

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THEOSOPHY AS SCIENCE

“SCIENCE is a way of life. Science is a perspective. Science is the process that takes us from confusion to understanding in a manner that is precise, predictive and reliable. To be able to think through and grasp explanations for everything is one of the most precious human experiences. Children begin life as uninhibited explorers of the unknown. We begin life as little scientists. But most of us quickly lose our intrinsic scientific passion,” says Brian Greene, professor of physics at Columbia University.

Theosophy is described as a synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy. Our age is the age of “discovery and facts.” Both Religion and Science are concerned with “facts” as against prejudice and fiction. “Science is...comprehension of every truth within the scope of human research and intelligence,” writes H.P.B.

“Science” is a term used in different ways, but etymologically derived from the Latin word “*scientia*,” connected with the verb “*scire*,” to know. Science, in the widest sense, encompasses every concept related to concrete or the abstract, the seen or the unseen world. Ordinarily the term is used to denote natural sciences or those fields of knowledge connected with the study of facts in nature observable by five senses. The scope of such knowledge is necessarily narrow. The field of scientific investigation is bounded by *physical nature*. Theosophy does not stop at physical realm but

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goes beyond and speaks of the existence of astral, psychic and spiritual realms. Theosophy propounds certain fundamental propositions of the Oriental Psychology, which describe both man and nature as being threefold. There is visible, objective nature; an invisible, indwelling, energizing nature which is the model for the physical; and above these two changing aspects is the *spirit*, which is the source of all forces and is unchanging. Similarly, man has physical body, within which is the astral body (or soul) but above these two is the *spirit*.

Science is identical with knowledge. Simple things like baking bread or washing clothes, are not only an art but can also be considered as science when we consider the rationale and step by step procedure required for performing these tasks. Thus, at a simple level, Science may be looked upon as useful knowledge, of how to do things methodically and efficiently. Theosophy as science encompasses knowledge that is much wider in scope and nature than that covered by what is ordinarily implied by “science,” which is mainly restricted to brain-consciousness. This knowledge is designated as head-learning or “Doctrine of the Eye.” It is the knowledge obtained by analysis, experiment and logical reasoning, going from premises to conclusions. If the premises are wrong the conclusions are bound to be wrong. Science deals only with phenomena (results), while Occult Science deals with noumena (causes). Science divides things into organic and inorganic. Theosophy, on the other hand, says that there are no hard and fast dividing lines between the “organic” and the “inorganic” or, between the “living” and “dead” matter. Everything that changes is organic. Every atom is endowed with intelligence and consciousness in its own degree and on its own plane of development. Occult doctrine teaches that life is present in the organic as in the inorganic matter; when the life-energy is active in an atom, that atom is organic; when dormant or latent, then the atom is inorganic.

The scientific nature of Theosophy becomes evident when we consider the source of theosophical knowledge. Theosophy as a

system of thought is synonymous with everlasting truth and is as old as the thinking man. These teachings are derived from the *Esoteric Philosophy* or WISDOM RELIGION. This WISDOM RELIGION is immemorial in time, universal as to space and is impersonal, *i.e.*, it is not the invention of any individual or individuals. This sacred body of knowledge was known only to a few elect among men in every age. They are called Adepts or Initiates. This knowledge is the result of observations made by these initiated sages and seers, of the workings of the laws of nature in every department and kingdom of nature—physical, psychic and spiritual. It was possible because the spiritual perceptions of these beings were so trained as to range beyond material limits, enabling them to penetrate into the actual reality of things. Mr. Judge says that these Adepts are the only true scientists because they take into account every factor, whereas modern or physical science is limited by brain power, imperfection of instruments and is unable to perceive anything deeper than at the physical level of matter.

This ancient doctrine has been transmitted from one generation of sages and seers to the next. This knowledge was orally transmitted from one race to the other up to the very beginning of the Fourth or Atlantean Race. But when some of these Atlanteans misused this knowledge bringing about cataclysm, most of them perished. Only a few wise men among them were saved and it is stated that they checked, tested and verified the knowledge in the laboratory of nature through spiritual visions. We know that the conclusions reached by one scientist in any branch of physical science are verified by other scientists, so also, it is stated that spiritual vision of one adept was corroborated by independent vision of other adepts. The vision of no one adept was taken as an established truth. The adepts of the Fifth (our) Race reduced these teachings to writing and wrote commentaries.

Theosophy is Divine knowledge or Science. It is the study of occult and sacred sciences. They are real, actual and dangerous sciences because they are concerned with secret potency of things

in Nature, and with development and cultivation of the hidden powers “latent in man.” The person who studies and develops these powers is an occultist. An occultist practises scientific Theosophy based on accurate knowledge of Nature’s secret workings. Theosophy is defined as true occultism or *Atma-vidya* or the knowledge of the Self, or *true Wisdom*. Among others, there are four Esoteric Sciences mentioned in the *Puranas*: (1) *Yajna-Vidya*, knowledge of the occult powers awakened in Nature by the performance of certain religious ceremonies and rites. (2) *Mahavidya*, the “great knowledge” or Tantrika worship. (3) *Guhya-Vidya*, knowledge of the mystic powers residing in Sound, *i.e.*, *Mantras* or chanted prayers or incantations. (4) *Atma-Vidya* or knowledge of the Self which includes all the Occult Sciences. Except *Atma-Vidya*, all the other occult sciences are based on the knowledge of the ultimate essence of things in various kingdoms of nature. Just as in physical sciences certain grounding in the “theory” is necessary before one can safely enter the laboratory and carry out the experiments, so also with occult sciences. To try to cultivate any branch of occult sciences without the knowledge of philosophical rationale of those powers is like launching a rudderless boat on a stormy ocean. It is like giving dynamite in the hands of a child. Many discoveries of modern science are raising the question of moral basis and of motive. Moral purity is even more important in the study of Occult Science.

What constitutes real man of learning—true and faithful servant of science? It is someone who has mastered general information on all things but is ever ready to learn more and does not hesitate in accepting his ignorance about certain things. When he finds that his theories were doubtful, he is willing to relinquish them, says H.P.B. Further:

For the sake of truth he will remain indifferent to the world’s opinion, and that of his colleagues, nor will he attempt to sacrifice the spirit of the doctrine to the dead-letter of a popular belief. Independent of man or party,

fearless whether he gets at logger-heads with biblical chronology, theological claims, or preconceived and in-rooted theories of materialistic science; acting in his researches in an entirely unprejudiced frame of mind; free from personal vanity and pride, he will investigate truth for her own fair sake, not to please this or that faction; nor will he dislocate facts to make them fit in with his own hypothesis, or the professed beliefs of either state or religion or official science. Such is the ideal of true man of science...and such a one, whenever mistaken...will hasten to publish his error and correct it.

This is the spirit inculcated in Theosophy. In fact, Theosophy is described as the most serious movement of this age, which threatens the very life of most of the time-honoured humbugs, prejudices and social evils. Theosophy was ushered in when degrading superstition and materialism had made truth unwelcome. “Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing,” writes Aldous Huxley. At times, we are required to become something different in order to acquire knowledge, and when we are ready, inwardly, the meaning dawns on us. But till such time there is no hurry to accept or reject a teaching. H.P.B. quotes from Narada: “Never utter these words: ‘I do not know this—therefore it is false.’ One must study to know, know to understand and understand to judge.” Nor should we try to somehow fit it into our existing belief system. We should not be in a hurry to reach any definite conclusion, but must be willing to remain in a state of doubt and uncertainty, without losing hope and faith.

Light on the Path emphasizes the importance of intuitive knowledge. “To obtain knowledge by experiment is too tedious a method for those who aspire to accomplish real work.” Science is analytical and experimental and therefore believes that nothing can be known about the constituents and properties of a plant or stone without subjecting it to the mechanical and chemical processes. Nor

can we understand the thoughts and feelings of another until they are expressed in words. Theosophy asserts that through the development and use of astral and spiritual senses it is possible to know unexpressed thoughts of another and the very essence of a plant or stone and even know what is passing through the mind of an ant.

We are better able to appreciate Theosophy as Science, when we study the Third Object of the Theosophical Society, which is, “the investigation of unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.” In pursuing this object every student is asked to question bigotry in every form—social, religious and scientific—after due investigation, as also his belief in miracles or anything supernatural. It aims to keep alive in humanity, spiritual intuition, by sifting the popular folk-lore and traditions and discover the inner meaning and long-lost important secrets. The Third Object aims at pursuing the line of enquiry to widen the field of scientific and philosophical observation, showing that just as there are physical laws governing physical realm, there are also laws governing psychic and spiritual realms.

The method of Theosophical dissemination is scientific. The truth—in philosophy, science and religion—is first given to us as suggestion by the Great Ones. But when the true is suggested to us, there is always a means presented by which we may see and verify it. There are rational arguments to support the claim. For instance, Theosophy says that no one can be *convinced* of reincarnation, unless he is able to put himself *en-rapport* with his Higher Self. Yet, theosophy puts forward several arguments supporting reincarnation. To have first-hand experience one needs to train inner, spiritual senses. But meanwhile we are asked to believe in the permanent Ego and take its existence as “Working hypothesis.”

Unlike other systems of ethics, Theosophy offers scientific basis for ethical living. Scientific part of theosophy shows that no individual is isolated but is inextricably linked with others.

H.P.B.—IN THE EYES OF HER PUPILS

WHAT do we know about “real” H. P. Blavatsky? It is the question we need to answer, as our hearts yearn to pay tribute to this great being, born at midnight hour of August 11-12, in the year 1831. While it would be most interesting to study her life as an individual, for the students of Theosophy, it is her life as a disciple of her Masters, as a Guru of the Theosophical Movement, an occultist, and the Mother of the Theosophical Movement that is most important. From these facets of her life there are lessons to be derived by every student.

What was she as a *Disciple* of her Teacher? Writing about her Master she says that ever since she first saw her Master bodily and physically, never has she denied or doubted him, never a reproach or murmur has ever crossed her lips even in thought under heaviest trials. It is this unswerving devotion that has given to her “Lion’s Strength” to bear the shocks, physical and mental, and it is this which is the cause of her success in the occult philosophy.

In what she says about the writing of her first book, *Isis Unveiled*, we get some idea of her dedication, her devotion, her determination to do whatever her master asked her to do. She says that when she began writing it, she had no idea whether it was to be an article, an essay, a pamphlet or a book. All that she knew was that she must write. And what were the circumstances when she began writing? She had not spoken English for over 30 years when she began writing. She had not studied in a college and her English was what she had learnt from her governess. She had no knowledge of the art of literary writing. The only thing that mattered to her was that her Master had asked her to write and she must write. She wrote as much as would fill four volumes of *Isis* and submitted it to Colonel Olcott for perusal. Mr. Olcott told her that almost whole of it except that which was dictated to her by her Masters must be rewritten. *Isis Unveiled* is around thirteen hundred pages long, and four times its material being asked to be re-written! Determined to follow what her Master had asked her to do, she went on to re-write those pages

with the help of Mr. Olcott and other members of the Society. Not only did she complete it but also mastered English language and later gave out entire philosophy of Theosophy in that language. She even edited two magazines—*The Theosophist* and *Lucifer*. Such was her devotion and determination to serve her Master.

What was she like as a *Teacher* and *Guru*? A true teacher never proclaims himself to be one. Never does he say, “I am giving out something new as revelation.” She always maintained that she was only giving out what she had learnt from her Masters. When Theosophical Society was founded, Colonel Olcott was its “President,” Mr. Judge was the counsel, while H.P.B. was only a “Corresponding Secretary.” She did not say that she was an Adept or an Initiate. Her enemies called her a fraud and an imposter. They even said that her “Masters” were figments of her imagination. She says that if that were so it would mean that the whole of the philosophy of Theosophy must have come from her, including the letters on which Mr. Sinnett based his book, *Esoteric Buddhism*, and all the tenets enumerated in the *Secret Doctrine*. That would make her several Masters rolled into one! But she did not want people to believe this. She was at pains to point out that her teachings were not her own but that of her Masters. She says that we are all at best fellow-students or pupil-teachers.

Also, about the authorship of the *Secret Doctrine* she says, “I am only a writer,” not the *author* of the book. She had brought a bouquet of flowers, in which only the string was hers. Every true student of Theosophy knows that it is that string which is most valuable. It is that string, which gives us true meaning of what is contained in the mass of philosophy, scattered through various scriptures of the world. It is that string which brings out the inner meaning underlying the teachings by providing the key to their correct interpretation. But for that string, the beauty of the consistent philosophy would not emerge. A true spiritual guru never looks for name, money or following. Her views on money are explicit. She earned her living by writing articles and also by making neckties. When she started

the Esoteric Section she said: “I would rather starve in the gutter than take one penny for teaching the sacred truths.”

As an *Occultist*, she was a towering figure. She had knowledge of occult powers and could perform various phenomena like mind-reading, clairvoyance, clairaudience, apportation of objects, and so on. In those early years she was demonstrating to her close disciples that such powers are possible to man and that they are not miracles but simply the use of the knowledge of invisible realm. Also, she performed these phenomena to lay down the lines of force to form three strong spiritual centers, in America, in Europe and in India. She was a direct agent from the Masters, who came in the 19th century to give out the teachings pertaining to man’s true nature and his destiny. Her *Secret Doctrine* is full of numerous quotations from ancient and modern scriptures from over a dozen languages and profoundest philosophers, not as vain display of erudition but to substantiate what she was stating. She did this without having at her disposal a collection of books or a library. It was one of her many feats as an occultist.

As a *Mother*, you find her sacrificing herself totally and fully for the cause that was dear to her heart. She pleads with her students to remain united and work with solidarity, sinking private differences, because in union there is strength. She was ever willing to give her money, health, name, strength for her child—the Theosophical Society. She said: “Come what may, I would die with Theosophical Banner in my hand, and while I live, I fervently hope that splashes of mud thrown at it would reach me personally.” Such was her love for the Society. As a mother, she allowed herself to be thrice saved from the jaws of death so that she may live and complete the writing of the *Secret Doctrine*. She took upon herself the Karma of the Theosophical Society. And so, while the Society lived, she died as a person in her name, fame, honour, strength, health and all that she held near and dear. This was the sacrifice of the mother.

In return, does she ask from her students any blind following? No. She says that if we have learnt anything from her teachings, *or*

with her help obtained even a glimpse of the True Light, then we must in return strive to strengthen the cause and make brighter that light through collective and individual efforts which would light up the world.

As for her teachings, it is very difficult to put down in nutshell that philosophy which has lived for over 132 years. Every true philosophy has its tenets and fundamental ideas. So has Theosophy. These fundamentals are summed up in the three fundamental teachings of Theosophy on God, Law and Evolution, the Ancient Source and the Ten Items of Eastern Psychology which form the basis for the whole of philosophy of Theosophy. Every student of Theosophy must therefore be well grounded in these teachings if he wants to understand the philosophy.

The First Fundamental Proposition deals with the nature of God. God is not a being or a person, nor the creator of this world. God is One Eternal and Absolute Principle, about which we cannot know anything. But God or One Reality is a playground of numberless universes like ours, which come into existence and go out of existence, periodically. Periodicity or law of Cycles is the fundamental law. Every universe is a continuation of the previous universe. If we have all come from the same source, then all are of the same essence and all have same powers and potentialities. The sense of separateness is only an illusion that must be overcome if we are to realize our oneness and our own divine nature. Hence, the First Object of the Theosophical Movement is to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, color, caste, etc.

Our universe is governed by Law. Behind the working of the laws in nature there are intelligences. Forces of nature are presided over by divine beings or gods, who have perfected themselves in earlier periods of evolution, and are now helping nature in her cyclic task. Some of them have given to us our bodies; others have given to us our mind, and hence our ability to think and choose. It is mind that makes us superior to animals. Some of these Great Beings burnt

down into human consciousness eternal divine ideas, universal ideas that have remained with us, though covered over by excessive materialism. These Great Beings form, what is called, the White Lodge of Adepts, and have preserved this knowledge, called WISDOM RELIGION or *Theosophia*. They periodically send out their messengers to give out the age-old wisdom for the benefit of mankind. Unfortunately, we give it the label of a “Religion,” and consider our own religion to be the only true one. Therefore, the second object of U.L.T. is to carry out comparative study of world’s religions sciences and philosophies with a view to identifying common vital truths and the ethics underlying them all. It is the brotherhood of religions that will help in reaching brotherhood of mankind.

Shankara, Buddha or Jesus became what they were through self-exertion. Every human being has the power to accelerate his progress or retard it. He can become like the *Nirmanakayas*, who, after reaching perfection renounce the peace and bliss of Nirvana in order to help mankind. Each one of us must strive to become companions of these Masters, by trying to spread Their Teachings. Let us forget the personality in the service of humanity. It is then and then alone that Theosophy can become a Living Power in our life and touch the hearts of others.

THEOSOPHY teaches that those who are like unto each other and love each other will be reincarnated together whenever the conditions permit.

Whenever one of us has gone further on the road to perfection, he will always be moved to help and comfort those who belong to the same family.

—W. Q. JUDGE

THE MEANING OF RETIREMENT

WE have all watched with sadness great players bidding “*adieu*” to the adoring crowd or a renowned artist announcing his retirement from active life. We strongly feel that they must not retire, that there is still “fire” in them and that they can give much more. This feeling is natural, both from the point of view of affection and from natural resistance to any loss. We can imagine the profound sorrow of King Shuddhodana when his beloved son Siddhartha left the palace, comforts, dear wife and young son Rahul in the quest of “Truth.” It is not easy to give up our familiar way of life. It was not easy for Prince Siddhartha either. Knowing this well Lord Buddha says:

Let a man value retirement which is hard to love; let him leave the householder-state, seeking the homeless one. Let the wise abandon the way of darkness and follow the light on the path. Leaving behind all sense pleasures, calling nothing his own, let the wise man cleanse himself from all impurities of the heart and then enjoy. (*The Dhammapada*, verses 87-88)

Hinduism speaks of four stages in the life of a Brahmin. These stages are: (1) The student (*Brahmachari*), marked by chastity, study, devotion and obedience to one’s teacher. (2) The householder (*Grihastha*), requiring marriage, begetting of children, working to sustain one’s family and to help support priests and holy men, and fulfilling duties toward gods and ancestors. (3) The forest-dweller (*Vanaprastha*), this stage begins when a man has had his grandsons. It consists of withdrawal from concern with material things and pursuing solitude and ascetic life. (4) The homeless mendicant (*Sannyasi*), which involves leaving the hermitage and renouncing all one’s possessions to wander from place to place begging for food, concerned only with the Eternal. Traditionally, *moksha* (spiritual liberation) should be the pursuit of a man only during the last two stages of his life (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). In these wisely appointed stages of life is packed profound wisdom which gradually

prepares a Brahmin to enter the spiritual path. Unfortunately, the materialistic age finds no value in such traditions.

The idea of “retirement” is well known to most people. In good old days, the king retired entrusting the throne to his eldest son. The concept of a successor is quite common in business world. A businessman prepares his son to take over the charge so that he can retire. Great artists train their disciples to keep the art alive. The mother-in-law who has overseen the activities of the whole household hands over the bunch of keys and charge of the house to her daughter-in-law. The Hindu tradition of four stages or four *ashrams* brought balance to life. It helped to keep alive, in the hearts and minds of men, the higher purpose of existence.

Today, we just don’t have time for anything, not even to pause for a minute and reflect upon the purpose of life. People, particularly in large cities, are always in a hurry. A large majority struggle for the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing while elite minority devotes its life to achieving name, fame, money and position. Young executives climb quickly up the ladder, acquire much wealth, material comforts and name in the business world. In their case it is “too much too soon,” leading to emptiness and purposelessness, psychic disorders and in some unfortunate cases, depression and death. World has not prepared them for anything other than worldly pursuits. Having achieved that they do not know what to do with their lives. Too much devotion to their career creates an imbalance, leaving very little or no time to bond with their family. In the hour of need there is no one to turn to and the torture of futility leads them to rash decisions. It is at such stage, when one has already achieved what the world calls “success,” that there is a possibility of taking a bold step, making a new beginning. Some leave the beaten path to explore the new one, be it social work, or spiritual pursuits. Large majority, however, seek repeated success.

For some people, their career is everything. Work for them is worship. But when they retire, there is nothing else to keep them occupied. They feel restless and purposeless. They desperately seek

to hold on to former world by taking up some or the other job. In some unfortunate cases, the emptiness, the agony of meaninglessness, intense feeling of one's uselessness saps their spirit and soon death claims them. It is not easy to welcome retirement, much less to love it. Temptation to continue in old ways of life is great. We are quite comfortable with our well established routines and dislike being disturbed.

Cotentment is the greatest wealth, says the Buddha. For most men there is never-ending desire for higher position, more money, higher status and so on. Nothing brings complete satisfaction. Each time we pass by the great lesson that life is trying to teach us, *viz.*, there are more important things than ambition, worldly gains and pleasures.

Fortunately, there are a few brave souls who chart out their paths, unmindful of the possibility of failure, particularly, when they "retire" to commence their spiritual journey. Young people from the Jaina families are known to take "*Diksha*," others voluntarily become nuns or priests. Some take up social work or join some Non-Government Organization (NGO) for serving others. No doubt, these are noble impulses, but one needs to apply caution and introspect before taking such a step. The questions to ask are: Have I done my duty as an individual in a family, society, in office or business? Am I adversely affecting lives of other people in choosing the spiritual path? Am I really prepared to undertake discipline demanded in walking the spiritual path? Am I trying to escape boredom, drudgery or irksome work? Have I prepared myself to undertake new responsibilities? Am I going to be a burden once that I have quit my job? Have I made provision for my dependants? Am I truly committed to what I have decided to pursue? Am I likely to regret the decision? Am I likely to get bored or be disappointed later? It is here that the power of imagination can help. Imagine yourself vividly in the new circumstances, live it out mentally to get a feel of what it would be like and if possible, take a deliberate break to get first hand experience of what is to be. There is then a possibility that you may discover

that your resolve is not all that strong. According to the ancient tradition, a real guru does not accept the disciple unless the disciple has obtained permission of his family members to do so. Many well-meaning friends and acquaintances just cannot believe how someone can leave a well-paying job, status and comforts that come with it. In fact, there is a point in what they say. Sometimes the decisions are impulsive; sometimes it is manifestation of violent anger, agitation or frustration. Such decisions have to be well thought out, particularly when it is not possible to undo or retrace steps. It is better to consult and discuss the matter over before taking any drastic steps.

Retirement may be voluntary or involuntary. It may also be timely or untimely. Sometimes, what is untimely by worldly standards is perfectly timely by standards of the inner man. Onlookers are astonished when someone announces premature retirement. They consider it rather bold or brave and even admit that they actually envy the one who has gone ahead and taken such a step. They forget that you are as free as you make yourself to be. It is only a question of *letting go* and choosing "*shreyas*" over "*preyas*." However, when the retirement is untimely and involuntary, it is unpleasant. These are best times from the standpoint of the inner man. It brings to surface the true strength of various relationships, be it business or personal. At such times we have an insight into human nature as also our own. Says Mr. Judge:

Try to recollect that you are a very small affair in the world, and that the people around do not value you at all and grieve not when you are absent. Your only true greatness lies in your inner true self and it is not desirous of obtaining the applause of others. If you will follow these directions for one week you will find they will take considerable effort, and you will begin to discover a part of the meaning of the saying, "Man, know thyself."

At such times, we may also experience the sweet side of life and discover true worth of our friends. Then we must learn to receive and feel grateful for the help extended to us. It is very crucial to

learn to cultivate detachment. It may be worthwhile to try to practice what Mr. Judge calls “resignation.” Thus:

We must be ready to say at any moment under whatever circumstances, whether expected or unexpected: “It is just what I in fact desired.”...And as our aim ought to be to reach the supreme condition and to help all other sentient beings to do so also, we must cultivate complete resignation to the Law, the expression and operation of which is seen in the circumstances of life and the ebb and flow of our inner being. All that can be gotten out of wealth, or beauty, or art, or pleasure, are merely pools of water found along our path as it wanders through the desert of life. If we are not seeking them their appearance gives us intense pleasure, and we are thus able to use them for our good and that of others just so long as the Law leaves them to us; but when that superior power removes them, we must say: “It is just what I in fact desired.” Any other course is blindness. All the passing shows of life, whether fraught with disaster or full of fame and glory, are teachers; he who neglects them, neglects opportunities which seldom the gods repeat. And the only way to learn from them is through the heart’s resignation; for when we become in heart completely poor, we at once are the treasurers and disbursers of enormous riches. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 45-46)

We need to reflect upon these words and prepare ourselves by gradual cultivation of the art of “detached attachment.” That is done by learning to take refuge in our true nature. Then we are able to experience everything to the utmost and yet are capable of letting go without resentment—nay, with pleasure.

We must learn to accept and appreciate wisely appointed stages of life. What lives on is not our body, status, name, degrees. We drop these things at the threshold of death. What a man carries with him is his noble deeds, higher aspiration and spiritual deeds. From each life the soul gathers only an aroma of experiences, noble thoughts, noble deeds and aspirations. And yet what does the average

human being aspire for? He wants to be the richest man on the earth. He wants to be the chairman of his company. He wants to break all records of his predecessors in his domain, and so on. He knows that none of these things are everlasting and yet he has no time or interest in anything else. He reserves the pursuit of spiritual life to his “post-retirement” days. He knows not whether there will be tomorrow, whether he would be fit enough to undertake a journey which requires inner stamina and undaunted will. Alas, for many, the day never arrives. Let us pay attention to the warning of Lord Buddha:

Men who have not lived the disciplined life of a chaste mind, who have not gathered soul wealth in young age, lie like worn-out bows, “sighing after the past.” (*The Dhammapada*, Verse 156)

The dictionary meaning of “Retirement” is withdrawal from one’s position or occupation or from active working life. But it also means devoting yourself to something meaningful. The Universal machinery is kept moving by efforts of the whole of the mankind. An individual exists because he has a role to play. If he refrains, if he wants to simply enjoy while others toil, because he thinks he has done his bit for the society, he is mistaken. At every stage in life, there is something that each one can contribute—be it active participation in work of the society, guiding some confused individual, extending a helping hand to the needy, saying comforting words to the oppressed and harassed soul. It is important to devote at least some time every day to the study and reflection of scriptures, words of great sages, or something that uplifts your spirit and makes you kind towards others without any personal considerations. Having received much, it is our duty to give, to join the unseen force that works for the good of the mankind.

THOUGHTS ON “THROUGH THE GATES OF GOLD”

VI

THE LAST chapter of the book is entitled, “The Secret of Strength.” It is spiritual energy or *Virya*, “the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH, out of the mire of lies terrestrial.” The conquest of self is conquest of the personality, and leaving behind the life of personality. Victory over lower, animal self can be achieved only when a person ardently desires it, and when he is ready to surrender his personal will to the Divine Will. To conquer self is to exchange repetitive existence—repeatedly seeking to intensify pleasures—for inspired life. This is the most difficult task that every spiritual aspirant has to undertake. The difficulty is described graphically in this chapter, thus:

To put on armour and go forth to war, taking the chances of death in the hurry of the fight, is an easy thing; to stand still amid the jangle of the world, to preserve stillness within the turmoil of the body, to hold silence amid the thousand cries of the senses and desires, and then, stripped of all armour and without hurry or excitement, take the deadly serpent of self and kill it, is no easy thing. Yet it is what has to be done. (*Through the Gates of Gold*, pp. 64-65)

The conquest of personality is not accomplished all at once. It may be compared to cutting through the layers of crust and skin. There are lessons to be drawn from physical, psychic and inner life. Having learnt the lessons completely, one leaves aside the physical life of wealth and comfort. Similarly, having learnt the lessons from the psychic life, one leaves behind the psychic life of emotions, fame, name, love and lust. Finally, having learnt the lessons of the contemplative life, one leaves behind even this life of adoration and enters “the great temple where any memory of self or sensation is left outside as the shoes are cast from the feet of the worshipper. That temple is the place of his own pure divinity.” When one reaches

this point of self-realization or identification with the permanent and divine aspect in oneself, one is able to go into the world fearlessly and perform actions without apprehension, alarm, fear, regret or joy. But before one reaches that final resting-place, the path of existence is checked by what seem like insurmountable obstacles. However, there is always help, and the difficulty is temporary and surmountable. While surrounded by troubles, tests and trials, the path may suddenly appear to become too narrow to stand or seem to lose itself in deep waters, but soon we realize that the situation is not as hopeless as it appears. “It happens in all profound experiences of human nature. When the first grief tears the heart asunder it seems that the path has ended and a blank darkness taken the place of the sky. And yet by groping the soul passes on, and the difficult and seemingly hopeless turn in the road is passed,” says the author. The soul stands terrified at grief, pain, suffering and the loss of all that is beloved or valued. Who puts these obstacles and trials in the path of the disciple? Is it God permitting the Devil to torment His creatures for their ultimate good? It is the childish and dramatic picture projected by the religionists. Both God and Devil are within man himself. It is a mistake to think that the path leads to some final goal or end. There is no limit to spiritual perfection.

The clue to the meaning and solution of spiritual struggle lies in the double constitution of man. When we begin to analyze man, we find two great “tides of emotion” in his nature. One tide makes him an animal and the other makes him a god. When man lets the animal power gain the upper hand, he becomes worse than the brute. Such a man degrades his soul by making it the slave of his senses, and ultimately brings upon himself the keenest suffering. The god has to be restored to the place of divinity. Then does man experience profound peace. Thus:

Not only is man more than an animal because there is the god in him, but he is more than a god because there is the animal in him.

The god in man, degraded, is a thing unspeakable in its

infamous power of production. The animal in man, elevated, is a thing unimaginable in its great powers of service and of strength.

But this power can only be attained by giving the god the sovereignty. Make your animal ruler over yourself, and he will never rule others. (*Through the Gates of Gold*, pp. 81-83)

This refers to dual nature of man. Man may behave like an angel or a devil. The natural instinct for self-preservation, procreation, caring for its young ones is common to ordinary beast as well as man. There is happiness when these drives are satisfied. However, an animal springs on his prey to feed himself or defend his territory or young ones. His meanness does not go beyond his own established nature. A tiger is tiger-like and a dove is dove-like. A brute can know nothing of goodness or evil, as man understands evil. It is man who can fall below even the level of an animal. He has used his power of thought to elevate his brutality to incredible heights. But man is much more than an animal because there is the god in him. The god in him makes him capable of keener enjoyments and pain. An animal knows nothing about rare, voluptuous, aesthetic pleasures. When god is made to serve the animal, keener and subtler pleasures stand ready to serve him. Man seeks these pleasures—he cares nothing for others, except that they must serve him so that he can obtain his pleasures. He has painstakingly worked out thousand different ways to take simple enjoyments to highest possible level—enjoyment of food, shelter, clothing and sex. He does not stop here, his perverted sense seeks newer ways of excitement and sensations. He has invented instruments of torture, weapons of mass destruction, use of animals for beauty, longevity, or for sport. He has invented brothels, trash literature to excite his senses. He has learnt to exploit and cheat other men for his own profits. From where does he get this energy, power, intellect and knowledge? He gets them from the god within. The god in us has been made to serve the animal in us. Spirit within is the source of all the powers and faculties in man.

Power to think and choose; power of imagination and the capacity for experience—all come from the Spirit. But we use it exclusively for satisfaction of animal nature in us. We prostitute the great power within for the satisfaction of the animal man. This is a sorry sight where god stoops to serve the animal.

Thus the man who becomes a beast has a million times the grasp of life over the natural beast, and that which in the pure animal is sufficiently innocent enjoyment, uninterrupted by an arbitrary moral standard, becomes in him vice, because it is gratified on principle. Moreover, he turns all the divine powers of his being into this channel, and degrades his soul by making it the slave of his senses. The god, deformed and disguised, waits on the animal and feeds it. (*Through the Gates of Gold*, p. 79)

But reverse the position and see what results can be achieved. Animals, when tamed, have been known to be of great service to humanity. Elephants, mules, horses, bulls are tamed slowly to serve man. If a beast can gain manifold value by becoming tame, it is not difficult to imagine how animal in us, when tamed, can add thousand-fold to the power of the god. *The Dhammapada* praises the taming of the lower nature, thus:

Good are mules when tamed. Good are Sindhu horses when tamed. Good are great elephants when tamed. Better than all these is he who has tamed himself. With such mounts no man can reach the untrodden land called Nirvana. A tamed man riding on his tamed self arrives there. (Verses 322-23)

Through the Gates of Gold says that when you force the animal into his rightful place, that of the inferior, you find yourself in possession of a great force hitherto unsuspected and unknown. Entire personality of man is made to serve the higher purposes of the divine within. Instead of horse leading the rider where he pleases, the rider must control the horse and use him to reach his destination. Animal

is not to be despised. It has to be trained, governed, controlled and tamed. Imagine walking from one place to another for miles on foot. A horse can reach you much faster with less effort on your part. Animal in us is not to be ignored or crushed out. He has to be used. A harmonious relationship has to be established. To be able to work tirelessly and with full concentration for as long a period as necessary; to go without food or sleep for prolonged period; to overcome instinct of self-preservation in order to save another man’s life or to protect and help him; comes naturally when animal is tamed.

You forget, you who let your animal self live on, merely checked and held within certain bounds, that it is a great force, an integral portion of the animal life of the world you live in. With it you can sway men, and influence the very world itself, more or less perceptibly according to your strength. The god, given his right place, will so inspire and guide this extraordinary creature, so educate and develop it, so force it into action and recognition of its kind, that it will make you tremble when you recognize the power that has awakened within you. The animal in yourself will then be a king among the animals of the world. (*Through the Gates of Gold*, p. 82)

Man is god, potentially. All powers and potentialities are there within. Consciously or unconsciously, we are all struggling to realize our real nature and regain our high estate. Not all succeed. But those who succeed owe it to the millions of other men who have contributed to his success.

Lastly, the book warns us that taming the animal in us and making him subservient to the god within is not easy. “Do not fancy it is easily done. Do not be deluded into the idea that the religious or the virtuous man does it! Not so. They do no more than fix a standard, a routine, a law by which they hold the animal in check.”

(Concluded)

SHAKESPEARE AND THE ADEPT INFLUENCE

II

PRECEDING the period of Mahatmic Influence were the early Chronicles, which included both comic and tragic material, and the early comedies. These indicated loosely and faintly the general lines of Shakespeare’s interests and abilities. An early effect on him of the Inspiration may be represented by *Romeo and Juliet*, that supreme tragedy of blind, childishly wilful impulse, in both the older and the younger. The strong emphasis on the foolishness of family feuds seems to indicate such Guidance. Some of the more vitalized Chronicles and the comedies associated with them, in which vice meets its just deserts yet with true charity, may also express that Inspiration. The story-material and characters in these plays were on the level of large groups in the theatre audiences, and the results in them were so just and so free from tiresome moralizing, that they must have caused many minds to see more clearly that what ye sow ye shall reap. It would seem therefore that in these plays too the higher Imagination and the higher Influence were at the work. And in both comedies and tragedies dated by critics near 1600, the operation of each phase of the Imaging Power is richly unfolded. A noteworthy degree is exhibited in the finer comedies, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night*. These comedies are perennial delights, full of a sunshine that is contrasted only with shadows more suppositional than real. *The Merchant of Venice* is indeed nobler, the shadows deepen, the struggle and effort intensify, and the tragedy for Shylock is for one supreme moment de-personalized into the tragedy of a race. Here was surely a bit of direct transmission of the Influence. For in spite of all the evil selfish revenge in Shylock, who that has a spark of genuine humanity can utterly fail to hear the Adept basic teaching of Brotherhood in that cry: “Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, senses, affections, passions?” The immediacy of the response to this in us

is truly another evidence of the Influence.

Many admirers of Shakespeare have been much puzzled to account for some of his portrayals of women. Where did he find being like Cordelia, Imogen, Hermione; very quintessence of loyalty they are, under conditions most difficult and tragic. How did he think of Miranda and Perdita, sweet and retiring as lilies of the valley? What of Viola, delicately self-effacing and well rewarded; and the saucy-patch young sister of all these, Rosalind, with her rival in comedy-making, Beatrice? Chief of all, perhaps, how could he create Portia! Excellent materials of study for some of these he could find in the two Roman stories he himself reworked and wherein he portrayed the noble wife of Brutus, and the equally noble mother of Coriolanus.

But if there is cause for wonder concerning the women, why not concerning the men? There are Kent and Edgar, Horatio and Banquo, quiet staunch upholders of the right and of their particular words, like the supporting timbers of a building. There are the heart-winning elders, Duke Senior, Polixenes and Gonzalo. That fine old student of life and of magic, Prospero, is unique. So too is Antonio, at least in his parent-like sacrifice for his young friend. A trifle larger in conception is Sebastian, and superior still is Bassanio, both being chosen more than choosers in their wedlock, yet worthy of the choices. Also the philosophic Brutus and Hamlet, tragic labourers with duties they cannot make their own. And as a fine contrast to these last two, Henry the Fifth, reformed madcap Prince Hal, wholly changed by awakening to his responsibilities, and marching confidently into duties that are emphatically his own—more loved in memory than any English King.

Through the big fabric of the Shakespearian world these beings move; and not one of them “too pure and good for human nature’s daily food.” It is surely not too much to say that for three centuries these men and women have been ideals and moulds, though perhaps unrecognized, of the thought-life of many young people. If models for them are insisted on, some may easily be found in contemporary

English life. Even Italy too, in spite of all the evil existing there, produced individuals notably generous and high-minded.

Besides, it must not be forgotten that there are always such beings. They do not entirely disappear even in low periods. Spontaneously and unconsciously, they are the levers that lift mankind a little further up in its evolution, and are the carriers and users of the traditional truths of humanity and Nature. They are scattered through all ranks and conditions, and there would be small hope for the advancement of the world without them.

With one or two exceptions, these personages of Shakespeare all exhibit or struggle with the middle range of passions and conditions, are played upon constantly by good and evil forces that are in opposition but not entirely out of balance. Theatre audiences found their own likenesses in these characters. The large number of them, their convincing vitality, and their relative importance in the world of Shakespeare, may furnish another evidence of Adept assistance. The mental life—the psychology—he depicted in this middle range of humanity is by everybody recognized as permanently true, as genuinely human under whatever conditions. Just as true, however, is the mental life exhibited by the two great extremes—the weaklings in general, such as the low women and the drivelling men, including some of the clowns; and on the other hand those characters who embodied such force of will and power of intellect that necessarily, when their strength was turned downward into selfishness and evil, they became the great tragic heroes and heroines. Other Elizabethans made their low and vicious mostly disgusting, and their towering tragic figures are less humanized than Shakespeare’s are, while the backgrounds of secondary characters are less rounded and vital. The Aid given to Shakespeare may well have resulted in this extraordinary humanization of his persons. This inference is indicated also by the wide difference in the degree of humanness between the later plays of Shakespeare himself and his earlier—those rather mechanical first comedies and histories. Yet even these are regarded as better

than the corresponding early work of other writers.

There is, moreover, another special reason why those women and men of the middle range in character were a particularly fruitful field for Shakespeare's Helpers. For centuries the conditions of Europe, either war-filled or monastic, nearly destroyed all forms of middle-range life. The religious, political and social systems were all cut from the same cloth of personalisms and their opposites, *i.e.*, religious infallibles, religious know-nothings; political tyrants, political imbeciles; social Eminences pinnacled too high to see their own base, social slugs ever leaving behind the trail of their slime. Those conditions were the mirror of the contemporary theology, under which Mind and Soul were either manacled or swamped. Virtues of the home existed, but were shut up in fortresses. Citizen and community characteristics were deflected so as to become either duties owed by vassals or the place-proud behaviour of overlords.

In that civilization women were far too much regarded by their fathers as valuable pawns in making princely marriages for the expansion of domains; and by their husbands as social centers, important to retain the homage of large followings of knights and squires. Below these of highest position were numerous attendants—imitative ladies-in-waiting; much lower still were the slavish houseworkers, unnoticed, mere ciphers, useful only to increase the number of serfs.

Say the *Laws of Manu* concerning women and married life: "Where women are honoured, there verily the Devas rejoice; where they are not honoured, there indeed all rites are fruitless." But the honour indicated by Manu was not that paid to the chatelaines; its root was not economic. It was an honour paid in spirit, an expression of true understanding of women's spiritual functions in the great whole of existence. Again in speaking of the connubial life—which is surely best exemplified by the middle range of conditions and persons, and in which men bear equal share with women—the *Laws of Manu* state clearly the foundational service rendered to humanity by family relationships: "As all creatures live supported by air, so

the other Orders (of society) exist supported by the Householder." "As all streams and rivers flow to rest in the ocean, so all the Orders flow to rest in the householder."

(Concluded)

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: In spite of living physically, mentally and morally a pure life, some of the spiritually advanced beings die very young. How do we explain this?

Answer: It is not easy to answer this question, especially, when no categorical answer is available in the theosophical books. In case the advanced being is at the stage where he still has karma to exhaust, then one of the explanations could be on the basis of Karma. There are Karma (or *Skandhas*) pertaining to the body as also to mental and emotional constitution. Patanjali mentions in his Yoga Aphorisms that there are two types of karma (actions)—those performed with the expectation of results and those performed without the expectation of results. Both these kinds of Karma performed in the past lives and being performed in the present life, not only *produce* the body but also *affect or influence* the body. Thus, length of life of a person is determined by these two types of karma, created in this or in the previous lives. Since karma operates on physical, mental and moral planes we may say that bad physical karma is at work in case of a person who lives a very short life.

There is another explanation possible, especially, in case of a person who takes birth voluntarily. An ordinary person is compelled to take birth because of his unexpended karma and *Tanha* or the desire to live and have experience. *Light on the Path* mentions that a person in whom the 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. In the article, “The Elixir of Life,” we are told that one can increase the span of life by making the *physical man* ethereal and sensitive; *intellectual man* penetrative and profound; *moral man* philosophical and self-denying. But the most important factor in determining the longevity is the “powerful and determined human will.” Of the two persons, every way alike and similarly circumstanced, the one who has “powerful will” and desire to live, will live longer. There are plenty of instances in the medical field showing that many a time a person could have lived if only he *resolved* to live. It may also happen that weak and vacillating will-power residing in the weak physical frame, may get strength from some unsatisfied desire (wish), such as, a mother’s heart-yearning to remain and support her fatherless children. On the other hand, when the desire to live deserts, the person can die. There are cases where one of the couple (husband and wife) dies, and the other genuinely loses interest in life and dies within few months. In his book, “The Search for Meaning,” Dr. Viktor Frankl gives the instance of a concentration camp inmate whose spirit was broken by the tortures of the concentration camp and wanted to die but was given hope that on a particular date they might be released. Hanging onto that hope he lived up to that date, but as the promised date came nearer and there was no sign of being released, he began losing hope and finally on the evening of that day he died. Such withdrawal of desire is not the mood of the moment. As Mr. Judge suggests, if the person who says that life here is worthless were offered life on some other planet in most harmonious, beautiful and gratifying circumstances, he would find his deep seated *wish for life* suddenly blazing up, and he would express his wish to continue living. “The soul is bound to the body by a conversion to the corporeal passions; and is again liberated by becoming impassive to the body.”

Question: Does alcohol consumption have deleterious influence

on moral and spiritual progress of the person? How?

Answer: It is well known that consumption of alcohol adversely affects liver and could ultimately prove fatal. Alcohol in all its forms has a direct, marked and very deleterious influence on psychic condition of a person. When taken in excess, it makes one lose self-control and also affects his judgment. For instance, in an experiment, a truck driver was asked to pass the truck between the two poles that were kept wide apart. Then the driver was made to drink alcohol and the poles were progressively brought closer together. It was found that the more he was drunk, the more confident he was about his ability to drive the truck between the poles that were ultimately brought adjacent to each other.

As far back as in 1934, Dr. W. McAdam Beccles had stated that presence of even 0.1 per cent of alcohol in the blood is sufficient to classify a person as “under the influence of drink.” It has been shown that alcohol has strong impact on “reaction time.” It is the time elapsed between the image seen by the eye and its translation by the brain into some necessary muscular action. In a normal person this time-gap is one-fifth second, but even a small dose of alcohol (so small that the person is quite unaware of it) can increase this time gap to four-fifth second. This time gap proportionately increases with the consumption of alcohol. For instance, if a person is driving along a road with his foot on the brake and if he suddenly sees a child dashing in front of his car, it will be one-fifth second before he puts on his brakes after he has seen the child. Whereas if he has taken even a small dose of alcohol, it will take him appreciable time before he begins to stop his car.

Besides this, alcohol is said to retain and carry the psychic characteristics of the people who are involved in making it, bottling it and selling it. Hence, one who drinks alcohol is affected by the magnetism—good or bad—of the people who have handled the bottles.

Alcohol is prejudicial to the development of “Third eye,” or intuitive faculty. Pineal gland is connected with spiritual clairvoyance,

while pituitary body is connected with pure psychic visions. Drunkenness produces disorderly molecular motion in pituitary body and sometimes can paralyze it, preventing the development of intuitive faculty.

In the article, “The Elixir of Life,” we are told that one who desires “Longevity” must give up certain physical desires, which in turn would make the physical body more ethereal, by drawing to itself more ethereal particles. Etherealizing of physical body is also conducive to spiritual progress. In the list of physical desires to be eschewed, the first place is given to “alcohol in all forms.” It is stated that while alcohol supplies no nourishment, nor any direct pleasure to the grossest elements of the physical frame, it induces rush of life, producing stress. This stress can be sustained only by very dull, gross and dense elements. By the law of supply and demand, the body of the drunken person seems to attract these gross particles from the surrounding universe, thus making the physical body coarse and dense instead of ethereal. It is mentioned that the most pleasurable physical sensations are only possible at such a stage of density of physical body.

Alcohol—in whatever form—has the potency to inject the grossest forms of life, so that even if it is taken in miniscule doses it will incline the person towards the irresponsible and murky sides of life. It has the tendency to paralyze the nerve centres and to shut out from the consciousness the light that is inherent in all life.

MAKE it a rule of life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you cannot build on it; it is only good for wallowing in.

—KATHERINE MANSFIELD

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Have we all surrendered to the Internet? When Friedrich Nietzsche switched over from longhand to typewriter, his friend noticed change in his style of writing. Nietzsche too, believed that our writing equipment does take part in the forming of our thoughts. Keeping this in mind the technology writer for *The Atlantic*, Nicholas Carr, points out that if a typewriter could do this to a mind as profound and powerful as Nietzsche's what could be the impact of Internet on us? Are we fast losing the capacity to think deeply, calmly and seriously? Have we all succumbed to Internet attention deficit disorder?

Andrew Sullivan admits that Internet has not made us stupid. It has even subtly changed the way in which one thinks and writes and has accelerated information processing. There seems to be mental multitasking, where one simultaneously absorbs information from multiple sources. Yet, with all that he admits that he seems to have lost the ability for real reading, his mind has been conditioned to resist it, so that reading a multiple page printout or a book is tiresome, and the mind looks for quick ways of collecting information. If this is the new way of thinking then it seems to be affecting the way we read and write. What we may be losing is quietness and depth in our literary, intellectual and spiritual lives. Further:

The experience of reading only one good book for a while, and allowing its themes to resonate in the mind, is what we risk losing. I would carry a single book around with me for days, when younger, letting its ideas splash around in my head, not forming an instant judgment (for or against) but allowing the book to sit for a while....Sometimes, human beings need time to think things through, to allow themselves to entertain a thought before committing it.

The white noise of the ever-faster information highway may, one fears, be preventing this. The still, small voice of calm that refreshes a civilization may be in the process of

being snuffed out by myriad distractions.

While Internet has made the ancient facts accessible to us, before it overwhelms us, we must also gain more perspective on it and reserve time and space to do something meaningful with them. We need to be both pond-skaters and scuba-divers. To achieve the equilibrium between the old and the new ways of thinking, it is often suggested that instead of being addicted to the Internet one must take a break in order to think in the old way again: to look at a human face in flesh rather than on a Facebook profile, to read a book rather than a blog, to pray rather than browse, writes Sullivan. (*The Times of India*, June 21, 2008, courtesy *The Sunday Times*, London)

It is suggested that if we wish to derive maximum benefit from the teachings of Theosophy then we must give up the *superficial* and *inattentive* methods of thought, concentrating the mind on every statement. There is a need to cultivate the habit of careful and constant concentration of mind even while performing every duty and act in life. In the East, emphasis is laid on *shravana* (attentive listening or reading), *manana* (deep reflection) and then constantly keeping the teachings at the back of one's mind so that they could be applied in one's day to day life. In the article, "Much Reading and Little Thought," Mr. Judge writes that light reading and superficial habit of skimming is everywhere apparent. "A few books well read, well analyzed, and thoroughly digested are better than many books read over once." It is essential for a spiritual aspirant to acquire both the *breadth* and *depth* of mind.

The discovery of the 290 million-year-old fossil *Gerobatrachus hottoni* or elderly frog, known as "frogamander," described in journal *Nature*, links modern frogs and salamanders, and may help to resolve long-standing debate about amphibian ancestry. *Gerobatrachus* has

a mixture of frog and salamander features, with fused anklebones that are seen only in salamanders, a wide frog-like skull, and a backbone that resembles a mix of the two. The evolutionary ancestry of modern amphibians, such as frogs, salamanders and earthworm-like caecilians, has since long remained uncertain because of the gaps in the fossil record, showing the transformation of one form into another. The discovery of *Gerobatrachus* fossil suggests that modern amphibians may have come from two groups, with frogs and salamanders related to an ancient amphibian known as a temnospondyl, while worm-like caecilians to another group of ancient amphibians called lepospondyls. “Frogs and salamanders share a common ancestor that is fairly removed from the origin of caecilians,” says Jason Anderson of the University of Calgary, who led the study. (*The Times of India*, May 23, 2008, courtesy Reuters)

The Secret Doctrine points out that for a long period of time man and earth and all the kingdoms of nature were in astral stage—being made up of matter of very fine texture, in its most ethereal state. Then the process of solidification and condensation began, producing solid physical forms for man and animals. During this astral period *root-types* or *basic types* of various species existed. In the differentiation of animal and other lower species intelligent aid and interference from great souls, high and holy men of immense power, knowledge and wisdom, known as *Dhyanis*, was necessary. It is stated that these *Dhyanis* began evolution by alteration and additions in these root-types, in purely astral period. As a result of this, there has been differentiation on the gross plane, into various families, species and genera. Our investigators have been able to trace certain species only up to a certain point, but have admitted that they do not know to what “root” they go back. For instance, taking oxen on one side and horses on the other, we see that both are hoofed, but one has split hoof and the other has only one toe. Science has been able to trace the oldest ancestor of each to the midway point. The “midway point of evolution” is that stage where the astral prototypes begin to pass into the physical and become subject to differentiation.

In case of oxen and horses, science is able to go back and trace only intermediate link, but not the ultimate Root type, which must belong to the astral region.

Humanitarianism seems to be the new religion of this age. The idealistic youth of today are attracted more by the ideal of worshipping and serving humanity than by offering prayers and worship to the unseen gods sitting in some remote inaccessible heaven. But is the service to mankind turning into a service of the human ego and its blindness? Through service we grow in humility, strength and love, but it is important to ask, who is the object of our service? Can we deny that much of the so-called humanitarianism is a subtle or gross mostly ostentatious display of the ego? It is service of the ego of one man by the ego of another—it is the case of the blind leading the blind. When our sympathy is not backed by Wisdom or is blinded by egoistic sentiments it often leads to a dependency and much harm. Humanity needs help and urgently so. But what is the real disease? Hunger, physical and emotional deprivation, wars, petty family quarrels, legal disputes, the breaking of hearts, the fear of exams, mounting stress, broken homes, deserted children, crime and rape, plunder and murder, and so on are but symptoms, not the illness proper. If we treat the symptoms without care for the disease itself, then the illness will return in another name or form. There is no dearth of charitable institutions and men of good will, but the human misery and problems continue to multiply. Philanthropy and humanitarianism with their insistence on outer relief of outer suffering, even at their best, are no better than temporary sops that satisfy us for the moment. Outer help, devoid of an inner change, is like putting a nice plaster and paint to conceal the cracks of a house in shambles. There are only a few who want and work for inner change.

On the other hand, what do we know of the ways of God? His

purpose is to develop strength through difficulties and suffering. It would be proper to first find out the purpose of life, as then the solution will automatically emerge. “All would change if only man changes. All would change if only man, the human-animal that was or still in his outer nature is, becomes the divine-man that he inwardly is and can become....That alone can satisfy and fulfil man....And helping each other move and grow towards this source of all Light and Love, to help unleash the hidden springs of the soul, to inspire and awaken man towards a new vision of sublime peaks where truth and love and peace and happiness dwell as permanent inhabitants is the real service,” writes Alok Pandey. (*The Advent*, April 2008)

Unless people’s minds and hearts are charitable, it is no use having few people pour forth their wealth. Thus, if people lack integrity at higher as well as lower levels, if they feel that it is right for them to cheat and prosper—no matter how many others suffer—the mere physical acts of charity are not enough to bring about peace and happiness.

H.P.B. suggests the “true basis” for social work in *The Key to Theosophy*. Accordingly, for the efforts towards social amelioration to be fruitful, they must be based on four principles: “Universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Laws of Karma and Reincarnation. These are the four links of the golden chain which should bind humanity into one family, one Universal Brotherhood.”

What each one of us needs to do, has been suggested in *The Voice of the Silence*: “Give light and comfort to the toiling pilgrim.” It shows that we must not only give comfort—physical and mental relief—but also give “light,” *i.e.*, “right knowledge” or “bread of wisdom,” to the distressed. Laws of Karma and Reincarnation are doctrines of responsibility and hope. Every ordinary man is really a toiling pilgrim, as one side of his nature is toiling towards human evolution.

PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

ABSENCE of philosophical principles always leads people to wrong action. Mental confusion results in deeds which produce pain, sooner or later. Philosophical principles cleanse our minds of confusion and enable us to decide on a course of action which, however unpleasant in the beginning, produces bliss in the end. In times of stress, the absence of such philosophical principles precipitates wrong action.

Men and women live so much in their passing moods of feelings and emotions that most of them evaluate events in the light of the pleasure or pain they experience hour by hour. We do not need a philosopher to tell us that emotional moods of pleasure and repose or of pain and confusion are in themselves a great symbol of restlessness. A person in glee at high noon is down in the depths of despair at sunset, for men and masses of men ever move between light and darkness which are the world's eternal ways. But we certainly *do* need a philosopher to stress for us the fact that feelings of enthusiasm and depression provide a false gauge, and a dangerous one because utterly unreliable.

Sometimes the same action brings joy to one and despair to another. The victor and the vanquished react differently to the same event. Changing moods are fancied by people to be misery and happiness. Enveloped by emotional glamour, they shed tears or shout cheers. The action which produces these opposite moods is one and the same action; and had it been true in the scientific sense or righteous in the philosophic, then there would have been *Ananda-Bliss* everywhere; bliss born of mental equanimity and of heart satisfaction would have been followed by a spirit of thankfulness everywhere.

Let us seek for the philosophical principles which would enable us to evaluate actions and their effects on us as pleasure and pain. In the Eighteenth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita* Krishna describes three kinds of happiness. All people who are seeking happiness

have a direct and a valuable piece of instruction in this classification.

The first type of pleasure, the lowest, is rooted in mental laziness which makes a person inattentive and heedless. No one should allow his mind to remain for ever in the torpor of sleep. But there *are* people who enjoy their mental torpor, enjoy not doing anything. That pleasure is negative in quality; it is a feeling of dullness, arising from the neglect of duties, which the *Gita* describes as improper.

The second kind of happiness is that which is rooted in actions impelled by the senses and by the appetites and the desires. The *Gita* describes it as sweet in the beginning, but bitter in the long run. The beguiling sweetness tastes like *Amrita*, heavenly nectar, while the senses and the organs are enjoying it; but it proves to be poison in the process of time. Shankara in his commentary on this *Gita* verse uses strong language; this kind of happiness brings “deterioration in strength, vigour, wisdom, intellect, wealth and energy; it leads to *adharma*, unrighteousness, and ultimately to *naraka*, hell.” Human actions which are related to this type of happiness fall into two divisions: (a) avoidance of actions which look painful or troublesome though they are duties to be attended to; and (b) indulgence in actions which look pleasurable, which are easy to perform, but which, not being duties, are not necessary to undertake. For temporary and sensuous satisfaction in the present, men and women act, thoughtless of the future.

The third kind of pleasure is defined as arising from a purified understanding and from clear knowledge belonging to the Soul. When our mind is cleansed and the knowledge of *Atma-Buddhi* flows into and through it, we enjoy the supreme satisfaction of the third type of happiness. The cleaning of the mind is a painful process and therefore this type of pleasure is described in the *Gita* as poison-like in the beginning; but when, as a result of that cleansing, the Wisdom of the Higher Self—*Atma-Buddhi*—flows into the mind, we enjoy the happiness of Nectar—the beverage of the immortal Gods. The cleansing of the mind destroys whatever conflict of duties we may have been troubled about, for the inflowing wisdom reveals

to us what our duties really are, and more—that wisdom brings the strength to perform those duties without self-interest and without a desire for reward. Self-interest implies desire for a particular kind of result; if it comes about, we are happy; if not, we become unhappy; but in that feeling we lose sight of the truth and the righteousness of our actions. Therefore, real happiness follows when self-interest is put away and desire for the fruits of our deeds is eradicated.

An action does not become right or righteous because it is pleasurable and profitable to us; nor must it be rejected as wrong as unrighteous because its effects on us are painful. Such profit and loss, pain and pleasure, are ephemeral and in the whirligig of time the enduring aspect of any action has to be faced by each one of us. Virtue brings its own reward, and guilt its punishment—tomorrow or after many days.

Each one of us has to learn to seek the principles to be applied in performing actions. The *Bhagavad-Gita* has been called the Book of *Karma-Yoga*; but *Karma-Yoga* is not the performance of ordinary actions. W. Q. Judge explains that *Karma-Yoga* means “concentration and contemplation while engaged in action.” He writes:

We must therefore seek for concentration in order that we may be able to do those actions which the All-Wise presents to us to be done, remaining the while unaffected.

But the All-Wise cannot and does not present any plan to the lower desire-self, with its wandering mind. Only to the purified mind which is concentrated does the true vision come, which vision enables one to act rightly and righteously.

Each one of us, then, has the solemn duty of finding out the truths and principles ere we act; nay more, of determining what our duties are in verity. The responsibility of political leaders whose acts involve nations is a thousand times greater. Pure actions result only from pure thinking.