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THE SPIRIT OF ADAPTABILITY	3
“THY KINGDOM COME”—I	9
OUR IDEALS	14
EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS	18
KARMA—I	
SAINT EKNATH—LIFE AND TEACHINGS—III	21
DESPAIR AND SELF-RELIANCE	27
MIRACLES	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	32

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE SPIRIT OF ADAPTABILITY

ADAPTABILITY means the ability to be flexible and adjust to changing factors, conditions or environments. The statement often attributed to Charles Darwin is: “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable,” *i.e.*, the most responsive to change. In his theory of Natural Selection Darwin shows that adaptation is the key to survival. Adaptation is simply the process by which an animal or plant becomes fitted to its environment. Instinctive activity tends to be adaptive, contributing to the animal’s ability to reach maturity and to breed. Instinct is an involuntary response by an animal to an external stimulus. Adaptation is very important for the survival as well as development of an organism. Animals adapt themselves to thirst and hunger. The cattle of Arizona deserts can go without water for four days because they adapt their tissues to store large quantities of water. “To be useful, adaptations must often occur simultaneously in a number of different parts of the body. A change from a more carnivorous to a more vegetarian diet necessitates alterations not only of the teeth, digestive juices, and length of the digestive tract but also in habit and defence mechanisms.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

In the case of human beings, the inner and outer environment is the result of Karma, and does not come to anyone arbitrarily. It is through them that we fulfil our Karma. It is under Karma that the

THE SPIRIT OF ADAPTABILITY

Ego is born to certain parents, in a rich or poor family, in a male or female body, with a kind or selfish nature, etc. Often, we find ourselves in a body or in surroundings that are not very pleasing. Life places us where we can best learn the necessary lessons in evolution. Often we hear a person say that if only his surroundings were more favourable; if he had a fair chance, then he would do better. But the fact that we are where we are shows that it must be necessary for us to pass through those identical trials and disadvantages to perfect ourselves. Hence it is better to learn to adapt ourselves to a given environment, if we are unable to change it, in spite of our best efforts. Mr. Judge advises us to resist without resistance and asks us to lean back on the great ocean of Self which is never moved and “look on at the ebb and flow of life that washes to our feet and away again many things that are not easy to lose nor pleasant to welcome.”

In our times, things are changing much faster so as to outpace our ability to adapt to these changes. And yet, learning to adapt ourselves to the changes is essential for survival. The adaptation may involve either physical, emotional and mental adjustments or adjustment in our behaviour, perception, beliefs or judgements. At a physical level, we may have to learn to do with little sleep and food. Mental and emotional adaptation is even more important, as we often find ourselves in the company of people with differing temperaments and idiosyncrasies. Each of us has formed a mental groove by set ways of thinking, feeling and acting. The mental groove of one person is not willing to run in the mental groove of another person. This opportunity to alter our minds and adapt to others is daily and hourly presented to us. However, the adaptive process requires strenuous efforts and also discrimination, as there are times when it is wiser to change an external condition or circumstance, rather than adapting to it. When we strive to adapt ourselves to adverse circumstances which are beyond our control, we gain physical, mental and moral strength. Hence, what the world considers as advantages of life or favourable surroundings may not necessarily be advantageous from the soul’s point of view.

THE SPIRIT OF ADAPTABILITY

As one advances on the spiritual path it is even more important to learn to adapt oneself to the environment. Adaptability implies detachment, the capacity to be where one is required, and to grapple with the new environment. While Karma gradually unfolds the quality of adaptability in ordinary people, a disciple or a chela hastens the process of mastering his environment. A chela may be and often is, called upon to go anywhere and do whatever is required of him. New physical surroundings raise obstacles, and without the virtue of adaptability, failure and frustration result. In developing adaptability, we acquire some knowledge of practical occultism as well as Higher Indifference or *Viraga*.

For an aspirant, adapting to the environment implies learning to work in harmony with co-workers and co-disciples, without allowing the likes and dislikes to influence his behaviour. We should be willing to serve wherever work calls us. Mr. Judge writes: “No matter where we are, the same spirit pervades all and is accessible. What need, then, to change places? We do not change ourselves by moving the body to another *locus*. We only put it under a different influence. And in order to change we must have got to dislike the place we moved from. This is *attachment by opposites*, and that will produce detriment, as does all that disturbs the equilibrium of the soul.”

Just as we create positive attachment when we like a person or a place, so also, we create negative attachment through our dislike. What we need to cultivate is equanimity towards people, places and circumstances that come to us under Karma. Our likes and dislikes disturb the equilibrium of the soul and prevent it from seeing things as they are. Mr. Crosbie points out that at times students feel that getting away alone somewhere, regularly, would help to keep one’s psychic balance. If we give in to this desire and habit of depending upon the *externals*, our personality demands periodical changes, producing nervous tension that is corrosive and destructive. Our mind is occupied with fancied needs and that in turn reacts injuriously on the body. Further: “True strength lies *within* and can

only be aroused and used by ceasing to think that anything in particular of an external nature is *necessary* for us, in the ordinary acceptance of the word. We have our place and our duty to fulfil and perform; externals are our temporary opportunities, and we shall be wise to use these rightly.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 125)

Some psychologists are of the view that our personality is flexible and can change to meet each situation. Others feel that our character and temperament remain consistent and stable without much change. It is true that what we call as “core” characteristics persist throughout our life, and that is how we are able to predict, with some certainty, the behaviour of our family member or a close friend, in a particular situation. But that does not mean that people will not or cannot change their attitudes and behaviour to meet the changing demands of life. The reason why our basic personality remains much the same is because our present personality is the result of our own Karmic tendencies or *skandhas* brought from previous lives. These *skandhas* become the foundation of our personality, determine a kind of trend of the present life, and some of them last throughout the span of man’s life. However, there are the *skandhas* which are not powerful and therefore can be altered comparatively easily, making it possible to bring about change in one’s personality.

Adaptability in its negative aspect would imply passive acceptance of one’s environment and circumstances. It can only lead to stagnation. It is of the nature of inertia or *Tamas*. On the other hand, dissatisfaction with one’s environment may lead one to impulsively and radically change the outer circumstances or environment. It is of the nature of *Rajas*. In this case one becomes irritable and impatient with others and with the environment which leads to frustration and waste of energy. When one strives to adjust to the circumstances by making inner adjustment it can produce a positive influence on the environment itself, which could result in harmony between the inner and the outer. It is of the nature of *Sattwa*. It is under karma that we are placed in the company of an individual or in certain circumstances of life. It is only when we have learnt the lessons they have to teach that we become free.

THE SPIRIT OF ADAPTABILITY

Each one of us has the dual responsibility of paying our karmic debts and also learning lessons that the situation has to teach us. If we are resourceful in the practice of adaptability, we would endeavour to overcome limitations of the circumstances, and in the process, fulfil our karma. To adapt or adjust ourselves to what Karma brings does not mean to be overpowered or determined by Karma but to act in such a way as to pay our karmic debts. It involves giving the right *response* to the situation or the person, and not *react*. Right Knowledge is essential to guide our actions.

When one takes one's evolution into one's own hands and desires to become wise in spiritual things, one is taking the path of discipleship which leads to physical, mental and spiritual perfection. The path of discipleship is full of tests and trials. But a closer examination reveals that all these diverse tests are but aspects of a single test, namely, the test of adapting oneself to outer conditions. Every disciple or spiritual-aspirant has the added support of the deep, esoteric knowledge which gives them the insight into the nature of the test as also the guidance to overcome the difficulties. True devotion enables a student-worker to adapt to the surroundings in which they are placed and also to work in collaboration with others. It should always be remembered that we are serving the Masters by serving Their humanity, and the best service can be rendered when each of us can learn to be in attunement with others working for the same end.

In the higher stages of chelaship, a chela (disciple) is sent wherever his service is required. Therefore, it is very essential for the spiritual aspirant to start preparing by adapting themselves to all kinds of physical, psychic and mental conditions. "If you live with the familiar forever, there will be certainty but there will be no progress," writes Sadhguru. The ascetics and monks of certain religions are wanderers, having no fixed abode, which is with a view to cultivating detachment. However, such a life can be lived only if one is well-grounded in "adaptability." It is interesting to recall that Carlos Gonzales Valles, popularly known as Father Valles, was a Spanish-

THE SPIRIT OF ADAPTABILITY

Indian Jesuit priest and author, who lived in India for five decades. It was a decade-long experiment in which Father Valles went from house to house as an itinerant guest to experience people's life and culture first hand. It meant adjusting every few days to a new environment. The housewives would ask him to do all sorts of odd jobs including rocking the baby to help it to sleep, which he would carry out without any complaint or displeasure. Once his religious superior, who was responsible for Father Valles's general well-being, decided to pay him a surprise visit to ascertain how well he managed. When he reached the house where Father Valles was staying for a few days, he saw Father Valles sprawled on the floor, enjoying a sound sleep, amid the humdrum of family life!

“The first test of an earnest aspirant, the first manifestation of descending Karma on his head, is always around this quality—Adaptability. To adapt oneself to one's teacher means conquest of doubt in the first and of despair in the second instance; further, the accomplishment of throwing away the contents of our consciousness, wherever and whenever necessary, and the reconstructing of our entire nature in conformity with the requirements of the Path and Its Service and not only Its treading for our own sake,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. After having lived several lives on this earth we become adaptable and by overcoming our own karma we increase our resourcefulness, *i.e.*, our ability to meet situations and become skilled at solving problems. A disciple does this deliberately so that he can adapt himself to the Master who in turn adjusts the mind of the chela, and using his resources enables him to work for the “Great Orphan,” Humanity.

THE REASONABLE man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

“THY KINGDOM COME”

I

“TALLY-HO” he cries as he spurs his mount in pursuit of his man-eating quarry. The faithful mare gallops onward and flinches not even as the ground under her feet melts into water as they ride into a ford of a river in pursuit. But as the treacherous water deepens, the deceptive riverbed gives way to trap those lithesome hoofs. He pitches forward and is thrown from the saddle into the river deep. His monstrous quarry, driven by its vermin instincts, turns around and dives into the waters in a vengeful attack. As they tumble through the fast-flowing river, embraced in combat, they are swept up into an irresistible vortex which launches them both over the cliff of a misty waterfall. He cries out as he falls with his arms flailing, grasping naught but thin air.

Presently, he lurches out of his bed with a sinking feeling in his stomach, drenched in cold sweat but otherwise firmly planted on the ground. He was dreaming. There was a lamp with a steady flame burning by his bed and an old man with a weathered but serene face, reclining on a chair by the bed. The old man was keenly observing him with ineffably deep eyes. Having slowly taken in his surroundings, he asked the old man, “Who am I? Why don’t I recollect anything?” Quoth the old man:

Crossing the river Lethe which carried thou thither
Through lands of oblivion from out yonder
Nursed back to health though mortally wounded
Seemingly wholesome yet memory beclouded

Standing upright, his stature filling the small thatched hut, he asked, “What would you have me call myself? Chandra, it seems is befitting as this night in which I awoke is adorned in full by Deus Lunus herself.” The old man said nothing. Chandra stooped to look at himself in a small mirror on the wall and lurched in horror. “Maimed is my face beyond recognition! Henceforth my face shall remain covered lest the unwary should catch this ill-disposed look.

“THY KINGDOM COME”

Alas, that this body should be saved, feel the strength of a thousand men and yet recollect not who it serves.” With the irony of his fate weighing on his heart, Chandra bid farewell to the old man and walked out into the night in search of answers.

Chandra walked with no definite purpose as his mind raced with bewildering thoughts, yet his feet seemed to tread with certainty as if from some unconscious remembrance. As day broke on the horizon, Chandra finally reached a magnificent city built around a majestic fort with four layers of walls in which stood a sprawling and splendid palace. As his towering frame entered the streets, people in his path quietly shrunk away as if in fear and reverence. The city was clean and nobody was in want of basic needs. And yet there was a pall of despair that seemed to hang over the populace. As Chandra approached one of the ramparts of the outer wall which had nine separate entrances, he stooped low and melted into a caravan of merchants entering the fort with precious merchandise from foreign lands. Inside the fort there was much fanfare that seemed to be centered around a colosseum from which the characteristic din of a large crowd was emanating in alternating waves of cheers and groans as it followed the fortunes of the game afoot.

There was, however, a relatively quiet backstage entrance where a few men of obvious physical prowess were somberly mulling about. As Chandra approached them, a few guards emerging from the entrance accosted the group and authoritatively one of the guards said, “You folks are up next.” Chandra was ushered into the arena with the rest of the ragtag group and found himself face-to-face with a platoon of imperial knights, ready for battle. The announcer thundered over the murmur of the crowd, “Is there a general among you that can lead the imperial armies? Then win over the highest order of knights and claim your title. Let the games begin!” The knights readied their respective weapons in unison and moved into an attack formation as the crowd erupted in excitement. Every nerve and sinew in Chandra’s body suddenly came alive. Standing tall, he took charge of his motley crew and barked orders to his

“THY KINGDOM COME”

bewildered men. Each one picked up his weapon of choice and instinctively followed Chandra’s orders. Chandra strategically organized them into an offensive formation and commanded his men to attack before the opponent could make their first move. This caught the knights completely by surprise. As they hurriedly tried to reorganize themselves into a defensive formation, Chandra’s unit crashed into them and their forward ranks were penetrated. After a brief melee, Chandra’s unit overpowered the platoon and its leader surrendered under Chandra’s sword. A hush descended over the dumbfounded crowd. The king arose from his imperial box and signalled meaningfully to the guards.

A full battalion of guards surrounded the arena and Chandra was led away to the king’s palace. On the way, Chandra learnt from one of the guards that based on an old man’s prophecy, the king had instituted these games to find the next general for his army ever since the last one was executed for betrayal. And this was the first time that anyone had won the game, let alone survive it. As Chandra entered, the king silently surveyed him with keen eyes. Chandra wore a turban and covered his face with a cloth so only his eyes were seen. The king cautiously asked, somewhat taken aback by his apparent insolence, “Why do you cover your face so?” “For it is maimed beyond recognition, sire,” replied Chandra. “Faceless as you may be, you have yet proven yourself to be the best suited in all lands to lead my armies! Will you prove the prophecy true and swear your allegiance to me?” asked the king. “Unto death, my lord” replied Chandra, genuflecting with his head bowed low. Chandra’s mind may have lost its memory but his very being exuded marshal spirit, which had finally found expression in this new-found purpose.

The king’s hitherto headless army, in shambles since the last general’s execution, found renewed vigour under Chandra’s guidance. In him, they saw a fearless leader for whom the *Yamapasha* was as a trophy necklace and Yama himself an old friend and a liberating angel. The king quickly used his newfound power to quell an internal rebellion against his rule and launched his

“THY KINGDOM COME”

expansionist agenda. None could contend with the army that marched as if the bell tolls not for them, for they, along with their leader it seemed, had all died before their death. Mighty armies fell before this indomitable force that the king’s ambition wielded to subdue both foe and friend alike. Chandra, the heir to Elysium, was vaulted to the status of a demi-god and worshipped as such by the people. And yet he neither rejoiced nor partook in the spoils of war. While his body fought on, driven by its innate marshal nature, his heart was slowly awakening to the sorrow of his existence. In reality, he was a nameless, faceless, purposeless brute energy over which he was himself not sovereign. Yet society’s adulation and the honour of his position smothered over the disputations of his heart. One day when Chandra was marching back with his army from one of his successful campaigns, he sought refuge in the solitude of a river bank to reflect on the burgeoning inner battle between his head and his heart. And there he caught sight of the old man who was curiously tending to a seemingly wild plant that had recently taken root on the banks of the river. Chandra smiled, rode up to the old man and said from aloft his proud steed, “Say old man, you will be glad to hear that I now know who I am and who I serve—my fealty is to *my* king, *our* king!” The old man looked up at Chandra with those ineffably deep eyes and quoth in response:

What knowest thou that knowest not thyself?
Borrowed knowledge is but wretched pelf.
When to thyself thou doth not belong,
Misery thou wreakes, so this misery can prolong.
Feelest not thou, pangs in thy heart?
Like fate in some lore that rends love apart.
For in every victory thou sense self-defeat,
As to ash does turn gratifications surfeit.

Chandra laughed and said with a sneer, “I’ll let you tend to your wild plant, old man while I go tend to matters perhaps a sliver more important.” He rode away not knowing that this would be the last laugh, smile or even a tranquil thought that he would experience.

“THY KINGDOM COME”

From that day, Chandra grew more distant and forlorn even as his army continued their momentum through sheer inertia. He preferred to be in solitude and any emergent issue that intruded upon his reminiscence was dismissed with fury. But time is wont to devour imminently those of his progeny that are least vigilant. And just as a garden without a gardener goes to seed, without Chandra’s ennobling and electrifying impulse, his men slowly fell into evil ways. They terrorized, preyed on the weak and progressively fell into debauchery and malice. The king, having used Chandra to achieve all his military ambition, started to see him as a liability and an ever-present threat to his power. The king plotted to spark ambition within Chandra’s top ranks who promptly turned against him in a bid to gain power. False charges of treachery were hoisted against him and he was forthwith banished from the king’s land under the pain of death.

(To be continued)

Time is endless in thy hands, my lord.
There is none to count thy minutes.
Days and nights pass and ages bloom and fade like flowers.
Thou knowest how to wait.
Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild
flower.
We have no time to lose,
and having no time we must scramble for a chance.
We are too poor to be late.
And thus it is that time goes by
while I give it to every querulous man who claims it,
and thine altar is empty of all offerings to the last.
At the end of the day I hasten in fear lest thy gate be shut;
but I find that yet there is time.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE
“Endless Time”

OUR IDEALS

When once it has been recognised that, in specifically human life, the primacy naturally belongs not to the personality, but to the Reason, there is nothing superhuman in following the *natural* law of human life and both regarding and using as a *tool* what *is* a mere tool of the true life—the personality. . . . But it may be asked: Why then do we have a personality if we are to renounce it, deny it? In order that the personality, like any tool, may serve *merely* as a means to an end—other answer there is none. The personality is nothing but the “spade,” that is given to the reasoning being to be dug with, to be blunted in that digging and then sharpened again, to be used up, but not to be cleaned and stored away. To *use* a tool as a tool is not to *deny* it, but simply to make it serve its proper purpose, *i.e.*, Reason.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY (*Lucifer*, September 1890)

MAN assumes the nature of his ideal: his mind is coloured, heart saturated, and destiny shaped in conformance to it. Our ideal—mostly unknown to and unfathomed by us—forces us to grow in its image with an increasing sense of compulsion. The longer we hold and the stronger we cherish it, the more it consumes our very being. It is the repeated recollection of an idea, whether consciously or not, that *dyes* the soul of man.

This being the case, it becomes imperative for us to examine our ideals, and determine if they are truly worthy of our life and energy. We can examine our heart, and see what inspires us, what attracts our attention: they are our ideals. More often than not, our ideals are personal in character, and focussed on transient worldly things.

These “lower ideals”—if we may call them so—are peculiar. They attract us unremittingly, take hold of our mind, demand our obedience, so much so that we unquestioningly devote our lives to their fulfilment. They *promise* contentment, peace and happiness right around the corner, when that *one thing more* is achieved. Yet, when achieved, they turn out to be not only unsatisfactory—as one

OUR IDEALS

who has accomplished any degree of earthly wealth or fame can attest—but what is more, they turn out to be prolific seeds of discomfort and pain. The experience is similar to the pain of one who worked long and hard for many years, only to find that he was rewarded in counterfeit currency, after all.

Can man escape this deception? How can he earn in a true currency (*i.e.*, experience genuine satisfaction), how can he safeguard the happiness so painstakingly acquired, and halt the flow of time and extinguish the engine of change? The answer, it appears, lies not so much in attempting the impossible, as it lies in examining the *nature* of our current ideals and replacing them with imperishable ones. It is worth the effort to investigate what, if any, are these imperishable ideals, which supposedly reward man with permanent peace and inextinguishable happiness.

The result of this investigation points to the *duality* of man himself. There are two distinct and opposing Centres in man, each of which present to him a *contrary* vision of himself. The personal, evanescent centre—that which we so endearingly identify as “I”—projects the ever-shifting, ephemeral ideals, *mayavic* in nature. If his focus is but himself alone, the unfortunate man fails to see the grand destiny that awaits him. He may (or may not) achieve wealth and status in the world, but he finds them turning to dust and ashes in his mouth, like the fabled Dead-Sea Fruit.

He must pause and look within his being, and identify the Changeless as opposed to the ephemeral; the Compassionate as opposed to the conflicting; the Loving in contrast to the lusting. The conflict between the vision of this higher “I” and the pigeonhole sight of the lower “I” is given as a dialogue by Count Leo Tolstoy, a portion of which is worth considering:

It is as if there were two “I’s” in man; it is as if they could never live in peace together; it is as if they were eternally struggling, and ever trying to expel each other.

One “I” says, “I alone am living as one should live, all the rest only seems to live. Therefore, the whole *raison d’etre* for the universe is in that *I* may be made comfortable.”

OUR IDEALS

The other “I” replies, “The universe is not for thee at all, but for its own aims and purposes, and it cares little to know whether thou art happy or unhappy....”

Life becomes a dreadful thing after this!

One “I” says, “I want to live, to live forever.”

And that the other “I” replies, “Thou shalt surely, perhaps in a few minutes, die; as also shall die all those thou lovest, for thou and they are destroying with every motion your lives, and thus approaching ever nearer suffering, death, all that which thou so hatest, and which thou fearest above anything else.”

Commenting on the above dilemma, H.P.B. writes:

To change this situation is impossible. There remains but one thing to do, and that is always done by him who, beginning to live, *transfers his objects in life outside of himself, and aims to reach them.* . . . But, however far he places them outside his personality, as his mind gets clearer, none of these objects will satisfy him. [Italics added] (“The Science of Life”: *H.P.B. Series No. 14*, pp. 36-37)

Hence, man need not despair about his condition, and feel perennially cheated for his efforts, since there is an alternative available. It presents to him a universal and noble ideal of Unity which transcends selfishness, of Divinity which overcomes transience. If his mental horizon expands beyond his temporary reflection on earth (*i.e.*, what we fondly identify as “I”); if his vision soars higher; then, he can seize his divine Destiny and engage in that work which only “fortune’s favoured soldiers obtain.”

This destiny is not a jealous possession of the select few of any nation or religion, but is the divine heritage (as well as bounden duty) of every speck and atom in the Universe. In the meanest creature as well as the mightiest power, in the degraded sinner as well as the noblest Saint, the *same Light* shines. As the *Shabad* of the Sikh Gurus say, “*Ek Noor te sab jag upja; kaun bhaley, kaun mandey?*”—Since the Universe arises in the One Light, who do you name as good and whom can you brand as Evil?”

Whether the parent source is called *Brahman* of Upanishads, the Heavenly Man of Kabbalah, the Father in Heaven of Christ, or

OUR IDEALS

the Beloved of the Sufis, makes no difference. Since the divine potential in each of us is the same it is an error of judgement to condemn any man as a hopeless criminal, a sinner beyond redemption, one who can never redeem himself.

It is this identity of every Soul with its parent Divine Fire which presents to it the highest Ideal—the Vision of its oneness with every other soul. This ideal is not something *acquired* through ideas, but is burnt into the nature of the soul. All ethics as well as the sense of justice takes birth in this matrix of interdependence, the web of reality. The innate devotion towards its Parent Soul, and the aspiration for Union with All, are indestructibly imprinted in our very selves.

The more we dwell upon the spiritual and moral, the more compelling it becomes, and gradually gaining strength, they overcome the lesser illusionary ideals. The material and the personal may appear the most real and compulsory, yet they are but empty shows, “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,” since Man, after all, is Immortal in essence. The mind needs constant study of these ideas, and aspiration of the heart, to set us back “on track”—the track which our own nature marked out for us. Life after life, our inner Self takes up body after body, with the singular purpose of realising its Oneness with all other sentient beings. This is its (*i.e.*, *Our*) eternal and spiritual Ideal.

Such an aspiration towards the Spiritual is generally mistaken to be an outward renunciation of the material world. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Sarahapâda, the great Tibetan *Mahasiddha*, could not overcome the lingering desire for a simple radish soup even after decades of contemplation. He was advised to give up the folly of forsaking objects outwardly, and take up the real practice: inner relinquishment, even while using the material objects for their intended purposes. Then, the lower finds its appropriate place, being made subservient to the Higher.

It is our choices...that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.

—J. K. ROWLING

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

KARMA—I

TODAY must bring its Karma through and by which we live and learn to love and teach; so let us be thankful to the Blessed Law. Its infallible, impersonal attentiveness to remove crookedness and restore harmony is a mighty lesson for all of us. People pray to some personal god while they should make a right appeal in the right way to this all-seeing, all attentive Law which is not blind but is Supreme Intelligence itself.

The New Year is in and what will it bring? Whatever comes will be for the best, for we shall make or mar it. The Master is Atman and also Karma, Judge says. He adds that the Master is in every phase of our changing days and years. If we use the power to fight and to wage war against weaknesses and also unfold by the use of the power to grow, we can say that our merits and demerits from the past are provided as Karma by the Master. It is the highest view of Karma and *The Bhagavad-Gita* teaches it in the last chapter. It is difficult to comprehend that our dislikes and hates, our wrong tendencies of Karma, are “gifts” from the Master, but a feeling is growing in and with me that that is so. Are we sincere and consistent fighters? That is the big question. What determines that sincerity and constant and consistent fighting? Memory—it seems to me. Remembering to fight is more than half the battle. “Haply to remember and haply to forget” will not do. We must remember and remember and again remember. Remembering to fight sets us seeking the how of the fighting—seeking knowledge.

Our Karma, *i.e.*, Karma of every devoted disciple, is a gift from the gracious Guru. “The Guru is Karma,” says Judge. What does he imply? When a devotee surrenders himself to the service of his Master, he surrenders his Karma—the whole assemblage of it from the past. In each incarnation we ordinarily bring with us so much of Karma. When a devotee surrenders himself, the apportioning of Karma is, so to speak, looked after by his Guru. Whatever comes is

right—“just what you in fact desired,” says Judge. Through each Karma we learn; even the evil Karma turns to brightness through our suffering or what not.

Every earnest devotee has to train himself in the art of *using* Karma. Not to chafe but to fulfil; not to indulge in self-pity but to maintain a cheerful attitude to pains and ills; this implies and entails the cultivation of several *Paramitas*. To forget is a more difficult undertaking than to forgive. Memory has to be trained to remember to live the truths, to apply the teachings. We forget to remember. On the other hand, how absurd and ludicrous even are the bits of memory which spring up and impinge upon us! The causal power, it seems to me, is the Great Remembrance that the Master is Karma. The constancy in the Presence of the Guru in every hour, as we breathe, has to be remembered. Half our difficulties will be over if *this* is not forgotten, but remembered. It is also *the* test of our devotion of the Master. “Put no one out of your heart” is of profound significance. Where we are weak is in the mental remembrance and in the silent repetition of the sacred texts. This implies ideation. Your practice will increase and expand if it proceeds from the depth of the Thinker in the body. Feeling love as an abstraction for all and everyone cannot precede love for soul-companions in a concrete way.

I am sorry to note that you find the place uncongenial, but the very fact that Karma has brought you to this particular type of environment means that it is an opportunity. Mr. Judge once wrote to a person who was not given to doing business, that he should mortify himself and learn because presently he would find himself in a situation where Theosophical office work would need his capabilities. Everything can be turned to use if you have the right attitude to your existing environment.

If we take what Karma brings with the right kind of Resignation, and work with the Law, every event will become an opportunity. If circumstances have worked to take you to the South, you might be able to do something there. Wherever a devotee is, there a Theosophical Centre verily is. If you read at this juncture

W. Q. Judge's article "Each Member a Centre," you will find inspiration if you make it applicable to yourself.

You need not worry about the uncongenial atmosphere in which you find yourself because in reality once we understand Theosophy, there is no such place. I understand what you mean, _____ is a big city and you are doing an important piece of work though it is also the earning of your livelihood; but H.P.B. has written in the First of her *Five Messages* that each one, if he orients himself in the right way in spiritual matters, can draw to himself those whom he can benefit. Mr. Judge has also written that each member is a centre of light and life and should become so by self-examination and assuming a firm position in regard to life. You know enough of Theosophy in order to have a clear perception that by studying the great philosophy and working on your self you will be able to derive more than mere sustenance. You will be able to secure from the philosophy the strength to help others through correspondence and conversation.

The Good Law provides for everything if we work with it. All our progress depends on the extent we work with the Law. We learn Patience and Resignation of the right kind and become possessors of ingenuity, learning to turn forces of obstacles and evil into experiences and good.

(To be concluded)

NONE of us, I am sure, knows what is the pain of hunger, but one day I learned it from a little child. I found the child in the street and I saw in her face that terrible hunger that I have seen in many eyes. Without questioning her, I gave her a piece of bread, and then I saw that the little child was eating the bread crumb by crumb. And I said to her, "Eat the bread." And that little one looked at me and said, "I am afraid because when the bread is finished, I will be hungry again."

—MOTHER TERESA

SAINT EKNATH—LIFE AND TEACHINGS

III

SAINT EKNATH after the manner of Saint Jnaneshwar was expounding the *Bhagavatam* in Marathi language. When four chapters of the book were completed, one of the disciples of Eknath who was writing it all down, left for Kashi, a sacred city in India. On reaching Kashi, he sat at Manikarnika Ghat and began to read these chapters aloud, attracting large crowds. Although the people were not acquainted with Marathi language, they listened, as he went on translating for them in the northern Prakrit. Some disciples who happened to hear it, reported this to their Guru, who sent for Eknath's disciple and abused him for vulgarising the holy scriptures and threatened to fix his Guru as well.

The disciple was frightened and confessed that his Guru, a realised soul, who lives in Paithan, has translated the scriptures in Marathi so that ordinary people may understand. The Sadhu at Kashi writes a letter to Eknath asking him to come to Kashi. Eknath, who has completed expounding in Marathi the fifth chapter of the *Bhagavatam*, arrives at Kashi bringing the fifth chapter with him. When Eknath reaches Kashi, the people there are elated at the sight of his noble and peaceful countenance. However, the Sadhu there treats him like an outcaste and talks to him only through a curtain. He says, "Whoever writes and propagates the scriptures in Prakrit [other than Sanskrit] is an outlaw to my mind.... You have insulted the language of the Gods!" Then Eknath puts forward his own point of view. He says that he does not think he has defiled the scripture in any way, but in fact made an attempt to convey to people the import and beauty of *Bhagavatam* by translating it in the language they know. He adds: "If you find in this work any faulty translation or any mistake and confusion of meaning, I shall forthwith drown this whole work in Ganga. But please listen to it and apply the test carefully."

Eknath is then allowed to read his work. Tears came to the eyes

of the listeners, who felt uplifted into the realm of pure devotion. The Sadhu too, felt moved and embraced Eknath. Several wise ones at Kashi request Eknath to stay with them and complete the readings of the *Bhagavatam*. Eknath agrees and resides at Kashi for one year. The Sadhus are extremely pleased and wish to honour Eknath by taking out a procession through Kashi, with Eknath riding an elephant. Eknath, in all humility, declines the proposal but instead asks to take his book in procession. According to his wishes they take out a magnificent procession. (*Saints of Maharashtra*, pp. 119-122)

Eknath may be seen as a unique blend of a sincere devotee and a *Jnani* (wise man). Eknath's whole life was a living example of the intrinsic goodness of the soul as applied through his actions and sayings to circumstances or his relations with others. Following the example of his ideal, Jnaneshwar, Eknath embraced “*jala-samadhi*” (water *samadhi*) in the sacred Godavari River in the year 1599 A.D. According to some accounts of his life story, on the fifth day of the second fortnight of the lunar month of Phalgun, Eknath found himself very indisposed. He conveyed to his servant that “tomorrow is the sixth day. I am going to die by entering the waters of Godavari River, by way of trance.” The next day a procession called “Dindi” started and all people in that procession reached river Godavari. Eknath did the last performance of *Kirtan* (singing devotional songs) in his life, on the sands of Godavari. People asked him, “When will you come again?” Eknath answered them in the poetic form of *Abhanga*, thus: “When the path of religion is not followed, when non-religiousness increases, then we come down in this world. When many heretics with their selfish deeds abound in the world, we will destroy their faces with the weapon of worship of Hari.” After Eknath had entered the stream of the river, his body came to the surface of the water. Then his son, Hari Pandit, performed the last rites and a structure (*Samadhi*) was constructed there in memory of Eknath.

In this form of voluntary death, the decision to end life is an outward expression of inward detachment. *Light on the Path*

mentions that a person in whom crude wish to live and to experience pain and pleasure has departed, he takes up the body only in pursuit of divine object, to accomplish the work of “the Masters.” Once the object for which the birth was taken is accomplished, such a person can withdraw his “will to live” and thus leave the body. Such a soul returns only when humanity needs right help and knowledge, as indicated by Eknath in his poetic answer to the people.

Saint Eknath lived in the sixteenth century. He is considered to be an important link between Saint Jnaneshwar, in the thirteenth century, and Saint Tukaram in the seventeenth century. The society at that time was full of superstition, corruption and an oppressive caste system. The devotional or *bhakti* movement emphasized by Eknath and his Guru helped to make spiritual life accessible to large sections of people, the outcastes, who could not carry out religious observances without the help of the priests.

Eknath wrote a scholarly and lucid commentary known as *Eknathi Bhagavat*. It is a commentary on the Eleventh Canto of the Hindu religious text in Sanskrit language called *Bhagavatam* or *Bhagavat Purana*. The majority of his writings are in verse form in Marathi language. He also wrote *Bhavarth Ramayana*, which is a variation of the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. He wrote the first twenty-five thousand *owees* (metrical stanzas) of the *Bhavarth Ramayana*. It was his disciple called Gavba or Gaoba who added fifteen thousand *owees* to complete the work. It is said that Eknath was inspired to write a Marathi version of *Ramayana* by Lord Rama himself. One night, as Eknath was asleep, Lord Rama came to him in a dream and said to him that since *Ramayana* composed by Rishi Valmiki was in Sanskrit language, its deep meaning is not understood by people. “Therefore, make its commentary in Marathi and give its contents to men.” Eknath began with *Bal-kand*, the chapter dealing with Rama’s birth and childhood. “Praying to the saints and good people Eknath began his book. With good devotion he did the composition, therefore it was called the *Bhavartha Ramayana*. Shri Raghunath (Rama) sitting upon his lips caused him rightly to

compose the book. Eknath became a mere instrument which all His holy *bhaktas* [devotees] know.” (*Stories of Indian Saints*, pp. 166-67)

When Eknath was composing *Bhavartha Ramayana*, he was of advanced age. In this treatise he has endeavoured to explain the spiritual meaning of all that happened during Lord Rama’s life by interpreting the symbology. He would read aloud and explain it to listeners in the temple. A woman sent her dull and good-for-nothing son, named Gaoba, to Eknath’s house. The son was promised that in that place he would get to eat, every day, a “Puran Poli” (a delicate round bread stuffed with sweetened paste of gram pulse). Eknath agreed that the boy would get to eat this sweet delicacy provided he would attentively listen to *Bhavartha Ramayana* which was expounded daily. Gaoba began listening to the exposition. When Eknath had finished expounding Ramayana till *Yuddha-kand* or the chapter that describes the battle between Lord Rama and Ravana, he told his disciples that his time to go had come near. According to one version of the story, when the disciples asked, “Who will complete the *Bhavartha Ramayana*?” Eknath answered that it will be completed by Gaoba, who was also called “Puran Polya.” Eknath put his hand on Gaoba’s head and blessed him. He would recite metrical stanzas after Eknath passed away. The listeners felt that Eknath himself was speaking through the voice of Gaoba.

In spiritual progress there is something like becoming a mediator or a channel, in the highest and positive sense, of the higher, spiritual influences. A chela learns to become a *conscious and active* receiver, throwing his mind into *receptive passivity* while receiving a message from the Master or Teacher. Shri B. P. Wadia suggests that every earnest and devoted student-aspirant must strive towards becoming mediators. “A thread of glass cannot conduct the electric fluid, but a copper wire can. Each student has to find out for himself those particular wires within him which act as conductors for spiritual influences.” When a group of student-aspirants are united, a divine atmosphere overspreads the group, and the nobler part of each one’s

nature is aroused and exercised. (*The Theosophical Movement*, September 1953)

Saint Eknath has written a beautiful commentary on *Hastamalaka Stotram* that is based on the conversation between a small boy and Adi Shankaracharya, covered in fourteen slokas or verses. The story goes that when Shankaracharya was wandering in order to propagate his vision regarding non-dualism, he visited a village named Sri Bali. In that village lived the Brahmins who performed Yajnas (sacrifices) daily. Among them was a learned Brahmin named Prabhakara, who was wealthy and respected by all. However, his only son behaved like a dumb and foolish person. When he heard that Shankaracharya was visiting their village he took his son to meet him, in the hope that his blessings might cure his son and make him a normal, intelligent boy. On meeting Shankaracharya the father told him that his son was seven years old but he was quite undeveloped mentally. Then Shankaracharya asked him: “O child, who are you? Whose child are you? Where are you going? What is your name? From where have you come? I should like to hear your reply to these questions, for the sake of my love, since you ever increase my love.” The boy answered, “I am neither man, God, *yaksha* (semi-celestial being), *Brahmin*, *Kshtriya*, *Vaishya*, *Shudra* (*i.e.*, he did not belong to any of the four castes), a *brahmachari* (celibate), a student, a householder, a forest-dweller, nor a *Sannyasi* (mendicant). I am pure awareness or of the nature of Self-knowledge.” After that he expounded the essence of all the Upanishads in twelve verses which came to be known as “*Hastamalaka Stotram*.” Since that day he was given the name “Hastamalaka” because the knowledge of *Atman* or Self was as clear to him as an “amalaka” fruit (gooseberry) in one’s palm. Shankaracharya took the boy with him, who became his disciple. It is said that Hastamalaka had given the same response as Shankaracharya had given to his Guru Govindpad.

Later, Shankaracharya tells his other disciples how Hastamalaka had come to acquire self-knowledge at a very young age. One day

a woman, carrying a two-year-old child with her, went to a riverbank to take a bath. She saw an advanced being, a *Sannyasi* sitting at the riverbank. She requested him to take care of her child till she returned from her bath. The child accidentally fell into the river when the *Sannyasi* was lost in deep meditation. On returning back, the mother found that her child had died. She cried bitterly. The *Sannyasi* was moved to see the grieving mother. He used his Yogic power and entered the body of the child. The child revived and was suddenly found to possess self-knowledge.

We may perhaps understand it in the light of the concept of the “borrowed body.” The students of Theosophy are aware that William Judge, the co-founder of the Theosophical Society in 1875, is said to have been an advanced soul using a borrowed body. Mr. Crosbie observes that there is such a thing as an Ego leaving a body intact and inhabitable, and another Ego, by agreement on higher planes, using that deserted body. If we knew anything about the occult laws governing the entrance and the exit of the egos from the body, we would understand that the ego thus entering into a borrowed body would necessarily be a highly developed being. The life of Mr. Judge shows that a boy, William Judge, born to Irish parents, Mary and Fredrick Judge, died at the age of seven and then suddenly revived. After this the boy began to show interest in mystical subjects, and he would be found engrossed in reading books on Mesmerism, Magic, Religion, trying to discover their real meaning. Thus, a radical transformation was seen in an ordinary boy, on account of an advanced soul occupying his body.

Shankaracharya was so impressed by the depth of twelve verses, uttered by Hastamalaka, which elaborate on the nature of the Self and Self-knowledge that he wrote commentary on the same.

(To be continued)

DESPAIR AND SELF-RELIANCE

DESPAIR is one of the greatest of retarders of progress; it produces a kind of paralysis of the whole moral being, so that hope and help come neither from within nor from without. Once upon us, it can only be conquered by understanding, and understanding is usually bought at the price of suffering.

A virtue is not a dead thing, not a matter of outer practice only. To be virtuous merely in outer actions, even apparently disinterestedly so, is hypocrisy. A true virtue springs from the inner nature and spontaneously expresses itself in action. The expression is unforced, perhaps unnoticed; we are often unconscious of our own true virtues. Yet, when we practise self-reliance and lay down rules and practices for ourselves to follow, we find that living virtue is not at our beck and call. We find then that we have, not virtues, but a hardness, an inflexible rigidity of mind, which is a prison made of hidden vices. How has this happened?

Darkness and light coexist in man. Without the darkness the light could not manifest itself; without the personality the spirit could not manifest itself. The personality is the vehicle of light. The second, spiritual birth brings rest to the soul and virtue to the personality. The light redeems the darkness of the personality. The light is born in man through faith. The faith which redeems the personality is a directing of the desire and will towards the nature of the light, towards a universal and compassionate Saviour which is found within and outside the man. Its nature is love and gentleness and peace.

To have faith in the light is to rely on the Self, which can overcome the despair brought about by reliance on the petty self. Even in the moment of greatest despair, we can lift our reliance from the self and cry for help and guidance to the Self; this cry is true prayer and that prayer will be answered; for as one's faith is, so one receives. Faith is the *Tao*, the Path. "And Jesus said unto them...If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (*Matthew 17:20-21*)

MIRACLES

THE essence of H.P.B.'s first book, *Isis Unveiled*, published in 1877, and subtitled "A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology," is contained in the Ten Fundamental Propositions of Psychology. One of the central ideas of the book is that there is no such thing as a miracle. There must be some deep reasons why H.P.B. first struck this note. H.P.B. is our Guru for this cycle, and the function of the Guru, it is said, "is to readjust, and not to pour in vast masses of knowledge." Let us see what H.P.B. has said to readjust our minds on this subject of miracles.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, she writes: "How can you ever expect good results, while you pervert the reasoning faculty of your children by bidding them believe in the miracles of the Bible on Sunday, while for the six other days of the week you teach them that such things are scientifically impossible?"

True to its discipline, science cannot accept something which cannot be scientifically accounted for. Christian theology posits, first, the idea of "divine revelation," and, secondly, the constant interference of "God" in human affairs.

The psychological implications of unquestioned acceptance of "miracles" are numerous and unsuspected. Though the student of Theosophy rejects the idea, he is not always fully aware of the subtle ways in which that old belief affects his thinking.

Curiously enough, the believer in miracles tacitly admits an orderly working of things; if not, how could he speak of miracles, which imply occurrences remote from the usual pattern of life? Another queer thing is that, if "God" is behind everything, then did he make some sort of mistake initially that needs subsequent correction? Or does he want to impress his "poor wretched creatures" with his might and power? A king or prince on earth would be despised if he tried to do that. By distorting the idea of God, by refusing to think and to use his natural gifts, man has generated the misery of his life. Far from being on the way to becoming divine,

MIRACLES

he is sometimes not even human, but descends to the level of the animal. But man is not the creature of a day. There is the age-old conflict between the inherent ideas burnt into the Soul of infant humanity and the false notions impressed upon man's mind by the various "leaders" of the day. He cannot be at peace with himself as long as he is torn between his innate sense of justice, of the divine fitness of things, and the idea of being born with a sinful nature, an idea which spells injustice. As long as man believes himself to have been born in sin, he is unable to fight and conquer alone; hence he is asked to believe in the necessity of "divine intervention" to redeem him. That is thought to be the greatest of all "miracles." "God" is appealed to, to take off our shoulders our too heavy burdens, to alleviate our ills, to produce rain, to stop natural calamities, and to do this and that *ad infinitum*.

How much more soul-satisfying is Theosophy! H.P.B. spoke, wrote and lived as one who knew, as an Initiate. Her writings are clear, concise, unequivocal; they are the teachings of the Soul, the life-giving waters of Ageless Wisdom.

H.P.B. agrees with modern science when she writes: "There is no miracle." But the limitation of science lies in this, that it "ignores the fact that there were laws once 'known,' now unknown" to it. We know that the knowledge of science is constantly changing. But H.P.B. went further and outlined the difference between modern and occult science. It is true that our forefathers, if they could see some of our modern gadgets and discoveries, might call them "miracles"; but, unless the invisible aspect of Nature is recognized, will the path followed by science today enable it to understand occult phenomena?

More than hints are given to us in the second and third of the Ten Items from *Isis Unveiled*. On page 635 of Vol. II of the same work we read: "*The trinity of nature is the lock of magic, the trinity of man the key that fits it.*" Magic is in no sense miraculous; it is spiritual Wisdom, and a magician in the true sense is a man made perfect. In the Fourth Item we read: "Magic, as a science, is the knowledge of

MIRACLES

these principles [of Nature and of Man] and of the way by which the omniscience and omnipotence of the spirit and its control over nature's forces may be acquired by the individual while still in the body." Man is a microcosm of the Macrocosm. There is a natural kinship between man and Nature. Man helps and is helped by Nature. It is said, "If the mineral kingdom did not have a psychic intelligence, men could never use it"; and also, "That which is but a spark in the lower kingdoms grows to be a flame in the higher beings." It is that inner side of Nature which remains to be understood by most scientific men, although today some of them suspect it.

Religion, on the other hand, though it calls "miracles" the work of God and of the host of saints, cannot ignore altogether certain psychic phenomena. These are ascribed to the devil or to those who minister to him. Hence the burning of witches and other persecutions of the Roman Church.

Man has power; he has also free will. Having acquired mastery over Nature's forces, he can either work with Nature and become a beneficent influence in the world, or work for his own selfish ends and become a Black Magician. There are forces of good and of evil in the Universe. H.P.B.'s *Isis Unveiled* gives instances after instances of the exercise of the white and the black arts. We can think of duality either in terms of white and black or of positive and negative; these two forces pervade manifestation and this is acknowledged in some respect by science. As applied to ourselves, the negative or passive is the surrender of our right to act like gods on earth, while the positive is the constant assertion of this birthright.

H.P.B. writes: "The medium is the passive instrument of foreign influences; the adept actively controls himself and all inferior potencies." This is thought provoking. As personalities, we have an imperative duty to our Ego and to all that lives. To gain knowledge, power and wisdom is our real job in life; that way alone can we fulfil our *dharma*. H.P.B., to whose life of love and self-sacrifice we can never be grateful enough, concludes her Ten Items by stating that "MAGIC is spiritual WISDOM; nature, the material ally, pupil and

MIRACLES

servant of the magician. One common vital principle pervades all things, and this is controllable by the perfected human will.”

Theosophy is true Wisdom; it is the magical path leading to the sanctuary of Nature’s secrets. But, says *The Voice of the Silence*, “Unsullied by the hand of matter, she shows her treasures only to the eye of Spirit—the eye which never closes, the eye for which there is no veil in all her kingdoms.”

Saint Augustine! well hast thou said,
That of our vices we can frame
A ladder, if we will but tread
Beneath our feet each deed of shame!
All common things, each day’s events,
That with the hour begin and end,
Our pleasures and our discontents,
Are rounds by which we may ascend.

* * * * *

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.
Standing on what too long we bore
With shoulders bent and downcast eyes,
We may discern—unseen before—
A path to higher destinies,
Nor deem the irrevocable Past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
To something nobler we attain.

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
“The Ladder of St. Augustine”

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The uncertainty principle, formulated by Nobel Prize winner Werner Heisenberg, states that one cannot know both the position and speed of a particle, with perfect accuracy. If we try to determine accurately the speed of a particle, the less certain we are about its position and *vice versa*. Thus, there is a trade-off or an act of balancing between two opposing things, speed and position. Though typically, this principle is relevant only to microscopic particles it can provide insights into understanding the universe and our relation to it.

The uncertainty principle conveys a very simple yet profound message that “it is okay if we do not have everything, or if we do not get everything right.” We must be able to accept the importance of trade-offs in life.

Economics is all about trade-offs. “We experience trade-offs in zero-sum situations when a plus in one situation is a negative in another.” Zero-sum game is a mathematical representation in economic theory of a situation involving two sides in which player one’s gain is equivalent to player two’s loss, with the result that the net improvement or benefit is zero. “Economics teaches us that making a choice means giving up something and how we can allocate scarce resources and negotiate opportunity costs. The choice between development and ecology is one classic example,” writes Ram Krishna Sinha.

However, many of us feel that if we work hard enough, we can get everything, as if trade-offs do not exist. For instance, when we confidently try to balance career advancement and family commitments, we often slip on both. It is important to recognize limitations of our physical and mental capacities and constraints of time, otherwise, “blindly using up our energies and overstretching our minds to chase perfection or success in all areas of our life can be emotionally draining and frustrating.” Hence, instead of trying to have everything, it is much wiser to “decide where to focus and channelise our time, energy and effort and which areas to ignore.”

The essence of trade-offs in our lives has been beautifully expressed by Urdu lyricist Nida Fazil, thus: “*Kabhi kisi ko mukammal Jahan nahin milta, Kahin zameen toh kahin aasmaan nahin milta,*” i.e., no one ever gets the entire universe, somewhere the earth and somewhere the sky is missing. Once we recognize that we can never quite keep everything in balance, it leads to calmness and contentment, which means “being happy with what we have, who we are and where we are,” writes Ram Krishna Sinha. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, June 1, 2023)

The act of balancing between two opposing things may be possible by setting our priorities and making adjustments and sacrifices. For instance, balancing home life and spiritual life requires one to adopt some few ascetic rules, but no one has a right to sacrifice the needs of friends or family members or perform spiritual duties at the expense of home duties. At one level, what is needed is wise apportioning of time, money and energy, and for that it is necessary that spiritual life should have become a *necessity* in one’s life. When we are so busy earning our living that no time is left for study of scriptures, or meditation then spiritual life has not become a *necessity*. When spiritual life becomes a necessity, we will have *upaya-kaushalya*, meaning “skilful means” guided by wisdom in order to make wise choices within a given situation. In a sense, cheerful and careful performance of family duties becomes part of the contribution to spiritual life. A Master of Wisdom writes: “Does it seem to you a small thing that the past year has been spent only in your ‘family duties’?” There is no better discipline than daily and hourly performance of duty.

On the other hand, when it comes to worldly and spiritual pleasures one of them has to take the back seat. The Buddha, the greatest psychologist of our age, asks us to surrender pleasures of little worth in order to secure deeper joy. By “deeper joy” he means “real joy” which is not dependent upon any object. Joys of this world are conditioned, transitory and depend upon external objects or beings. We must learn to give up joys of little worth in order to secure deeper joys.

In stating that it is impossible to measure both the particle's position and its speed, beyond a certain limit of accuracy, Heisenberg showed that the very act of observation affects that which is being observed. This applies to the Absolute Reality, God or *Parabrahm*. We cannot perceive God like we perceive everything else, because It is Itself the knower, and the knower cannot be the object of its own knowledge. To know It is to become It.

In rare cases, traumatic head injuries give rise to remarkable creative talents in victims. There are several examples of the same. There is the case of a person who asked his friend to toss him the football while he was standing above the shallow end of the swimming pool. When he tried to catch the ball, he splashed through the water and his head slammed into the pool's concrete floor. The doctors diagnosed a severe concussion. He suffered severe hearing loss in one ear, memory loss and headaches. A few days later when he visited his friend he spotted a piano in his house, and began to play. He had never played a piano before, nor had he the slightest inclination to, and yet his fingers seemed to find the keys by instinct. How was this possible? When he consulted Dr. Darold Treffert, an expert on savant syndrome, now retired from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine, he diagnosed him with acquired savant syndrome, a condition in which individuals who are typically mentally impaired demonstrate remarkable skills.

“In the 90 or so known cases, ordinary people who had suffered brain trauma suddenly developed what seemed like almost superhuman new abilities: artistic brilliance, mathematical mastery, photographic memory. Dr Treffert believes that our brains come with a wide array of ‘factory installed’ software—latent abilities that exist but that we sometimes don't have access to. The exact nature of an acquired savant's emergent abilities depends on the exact location of the injury. That explains the wide variation in both the range of abilities found in different individuals and their

manifestations.” However, some of them also have negative symptoms such as developing symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder such as, washing hands twenty times in an hour.

In another case, a head injury resulted in uncommon mathematical abilities, whereby he was seen sketching geometrical drawings, called fractals, being highly sophisticated visual representations of complex mathematical relationships. Dr. Bruce Miller who co-directs Memory and Aging Centre at San Francisco, treats elderly people with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia, had identified nearly thirteen patients who displayed unexpected talents, which included painting, as their neurological degeneration continued. He argues that “in the brains of dementia patients and some autistic savants, the lack of inhibition in areas associated with creativity led to keen artistic expression and an almost compulsive urge to create.” Neuroscientist and savant experts feel that unravelling the phenomenon of acquired savantism could one day enable all of us to explore our hidden talents, writes Adam Piore. (*Reader’s Digest*, December 2022)

We may get the Theosophical perspective on how head injuries can give rise to remarkable creative talents by referring to *The Friendly Philosopher* (p. 183) which mentions the case of a person who suffered brain injury and as a result he forgot his name. But after the brain injury he was able to play billiards, which he had not played before in his life. But neither forgetting his name, nor being able to play billiard changes the fact that he was the same man or the same person. At the level of the brain, one door was closed while another opened. Though he had not played billiards in that life, he must have done that in a previous life, and the brain injury made it possible to access that memory. Since the game of billiards is not very old, his previous life when he learnt billiards, also must be very recent. The point being made is that we have a large store of capacities, abilities, aptitudes and knowledge, of which only those find expression which are in line with the Karma brought by the Ego. Therefore, when old Karma or old karmic causes have been

exhausted, new Karma begins to operate, and then we see in that person, expression of new tastes, capacities and new desires. Here, there is no brain injury, but only new karmic causes operating. All that we are able to do in a given life is because we have either done it in this life or in some other life. No one can do anything which has not been related to one's experience in this life or in the past life. This is one of the meanings of the saying of Solomon, "There is nothing new under the sun."

In *Letters That Have Helped Me* (pp. 152-54) Mr. Judge observes that whether it is capacity, talent, aptitude or knowledge, we can express it in any given life provided its memory is brought back by the Ego and by the instrument, *i.e.*, cells of the body. When we are able to learn something or do something, it implies remembering something we had once learnt, and that in turn depends upon whether or not the cells or atoms of the body also carry the impressions of those experiences, besides the Ego.

According to the study published in the Geophysical Research Letters, "Earth's pole has drifted towards 64.16 degrees East at a speed of 4.36 centimetres per year during 1993-2010 due to groundwater depletion and resulting sea level rise." The reason for groundwater depletion is excess groundwater exploitation in India and U.S.A. which in turn has effectively affected Earth's spin. Based on new climate models, scientists have estimated that the drift in Earth's Pole has caused the Earth to tilt nearly 80 centimetres eastward. Though it is difficult to give an exact figure, the international team of researchers estimated that humans have pumped out 2,150 gigatons of groundwater, which is equivalent to more than 0.24 inches of sea level rise.

Ki-Weon Seo, a geophysicist at Seoul National University who led the study said that "Earth's rotational pole actually changes a lot," but among "climate-related causes, the redistribution of groundwater actually has the largest impact on the drift of the rotational pole."

In other words, the Earth's rotational pole, which is the point around which the Earth spins (the Earth's axis), moves a bit over time, the phenomenon is called polar motion. This means that the position of this rotational pole changes relative to the Earth's outer layer or the crust. As the water moves around on Earth, it can cause slight changes in how our planet spins. This is illustrated by the spinning top, which spins a little differently when you add a small weight to it.

“While the slight drifting of the pole will not have an impact on the seasons, researchers cautioned that over a longer geological period, it could have an impact on the climate.” (India Today Science Desk, June 19, 2023)

The axis of the Earth is an invisible line around which the Earth rotates or spins. The points on the surface of the Earth where the axis intersects the surface are its North and South Poles. Earth's axis is not perpendicular but has an axial tilt or obliquity. Axial tilt is the angle between the planet's rotational axis and its orbital axis. The orbital axis of the Earth is perpendicular to the ecliptic or orbital plane. The Earth's axial tilt is 23 ½ degrees, which causes the seasons. Throughout the year different parts of Earth receive the Sun's most direct rays. When the North Pole is nearer to the Sun, it is summer in the Northern Hemisphere. When the South Pole is nearer to the Sun, it is winter in the Northern Hemisphere.

Science has identified several factors that could contribute to axial tilt. “Anything from ocean currents, to shifting molten rock in the mantle, to the melting glaciers caused by climate change can lead to a shift in the distribution of mass across the globe and coax the axis to drift...Of the factors the study looked at, pumping groundwater was the second-largest contributor to the axis drifting, behind the melting Greenland ice sheet,” writes Will Sullivan. (*Smithsonian*, June 22, 2023)

Theosophy or occult philosophy attributes axial tilt and consequent results to “a *law* which acts at its appointed time, and not at all blindly, as science may think, but in strict accordance and

harmony with *Karmic* law. In Occultism this inexorable law is referred to as ‘the great ADJUSTER.’” H.P.B. observes that changes in the axial direction are always followed by climatic vicissitudes. Theosophy connects the axial disturbances with cataclysms as also disappearance of races of humanity and continents. “The Secret Doctrine teaches that, during this Round, there must be seven terrestrial *pralayas*, three occasioned by the change in the inclination of the earth’s axis,” which may be connected with destruction of the last three continents. (*S.D.*, II, 329)

Having completed our evolution in four Root Races, the humanity of our earth is now in the Fifth Root Race or Aryan Race. We are told that so far there have been four great cataclysms, supposed to mark the end of four Root Races, accompanied by disturbances in the axis of the earth. Since Vaivasvata Manu’s humanity appeared on this Earth, there have already been four axial disturbances, when old continents (except the first) submerged giving place to new ones and also huge mountain chains arose where there had been none before. (*S.D.*, II, 330)

Further, referring to the Puranas, H.P.B. writes that “it teaches distinctly that after the first geological disturbance in the Earth’s axis which ended in the sweeping down to the bottom of the Seas of the whole second Continent, with its primeval races...there came another disturbance by the axis resuming as rapidly its previous degree of inclination; when the Earth was indeed *raised once more* out of the Waters.” (*S.D.*, I, 369)

The Egyptian priests told Herodotus that “(a) The poles (polar axis) of the Earth and the Ecliptic had formerly coincided; and (b) That ever since their first Zodiacal records were commenced, the Poles have been three times within the plane of the Ecliptic, as the Initiates taught.” (*S.D.*, II, 368)

LET no man think he is loved by any when he loves none.

—EPICTETUS