the inner man,” which every good individual may find. For Paul, Christ is not a person but a personage—the divine good and the divine truth in a human form—through whom the light of Christos shines forth. Rare indeed are such, while the vast majority remain ignorant of the fact of latent divinity overshadowing them.

“Such God-like beings—as Gautama Buddha, Jesus, Tisoo,

Christna, and a few others had united themselves with their spirits permanently—hence, they became gods on earth. Others, such as Moses, Pythagoras, Apollonius, Confucius, Plato, Iamblichus, and some Christian saints, having at intervals been so united, have taken rank in history as demi-gods and leaders of mankind. When unburdened of their terrestrial tabernacles, their freed souls, henceforth united forever with their spirits, rejoin the whole shining host, which is bound together in one spiritual solidarity of thought and deed, and called the ‘anointed.’” (*Isis*, II, 159)

Such is the destiny of every man and woman, though the consummate end for collective humanity looms far, far away in time. Yet, say the Teachers, it is within the reach of every individual who has deeply felt the illusory nature of life and longs for Truth. It is an ancient saying that the Self is known by him whom the Self chooses. When will the choice of the Most High fall on one, none can say. It may come at the next moment or after an age. All that the aspirant in his holy striving needs to do is to prepare himself through self-discipline, sacrifice, and selfless service for the conferment of the greatest of all privileges. “When the materials are ready the Architect will appear.” The preparatory work consists in clarifying one’s perceptions and purifying one’s nature so as to facilitate the light of the Christos-Krishna to shine through oneself. Master says that the work of self-purification is not a matter of a few years or even of a lifetime, but of an unrelenting effort protracted through many lives.

Search for Truth is in fact a search for the nature of the true Self in, by, and through oneself. It means coming into Self-knowledge through Self-reliance. Teachers say that it can only be attained by a knowledge of the relation of our human self with the Impersonal Divine Ego which broods over us—Krishna, Christ, Padmapani, *Ishwara*, or by whatever name one may call it. Great Gurus inculcate in Their disciples Self-reliance. The Teacher says to the aspirant, Sravaka, who has offered himself to him as a pupil that he must travel on alone, that he himself must strive, and that the Teacher can but point the way. Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life, says *Light on the Path*.

Though Theosophy has many of its tenets in common with Vedanta yet it differs from the latter in some vital points. For instance, in the Vedantic teaching, it is possible for the disciple to merge his self directly with *Atma* through discriminative negating of the falsity of self-identification with the *Koshas*, including *Vijnanamaya Kosha*, which is Divine Individuality in Theosophical parlance. Theosophy, on the contrary, teaches that not one of the principles can be skipped, and that union with Atman is possible only through the agency of the Divine Individuality—the Inner Ruler.

This is clearly set forth in the parable of the vine and the branches (chapter xv of St. John): “I am the *true* vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away...As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the Vine—ye are the branches. If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch, and is *withered* and cast into the fire and burned” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 184, Indian ed.). *Atma* is the husbandman, vine is the Buddhi, the spiritual Ego (Christos), and the branch is the personality.

The message is plain. Even in ordinary life human happiness on earth and after death in the post-mortem state depends entirely upon the spiritual quality of the person’s life and thoughts, as nobler thoughts and impulses in us come from the “Wisdom that is from above,” which, being consubstantial with the latter, can never perish. Personality choosing the opposite course, “wisdom...that is earthly, sensual, devilish,” is the withered branch that is cast into the fire—that is spiritual death.

As man is in his physical and spiritual essence Deity Itself, both Absolute and manifested, which is expressed by the assertion of the great Gurus, “I am myself *Parambrahma*,” the aspirant must place his entire reliance on the Higher Self for guidance and enlightenment. “Stand alone and isolated,” teaches the *Light on the Path*, “because nothing that is embodied, nothing that is conscious of separation, nothing that is out of the eternal, can aid you.” SELF alone is eternal,

and the disciple is bidden to live in the Eternal. H.P.B. teaches that there is no way or means or method of sacrificing oneself to the eternal except “sacrificing oneself for the collective spirit of Life, embodied in, and (for us) represented in its highest divine aspect by Humanity alone.” (*H.P.B. Series No. 36*, p. 43)

Long, devoted study and work for Theosophy leads one progressively to a truer understanding of the SELF, and a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood, and develops in degrees altruistic motive, which, seeking nothing for itself, offers up as sacrifice every duty and task one has to do to the highest good of Humanity. All Nature evinces a progressive movement towards a higher life. The aspirant has to become a co-worker with Nature in her progressive cyclic work by labouring for the divine evolution of *Ideas*—that is, transmuting every duty to be performed to spiritual quality by bringing the perception of archetypal virtues to bear on them.

Personal predilections, intents, and motives in all undertakings are entirely abstracted, and given over to implicit obedience to the behests of the *Ishwara* dwelling in the heart. Teachers say the difficulty of discerning and sifting the voice of the Inner Self from the disguised deceptive desires of the personal self is gradually overcome by undivided attention to the Heart Doctrine as the basis for thought and action, unselfish devotion to the good of the world, and absolute trust in the divine justice of Karma, ever remembering the inspiring words of the Master, “So cast the lot of yourself into the lap of justice, never fearing but that its response will be absolutely true,” and also the words of Lord Krishna, “To them thus always devoted to me, who worship me with love, I give that mental devotion by which they come to me. For them do I out of compassion, standing within their hearts, destroy the darkness which springs from ignorance by the brilliant lamp of spiritual discernment.” (*Gita*, X, 10-11)

HURT FEELINGS

EXCESSIVE heat or cold hurts bodily sensitiveness. Similarly, feelings which do not suit our temperament hurt us. Different things irritate different people; that which soothes A, irritates B; some are able to receive personal criticism from friends, while others fly into a rage at a slight phrase which sounds critical; still others—a large number—nurse in silent resentment “adverse” criticism while expressing their thanks for advice given. In one, patience leads to lethargy, while in another a slower tempo would lead to real patience; and so on.

In the leading of the higher life hurt feelings are a very early experience and it takes time for most students to realize that the cause of the hurt is not in the critic or in the circumstance but in his own desire nature. Just as believers in Karma quickly slide into blaming others for their misfortune so also our hurt feelings make us blind to the simple fact that their cause is within ourselves.

Hurt feelings mean a disturbance in the Kamic or desire nature. In the final analysis it is the personality which feels hurt—dissatisfied with what is heard or seen. Wounded feelings are as real as wounds to flesh and muscle. Further, they prove highly dangerous if not promptly attended to. Open astral sores immediately attract to themselves consubstantial elementals. Continued emotional upsets made by hurt feelings produce a reaction on the physical body, resulting in neurosis, hysteria, leading to melancholia or apoplexy, and so on. Such upsets, if they become frequent, ultimately become permanent.

Hurt feelings are related to the personality whose nature is egotistic in the ordinary man. When he, energized by Theosophy, undertakes to transmute egotism into altruism, he is face to face with self-centredness, conceit, vanity, pride which are but aspects of egotism. The personality resents its control by the Inner Ego. Further, aspiring to pure altruism, he tends in the direction of like-minded folk; this is due to the action of the Inner Ego. Then the

HURT FEELINGS

resentment of the personality translates itself as interference, injury, or insult from others. To the personality this becomes an attractive base to fight from. It deludes the aspirant into false perception so that instead of handling his own personality he opens the flood-gates of his wrath, mental and verbal, on others. He takes comfort in his own wounds, indulges in self-pity, and feeding his egotism produces self-righteousness.

How shall we heal our wounded feelings, our astral sores?

First, we must cease brooding over the incidents which wounded us. Wounds were not caused by what was said but by our reaction to what was said. We ourselves by Kamic process wound our astral body. Every time the picture which resulted in the wounds engulfs us, we must get away from it by engaging ourselves in thinking of metaphysical or ethical teachings.

Secondly, when these astral-light pictures are not permitted to disturb us in waking consciousness they reproduce themselves during our sleeping conditions. When these astral pictures affect our sores during *svapna* we find a recrudescence of our evil mood in waking consciousness, albeit we may be unconscious of how or why we become ill again.

Preparation for sleep should include not a resolve not to be affected by them—for this is remembering and arousing their activity—but a quiet dwelling on the Inner Ego and the Higher Self, so that the ills of *svapna* may not contaminate us and so that we may, without dallying on the way, pass into the higher state known as *sushupti*.

This will react beneficently in waking life although we may not on waking remember what the Ego experienced plunged in *sushupti*, which is dreamlessness for the brain. But that egoic experience—a refreshing plunge in the fount of almost omniscience in hours of waking consciousness, enabling us to reproduce in ourselves the good and the noble which are present everywhere in Nature and in all men.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Science and reason have revealed many of nature's secrets, from the molecular machinery inside cells to the origin and evolution of the universe. However, although they generate reliable knowledge about the world, they have their limits. It is important to explore outer limits of knowledge as that can shed light on what knowledge really is, and help us in distinguishing between things we can never know, owing to the fundamental constraints of the physical world, and things we do not know but could find out in the future. It may also help us to improve two tools, Mathematics and logic, which we use in order to gain insight.

In 1982, Frank Jackson, a philosopher, suggested a thought experiment, in which we are asked to imagine a person who has been brought up from birth inside a black, white and grey room, but at the same time, has spent her life studying the science of colours. She has learnt that a prism separates white light into a spectrum and that there are colours of various wavelengths, but has not seen any of these except black and white. When she leaves her room and gets to see the world outside, she would learn something new about colour. This experiment suggests that “there are types of knowledge that cannot be gained by reading, measuring or deducing. They have to be learned through direct experience,” writes Clare Wilson.

It is impossible for us to share someone else's subjective experiences and as a result it becomes very difficult to know how much pain one is in because normally, we are unable to feel another's pain, and have to rely on their description. Likewise, we can never know if our perceptions of the world are the same as those of someone else, though experimentally it has been proven that people have different experiences of particular colours, sounds, smells and so on. It is difficult to know the minds of other people, and even more difficult to understand things from animals' point of view. It would be extremely difficult to understand the experiences of an intelligent machine, with a mind that is not made of the same basic material as us.

Science tries to understand reality by means of equations, theories and experiments, but finds that there is a crucial aspect which remains at least partly unknowable. Anil Seth, a neuroscientist at the University of Sussex, United Kingdom, is of the view that there is the direct experience, which is possible only to the organism with a particular brain. Thus, “we will never fully know what pain, colour and love are really like for other people—never mind other animals.” Also, it becomes hard to form judgements about the ethical treatment of animals, writes Clare Wilson. (*New Scientist*, January 14, 2023)

Human mind is capable of two kinds of knowledge or two modes of consciousness—the rational and the intuitive. Rational knowledge, which is a relative knowledge, is derived from the experience we have with objects, events, etc. which we come across in our everyday surroundings. Science, as we know it today, only encompasses the knowledge obtained by means of five senses and the mind, by observation, analysis, reason and experiment. It is therefore limited to the material realm and we might say that it presents only material basis for thought. According to science, one cannot know the properties of a stone without subjecting it to chemical or mechanical processes. One cannot know the thoughts of a person until these are expressed in words. Moreover, the universal basis of thinking must recognize the universal presence of Spirit or Life pervading all things. We do not find this in science which distinguishes between organic and inorganic things.

Intuition is the direct perception of truth. It is Wisdom. Intuition is an embodiment of the knowledge that has been gained in the past by the spiritual nature of man. It is the highest spiritual faculty in man but lies dormant as long as man remains a slave to the senses and the mind. There is a temporary conjunction of *manas* with *buddhi* when one gets a flash of intuition. In Great Beings there is a permanent conjunction of *buddhi* with *manas*. Intuition is the faculty of Spiritual Discrimination or *Buddhi activated*. *Buddhi* is the channel through which divine knowledge reaches the “Ego.” When *Buddhi* is activated, the mind is made porous and receptive to the

influx from the divine, then the Yogi “perceives what is passing in the mind of the ant,” says saint Dnyaneshwar. In Spiritual life we achieve very little by somebody else telling us about faith or love or devotion. We have to undergo the various experiences of faith and love ourselves to know them. H.P.B. writes that acquisition of wisdom requires sacrifice and devotion of man’s whole life.

We must “die to the past” if we wish to be intensely alive in the present moment. In the tales of King Vikramaditya and vampire Betaal, the name “Betaal” is derived from “be-taal” which means being “out of sync or out of step.” In music, “taal” is the metric cycle of rhythm, which breathes life into music. Thus, Betaal means one without life, a corpse. “We are just like Betaal when we lose touch with the present moment and slip into the past. We are no longer alive because the past is no longer alive” writes Dr. Bijal Maroo. Betaal narrates to the king twenty-five stories or incidents of things that happened a long time ago and then asks him to give his judgement with justification for the same. All this makes him lose consciousness and Betaal, representing the past, runs away with the king’s lifeblood. The king keeps chasing Betaal, the past, instead of staying in the present moment. Lifeblood in this context means awareness of the present moment.

We too, are tempted to chase the past, which consists of two types of thoughts: Pleasant memories of happy times, when things happened as we had desired and unpleasant memories of events which happened contrary to our wishes. We keep going back to the past because we are dissatisfied with the present moment and are unable to surrender to what *is* and prefer to dive into the sea of pleasant memories. However, we also delve into the past unpleasant conditions, in which we were victimized or hurt, and wish to turn back the clock and to triumph over those who hurt us. Seneca, the stoic philosopher, writes, “We suffer more in imagination than in reality.” The actual incident occurs only once, but by reliving the incident in our minds, we die a million deaths.

To break free from the past we can try to live consciously. Most of the time we cling to a routine and our activities are guided by habit. We can strive to change our personality and acquire a different way of thinking. To increase awareness and live a conscious life we should regularly practice meditation, which can help us to control the mind and restrain it from dwelling on the past. Likewise, being grateful for our past achievements helps us to move on and reach greater heights. Forgiveness is the key to break free from the unpleasant memories of the past. As we move on, we should carry with us the insights and lessons derived from the unpleasant experiences. Let us remember what the famous singer Lionel Richie said: “When your past calls, do not answer. It has nothing new to say,” and usher in the New Year leaving behind the burden of Ghosts from the past, writes Dr. Bijal Maroo, a homeopathic consultant, counselling and health psychologist. (*Life Positive*, January 2023)

Teachers, down the ages, and especially, the new age gurus advise us to live in the present moment. We seem to live life carrying with us a heavy load of the past baggage. We live life, oscillating between the past and the future. *The Voice of the Silence* advises: “Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences. Look not behind or thou art lost.” When we recall the past, and live in those memories we rejuvenate them, *i.e.*, provide fresh energy to those thoughts. Thoughts are energy and so every time we think of the past, we lend energy. Someone who had miserable childhood can continue to focus on it but alternatively, he can focus on what he wants to achieve. When we stop dwelling and focusing on the past, it begins to disappear, while things we want to achieve begin to expand and strengthen. If we have done something wrong, certainly we must repent and resolve not to sin again; and having extracted the lesson, dismiss the matter. Our capacity to do good in the present is adversely affected when we dwell over the past, which drags us down from our present level of consciousness. Mr. Judge has said, “The Past! What is it? Nothing. Gone! Dismiss it. You are the past of yourself. In you, as now you exist, lies all the past....Then regret nothing,

not even the greatest follies of your life, for they are gone, and you are to work in the present which is both past and future at once.”

Our present actions affect the future. “Man’s life is in his own hands, his fate is ordered by himself. . . . In the garden of sunflowers every sunflower turns towards the light. Why not so with us? This can be affected by those who are courageous and resolute. . . . A day can be coloured, so can a year,” writes H.P.B.

“A man is what he thinks about all day long,” says Ralph Waldo Emerson. By the use of powerful and positive thoughts we can make ourselves courageous and strong, or make ourselves weak and helpless by our negative thoughts. We have examples of people who stood their ground without compromising with their principles even in extremely adverse situations. For example, Socrates, at the age of 72, was forced to drink the hemlock just because his spiritual ideas were not in consonance with those of orthodox elements of Greek society, and was accused of instilling negative thoughts in the minds of the youth. His last words to the judges were: “It is now time that we depart, I to die, you to live, but which had the better destiny is unknown to all, except God.”

Likewise, when Martin Luther declared himself against the Pope, the Emperor urged him to retract. His response was, “Sire, unless I am convinced of my error by the testimony of scripture, or by manifest evidence, I cannot and will not retract, for we must never act contrary to our conscience. Such is my profession of faith, and you must expect none other from me.”

We, at our level, must have courage to resist temptations, adhere to the path of truth and righteousness and courage to earn our livelihood by fair means. According to Samuel Smiles, a great deal of unhappiness in the world is owing to fickleness of mind and indecision of purpose, and for want of courageous decisions the deeds intended never get translated into action. Let us exercise the powers of our minds and gather courage to take independent and

firm decisions in the coming year and move towards our goals with faith and confidence in our abilities and decisions, writes Anup Taneja. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, January 14, 2023)

Theosophy says: “Thoughts are the seeds of Karma.” Whatever we are—physically, mentally, psychically and spiritually, and whatever circumstances we find ourselves in—they are the result of our own thoughts. The peculiar character that we have acquired is the result of our thoughts. Because: “Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit and reap a character.”

It is said that “An elephant can be tethered and held captive by a thread—if *he believes* he is captive.” Many are held back from realizing their full potential by the false ideas that man is born in sin, and that he is dependent on someone outside of him for salvation. Our thinking is conditioned by the thinking of our age. We are continually affecting each other at the thought level.

The creative power of thought is variously described as *Kriyasakti* and *Sankalpa sakti*. When we undertake self-discipline, we first make an ideal plan or *Sankalpa* and then execute it. *Sankalpa* means to thoroughly think and imagine so that the thing thought about gets translated into action. The highest power of thought or *Kriyasakti*, which makes man a creator, lies latent within each. However, to develop courage of conviction or to live the life based on spiritual principles, we need to develop the power of Will. Spiritual Will comes into play, when we stop asserting our personal will. We can begin by denying ourselves small whims and fancies during the day. It requires cultivation of unselfishness and readiness to be assisted, guided and instructed by our divine nature. When we are ready to sacrifice the personal nature then all the power and force of the divine nature becomes available. The more we pay heed to the “Voice of Conscience” within, the greater will be the development of our Will.