

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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TRUTH AND OUR CIVILIZATION	109
THE RELIGION OF RESPONSIBILITY	116
THE WONDER THAT WAS EGYPT—II	119
VIVEKA—SPIRITUAL DISCRIMINATION	125
THEOSOPHY IN DAILY LIFE	131
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	135
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	140

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### TRUTH AND OUR CIVILIZATION

That the world is in such bad condition morally is a conclusive evidence that none of its religions and philosophies, those of the *civilized* races less than any other, have ever possessed the *truth*. The right and logical explanations of the subject of the problems of the great dual principles—right and wrong, good and evil, liberty and despotism, pain and pleasure, egotism and altruism—are as impossible to them now as they were 1881 years ago.

—*Lucifer*, July 1890

Who loves truth in this age for its own sake? How many of us are prepared to search for, accept and carry it out, in the midst of a society in which anything that would achieve success *has to be built on appearances, not on reality, on self-assertion, not on intrinsic value?* We are fully aware of the difficulties in the way of receiving truth. The fair heavenly maiden descends only on...the soil of an impartial, unprejudiced mind, illuminated by pure Spiritual Consciousness. In our century...man...allows himself usually to be drifted down from cradle to grave, nailed to the Procrustean bed of custom and conventionality. Now conventionality—pure and simple—is a congenital LIE, as it is in every case a “*simulation* of feelings according to a received standard”; and where there is any simulation there cannot be any truth.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

WE have mastered the art of dissembling, as the above quotation points out. “Chameleon,” a short story by Anton Chekov, is about a puppy who bit the finger of a workman in a timber yard, and the indignant inspector vowed to teach the owner of the dog a lesson and fine him heavily. However, when he learned that it was the General’s dog he began to caress it and was angry with the workman for complaining, saying that it was impossible for such a little dog to reach up to the finger and bite it. Then, when the Constable pointed out that he was sure it was not the General’s dog, but a stray dog, again the inspector was ready to punish the owner. Thus, by turns, like a Chameleon, the inspector changed colours, depending upon whether the dog belonged to the General or not. Truly, “there is simulation of feelings according to a received standard.” We are all guilty of it at some time or other. We do not dare to express what we *really* feel. Do we honestly express our opinion when we come across a painting or a classic? As Erich Fromm points out, more often than not, if the painting is by a famous painter like Picasso or Van Gogh, we judge it to be extremely beautiful. If we were honest, we would admit that we did not find the painting particularly impressive, but judged it beautiful because we are *supposed* to find it so—because we have heard from our childhood that certain authors and artists are great and that it is a mark of “good taste” to like and admire their work.

There is a lot of connivance to deceiving in the society. People who may be extremely charming in their interaction with others, slander behind their back. In the article “Is Denunciation a Duty?” H.P.B. observes that people died a comparatively quick death by the claws of hungry wild beasts in the arena of the Roman Colosseum, while in our so-called refined and enlightened civilization, behind the closed doors of modern drawing-rooms, the graceful and ferocious great cats sharpen their rose-coloured claws, tearing apart the character of their own best friends, for real or imagined vices and crimes. “Severe denunciation is duty to truth,” on condition that we denounce and fight against the *root* of evil and not the evildoer, who is, most often, the victim and product of

his environment. If a person happens to be “a public officer, a judge or magistrate, a barrister or even a preacher, it is then of course his duty to his country, his conscience and those who put their trust in him, to ‘denounce severely’ every case of ‘treachery, falsehood and rascality’” (*H.P.B. Series No. 33*). It is the duty of Theosophy to expose falsehood and to redress wrong. Thus:

Theosophy has to fight intolerance, prejudice, ignorance and selfishness, hidden under the mantle of hypocrisy. It has to throw all the light it can from the torch of Truth, with which its servants are entrusted. It must do this without fear or hesitation, dreading neither reproof nor condemnation. Theosophy, through its mouthpiece, the Society, has to tell the TRUTH to the very face of LIE; to beard the tiger in its den, without thought or fear of evil consequences, and to set at defiance calumny and threats. *As an Association*, it has not only the right, but the duty to un-cloak vice and do its best to redress wrongs, whether through the voice of its chosen lecturers or the printed word of its journals and publications—making its accusations, however, as impersonal as possible. But its Fellows, or Members, have *individually* no such right. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*, p. 12)

Individually, when the reports of wrong committed by another person reach us, we have no right to believe in them, until we get undeniable proof of the correctness of the accusation. If the report happens to be true, then pity, forbearance and charity should prompt us to excuse our sinning brother. “A Theosophist ought never to forget what is due to the shortcomings and infirmities of human nature.” However, if by allowing the guilty to go unpunished, we are going to cause injury to others in the society, then we must “speak the truth at all costs.” It is to be done after mature deliberation and after consulting our conscience. If it is our duty, under Karma, to point out the wrong in a person, we must do so openly and direct to his face (*The Key to Theosophy*). Says the Buddhist precept:

Condemn no man in his absence; and when forced to reprove, do so to his face, but gently, and in words full of charity and

compassion. For the human heart is like the Kusuli plant: it opens its cup to the sweet morning dew, and closes it before a heavy shower of rain. (*H.P.B. Series No. 33*, p. 41)

Sometimes, we take pride in speaking the truth, in being forthright, in our ability to point out the wrong bluntly without mincing words. Often we hear people say, “I told him point-blank,” which actually means that I told the truth without contemplating the effect my words will have on the person. We must bear in mind some specific and subtle precepts of speech given in the *Laws of Manu*:

Let him say what is true. Let him say what is pleasing.  
Let him utter no disagreeable truth. Let him utter no agreeable falsehood.

“Let him say what is true”—not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because another person might, perhaps, base his own acts upon it, thinking it to be true. “Let him utter no disagreeable truth.” We should be able to tell the truth without hurting another person’s feelings, and if we are not able to do so, it shows that we have failed to build a relationship where we can tell the truth without hurting him. “Should we speak the truth even when it is going to cost a person his life?” is a subtle moral question.

There are two kinds of truth—Relative and Absolute. Absolute Truth or Absolute Knowledge—which is Wisdom—has to be reached or realized by each one for himself. For this, we need to paralyse the appetites of the lower personality. There are certain preliminary preparations and the difficulty of reaching Absolute Truth is described as

outside a certain highly spiritual and elevated state of mind, during which Man is at one with the UNIVERSAL MIND—he can get nought on earth but relative truth or truths, from whatsoever philosophy or religion. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, p. 11)

Relative knowledge is ratiocinative. Purely rational knowledge has its own limitations. Our knowledge of things is limited by our perceptive faculties. We know an object in terms of our sense

perceptions. For instance, a blind person may know a rose only by its smell. A scientist may know even its chemical composition. But the rose *as we see it* is not identical with the rose *as it is in itself*. So, Kant said that there is something like a “thing-in-itself.” Absolute knowledge is the knowledge of the thing-in-itself.

Unfortunately, by knowledge we mean that which we gather through our senses. Science believes that it is not possible to know the constituents and properties of plants and minerals without using chemical and mechanical processes. We can never know about the thoughts and feelings of people till they express the same in words. As against this, *The Voice of the Silence* says that when the *Buddhi* in man is active, he gets the powers of clairvoyance and clairaudience and he can read the thoughts passing through the mind of the ant. Thus the sages and seers could look into the “very kernel of matter and record the soul of things.”

In the case of Great Beings or Wise Men, there is permanent conjunction of *Buddhi* and *Manas*. *The Voice of the Silence* says, “Blend thy Mind and Soul.” We must let our mind contact universal ideas through good books, scriptures, etc. *Depth* of mind comes from enthusiasm and commitment to go deeper into the subject. Instead of asking, “Is this the right answer?” we need to ask, “What is the truth?” and then it becomes an ongoing quest. Besides the depth and breadth of mind we need the heart quality of the mind—developing qualities like love, goodness, altruism, etc. Our modern civilization does not regard morality as a vital factor. As H.P.B. writes:

Our age, we say, is inferior in Wisdom to any other, because it professes, more visibly every day, *contempt for truth and justice, without which there can be no Wisdom*. Because our civilization, built up of shams and appearances, is at best like a beautiful green morass, a bog, spread over a deadly quagmire. Because this century of culture and worship of matter while offering prizes and premiums for every “*best thing*” under the Sun, from the biggest baby and largest orchid down to the strongest pugilist and the fattest pig, has no encouragement to offer to morality; no prize to give for any moral virtue....This

is the age, which although proclaimed as one of physical and moral freedom, is in truth the age of the most ferocious moral and mental slavery, the like of which was never known before. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 32*, p. 2)

“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 thing. 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. Mr. Crosbie says, “Truth, as we ought to know, always explains. When we have the explanation, we have found the truth.” Also at times there is heart response. We have the intuitive feeling from within that *this is true*.

When we take “truth” in its highest sense, we find that the teachings of all the scriptures put together do not contain the whole truth. A different mode of spiritual experience is necessary to grasp the full truth. There has to be direct intuitive apprehension of Spiritual facts. So the claim of any religion that it alone possesses the whole truth is absurd. It is like the story of six blind men. When they came across an elephant, one of them felt its trunk and said that the elephant was like a thick rope. Another touched the legs and concluded the elephant was like a pillar, and so on. All of them were right, but each had only partial truth. So also each religion gives out only partial truth; each needs to cultivate tolerance towards other religions. Hence Jainism points out that various systems of philosophy that give different accounts of the universe, present only different aspects of the many-sided universe. So, too, no person can give complete knowledge of an object—because of

limited understanding, imperfection of speech, etc. Hence they say that every judgement should be qualified by the word “*syad*,” *i.e.*, “in a way,” or “somehow”—in one sense and from one point of view. Like Ancient Wisdom, Theosophy says, “There is no Religion higher than Truth.”

Mr. Crosbie says, “Truth is not a man, nor a book, nor a statement.” Scriptures are only pointers—means of reaching the truth. “As many benefits as there are in a tank stretching free on all sides, so many are there for a truth-realizing Brahman in all the Vedic rites.” (*Gita*, II)

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It is not right to judge a man,  
By hasty glance or passing whim,  
Or think that first impressions can  
Tell all there is to know of him.

Who knows what weight of weariness  
The man we rashly judge may bear,  
The burden of his loneliness  
His blighted hopes his secret cares.

A pompous guise or air of pride  
May only be an outward screen,  
A compensation meant to hide  
A baffled will, a grief unseen.

However odd a person seems,  
However strange his ways may be,  
Within each human spirit gleams  
A spark of true divinity.

So what can first impressions tell?  
Unthinking judgements will not do,  
Who really knows a person well  
May also come to like him too!

## THE RELIGION OF RESPONSIBILITY

IN the world today, we have had it demonstrated to us that the mass mind *can* be educated; a new point of view can be presented to it and a new attitude engendered. If this can be done, then what are the ideas and principles which our leaders should themselves accept and offer to the public to change the minds of millions?

Adult franchise is a mark of political privilege obtained by the people in a democracy; but it is *not* necessarily the mark of a sense of responsibility. Nor is free education always serviceable to the people. The balance between privilege and responsibility has to be maintained. What is needed is such education as will train the people in the responsibility which the vote, free speech, and all the rest, bring.

The virtue of self-help and self-reliance cannot be overstressed. No outside grace can save us unless we help ourselves. The implication of this is far-reaching. Not only has it a political implication; it has a philosophical implication also. And unless that basic philosophical implication is grasped, the social, economic and political implications will not be clearly understood. People everywhere should be taught to rely *not* on political leaders and parties, but on principles. On what principles?

Man is a self-conscious intelligence with the power to choose between right and wrong. All human privileges are most intimately connected with this basic power to choose, to decide, to will freely. Because this power is not used, the corresponding privileges do not accrue to man. And the power of choice and determination is not used because such a use entails responsibility. Men want privileges without responsibility; but Nature speaks most emphatically and clearly, pointing to the fact that privilege and responsibility are coeval, inseparable, the two sides of the same coin. Rights cannot be enjoyed without execution of duties; duties properly performed never fail to bring in their train privileges.

The Religion of Responsibility is what all people need; it cannot be brought to the hearts of men and women through dictatorship and autocracy which enslave human minds, enchain human hearts

and degrade human morals; but on the other hand neither can it be brought to our hearts by the power of the vote, of free speech, and the like, which so-called democracies offer to their citizens through the machinery of party politics.

The Religion of Responsibility comes through a perception of the place of man in the scheme of things, of the purpose of human evolution, of the fundamental which the Laws of Manu put forward—“Other-dependence is misery; Self-dependence is happiness.” The pivotal doctrine of the Religion of Responsibility is that Man grows by self-induced and self-devised efforts; it admits of no privileges or special gifts, save those won by man’s own Soul or Ego through personal effort; hence, whatever merits a man possesses have been acquired by that Soul throughout a long series of reincarnations.

The greatest difficulty in man’s way in practising the Religion of Responsibility is rooted in the wrong education which he has been receiving for several centuries. The education of the public everywhere has stressed the importance of a falsehood, which in the language of the Buddhist philosophy is the Heresy of Separateness. Organized creeds teach the false doctrine of religions—one true, others false. Organized social groups also teach the same false idea that differences in social status mean superiority and inferiority—the Eastern castes are different one from the other, but not superior and inferior; the Western classes are different, but capitalists are not superior to the labourers any more than the proletarians are superior to the bourgeois. Organized political parties offer different programmes, but mere affiliation to a particular party does not confer superiority or inferiority; a man is not superior or inferior from the mere fact of belonging to a political party. Organized nations with different cultures and different historical backgrounds are different one from the other, but no nation is superior to the others. The Heresy of Separateness has to be destroyed ere the true education of the public can really make progress in the Religion of Responsibility.

A Culture with a universal outlook which broadens human

sympathies and deepens human insight is what we need. It may be worth our while to consider some of the principles of the Religion of Responsibility appropriate to the mind of the race which is unfolding now.

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It is easy enough to be pleasant,  
 When life flows by like a song,  
 But the man worth while is one who will smile,  
 When everything goes dead wrong.  
 For the test of the heart is trouble,  
 And it always comes with the years,  
 And the smile that is worth the praise of the earth  
 Is the one that shines through tears.

It is easy enough to be prudent,  
 When nothing tempts you to stray,  
 When without or within no voice of sin  
 Is luring your soul away;  
 But it's only a negative virtue  
 Until it is tried by fire,  
 And the life that is worth the honour of the earth  
 Is the one that resists desire.

By the cynic, the sad, the fallen,  
 Who had no strength for the strife,  
 The world's highway is cumbered today;  
 They make up the sum of life.  
 But the virtue that conquers passion,  
 And the sorrow that hides in a smile,  
 It is these that are worth the homage of the earth  
 For we find them but once in a while.

—OSCAR WILDE

## THE WONDER THAT WAS EGYPT

### II

HAVING seen how ancient India influenced the Egyptian civilization, when we study and compare the traditions and beliefs of the people of this mighty civilization with those of the East, we find a great deal of similarity.

Slow evolutionary processes evolved various kingdoms of nature from the simplest form to the most complex. Man is the crown piece of evolution. But infant humanity was not left alone to work out its future progress. The human child is cared for by its parents and elders. The child is given its education by elders at home and in school. This knowledge is passed on from elder to younger, from senior to junior, older generation to younger generation. Similarly, when for the first time man became a thinking being, there were divine instructors to guide him. These divine beings had already undergone evolutionary progress and perfected themselves in earlier worlds. They were like our graduates and post-graduates who come back to schools and colleges to teach others. These god-like beings guided and instructed early humanity until it produced its own guides and elders to carry on this tradition. They taught to mankind the arts and sciences, astrology, agriculture, architecture, mathematics and astronomy.

Confirming this tradition, Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that it is *he* who gave the divine wisdom to Vivasvat, which was passed on to Manu and then to Ikshwaku. Ikshwaku “founded the line of Solar Kings, who in early times in India were men of supreme knowledge. They were adepts every one, and ruled the lands as only adepts could” (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 103). The great body of knowledge has come down to us from gods and demi-gods through our great adept-kings. Pharaohs were the adept-kings of Egypt. Egypt also had its divine instructors in Isis-Osiris. Prosperity and advancement of Egypt is attributed to Isis-Osiris.

As Bosuage shows, the Egyptians themselves confessed that science flourished in their country only since Isis-Osiris, whom

they continue to adore as gods, “though they had become Princes in human form.” And he adds of Osiris-Isis (the divine androgyne): “It is said that this Prince (Isis-Osiris) built cities in Egypt, stopped the overflowing of the Nile; invented agriculture, the use of the vine, astronomy, and geometry.” (*S.D.*, II, 366)

Not only Herodotus—the “father of History”—tells us of the marvellous dynasties of gods that preceded the reign of mortals, followed by the dynasties of demi-gods, Heroes, and finally men, but the whole series of classics support him; Diodorus, Eratosthenes, Plato, Manetho, etc., etc., repeat the same, and never vary the order given. (*S.D.*, II, 367)

Herodotus was shown by the priests of Egypt the statues of their human Kings and Pontiffs-*piromis* (the archi-prophets or Maha-Chohans of the temples), *born one from the other* (without the intervention of woman) who had reigned before Menes, their first *human King*. These statues, he says, were enormous colossi in wood, three hundred and forty-five in number, *each of which had his name, his history and his annals*. And they assured Herodotus...that no historian could ever understand or write an account of these superhuman Kings, unless he had studied and learned the history of *the three dynasties* that preceded the human—namely, the DYNASTIES OF THE GODS, that of demi-gods, and of the Heroes, or giants. These “three dynasties” are the three Races. (*S.D.*, II, 369)

In the Egyptian tradition, Osiris and Isis hold a sacred and special position. On a pre-cosmic level, they represent Spirit-matter or ideation-form aspect, giving birth to Logos or son—Horus or Thoth. According to the Osiris-Isis myth, Osiris was an earthly ruler, who was popular with his subjects. His brother, Set (or Typhon), was jealous of this popularity and plotted against Osiris. He secretly obtained his brother’s measurements and had a magnificent casket made to fit. This casket was in the form of a human-shaped box. Set then organized a large feast to which Osiris and a number of others were invited. At the height of the festivities Set produced the casket and announced that it would be given to whoever it

fitted. All the guests tried the casket for size, but none fitted until finally Osiris stepped into it. Set immediately slammed the lid shut and sealed the casket. The sealed coffin was then thrown into the Nile. Isis was devastated at the loss of her husband and searched for the casket and eventually found it. Before burial, for safekeeping she concealed it in the marshes beside the Nile. Unfortunately for Isis, Set found the casket and he chopped the body of Osiris into 14 pieces, and scattered the parts throughout the land of Egypt. Isis had then to set out again, looking for the parts of her husband. Eventually she reassembled Osiris and wrapped him in bandages. Isis breathed life back into Osiris’ body and it was then that Horus was conceived. As we shall see, the myth can be interpreted in various ways.

“The Egyptians,” says Dunlap, “distinguish between an older and younger Horus, the former the *brother* of Osiris, the latter the *son* of Osiris and Isis.” The first is the *Idea* of the world remaining in the Demiurgic Mind, “born in darkness before the creation of the world.” The second Horus is this “idea” going forth from the *Logos*, becoming clothed with matter, and assuming an actual existence. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 56)

The Sun (the Father), the Moon (the Mother), and Mercury-Thoth (the Son), were the earliest Trinity of the Egyptians, who personified them in Osiris, Isis, and Thoth (Hermes). (*S.D.*, II, 462)

Thus, Horus represents “unexpressed thought” as well as the physical manifested universe, and Sun corresponds to *Jiva* [or *Prana*] and Osiris. This is very suggestive, as Osiris corresponds to *Jiva*, “the one Life,” and various principles are but modifications of *Jiva*. Thus:

The four chief aspects of Osiris were—Osiris-Phtah (Light), the spiritual aspect; Osiris-Horus (Mind), the intellectual *manasic* aspect; Osiris-Lunus, the “Lunar” or psychic, astral aspect; Osiris-Typhon, Daimonic, or physical, material, therefore passionate, turbulent aspect. In these four aspects he symbolizes the dual EGO—the divine and the human, the cosmic-spiritual and terrestrial. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Osiris is also considered to be the greatest god of Egypt, the first manifesting deity, third logos, identical with *Ahura Mazda* of Zoroastrian religion. Osiris, when differentiated and personified, becomes Typhon, his brother, Isis and Nephtys his sisters, Horus his son and his other aspects. In Zoroastrian religion, *Ahura Mazda* and *Ahriman* (*Angra Mainyu*) are the representatives of Good and Evil, of Light and Darkness, of Spiritual and material elements in man. So are the Egyptian Osiris and Typhon. They are the two opposite poles of one creative power, the eternal pair of good and (necessary) evil, God and Devil, Sura and Asura, Deva and Danava. In various religious traditions, these two are shown warring against each other. As for the inner meaning of “Wars in Heaven,” we are told:

The great “Wars in Heaven,” in the Puranas; the wars of the Titans, in Hesiod and other classical writers; the “struggles,” also in the Egyptian legend between Osiris and Typhon, and even those in the Scandinavian legends, all refer to the same subject....They relate severally to astronomical, theogonical and human struggles; to the adjustment of orbs, and the supremacy among nations and tribes. The “Struggle for Existence” and the “Survival of the Fittest” reigned supreme from the moment that Kosmos manifested into being, and could hardly escape the observant eye of the ancient Sages. (*S.D.*, I, 202)

At another level, it represents the war within the disciple. When for the first time a disciple resolves to walk the spiritual path, his own evil tendencies, threatened with dethronement, line up as a mighty army in the war, as the evil *Kauravas* did against the *Pandavas* in the great epic of *Mahabharata*. It is the struggle of man’s good nature against the force of his own evil propensities and that of his own race. Explaining this allegory of the opposing forces of Osiris and Typhon, we are further told:

Typhon was also called Set. He is simply the *dark side* of Osiris, his brother, as *Angra Mainyu* is the black shadow of *Ahuramazda*. Terrestrially, all these allegories were connected

with the trials of adeptship and initiation. Astronomically, they referred to the Solar and Lunar eclipses, the mythical explanations of which we find to this day in India and Ceylon, where anyone can study the allegorical narratives and traditions which have remained unchanged for many thousands of years. (*S.D.*, II, 380)

Typhon was but a symbol for the lower quaternary, the ever conflicting and turbulent principles of differentiated chaotic matter, whether in the Universe or in Man, while Osiris symbolized the higher spiritual triad. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

The greatest mystery, the mystery of man’s true nature, was known to the Egyptians. They knew that man is not just his body, which dies. They believed man to be made up of seven souls, seven constituents. According to Egyptologists, sevenfold constitution of man was the cardinal doctrine of old Egyptians. H.P.B. confirms that Seven Souls of Pharaoh often mentioned in Egyptian texts refer to seven principles of man. Mr. G. Massey shows striking similarity between Esoteric and Egyptian teaching with regard to the constitution of man in the following tabulation:

(Esoteric) Indian

Egyptian

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>Rupa</i> , body or element of form. | 1. <i>Kha</i> , body.                            |
| 2. <i>Prana</i> , the breath of life.     | 2. <i>Ba</i> , the Soul of Breath.               |
| 3. Astral Body.                           | 3. <i>Khaba</i> , the shade.                     |
| 4. <i>Manas</i> —or Intelligence.         | 4. <i>Akhu</i> , Intelligence or Perception.     |
| 5. <i>Kama-rupa</i> , or animal soul.*    | 5. <i>Seb</i> , ancestral Soul.                  |
| 6. Buddhi, Spiritual Soul.                | 6. <i>Putah</i> , the first intellectual father. |
| 7. <i>Atma</i> , pure spirit.             | 7. <i>Atmu</i> , divine or eternal soul.         |

\* This is a great mistake made in the Esoteric enumeration. *Manas* is the fifth, not the fourth; and *Manas* corresponds precisely with *Seb*, the Egyptian fifth principle, for that portion of *Manas*, which follows the two higher principles, is the ancestral soul, indeed, the bright, immortal thread of the higher Ego, to which clings the Spiritual aroma of all the lives or births. (*S.D.*, II, 632)

They compared man's sevenfold nature with *seven cubits* of wheat. Wheat was sacred to the Egyptians and they even placed wheat with their mummies in the coffins. Wheat was, with the Egyptians, the symbol of the Law of Retribution or Karma. The mystery of what happens to man after death is explained in detail in the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. When a man dies, he is considered to be still sevenfold—"a direct reference to the esoteric division of man's principles symbolized by the divine wheat." This is represented by *wheat seven cubits high* in the region of the Manes (disembodied men). But after an interval, his higher three principles separate from the lower four and reach the heaven world represented by *wheat three cubits high* in the land of Aanroo. Now Aanroo is the heaven world or *Swarga* or *Devachan*. Thus, "Egyptians had the same esoteric philosophy which is now taught by the cis-Himalayan adepts, who, when buried, have corn and wheat placed over them." (*S.D.*, II, 374 fn.)

(*To be concluded*)

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THE MIND is like a bright pearl. If obstructed by material desires, it is like a pearl covered with mud and sand. But if clasped by passions, it is like a pearl adorned with silver and gold. Accordingly, a scholar is afraid not of an unclean malady, but of the difficult cure of a clean malady; and he fears not a barrier in events, but the difficult removal of a barrier in principles.

—HUNG TZU-CH'ENG

## VIVEKA—SPIRITUAL DISCRIMINATION

THE seventh chapter of the *Gita* is named *Jnana-Vijnana Yoga*, translated by Mr. Judge as "Devotion by means of Spiritual Discernment." Shankara defines *Viveka* as discrimination; wisdom or *Buddhi* made active. In this seventh chapter, Sri Krishna emphasizes the need to translate knowledge into a living reality by practising it, *i.e.*, the knowledge acquired through the higher mind has to be realized. Sri Krishna points out the difficulty involved in reaching perfection in the following verse:

Among thousands of mortals a single one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving perhaps a single one knows me as I am. (p. 53)

The same idea is echoed by both Buddha and Shankara. They say that it is difficult to be born as a human being. After being born as a human being, it is difficult to live the life of a man. To be truly human is to exhibit in us the natural qualities of a human being, *viz.*, "kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, good-will to all, justice and generosity—attributes which belong specifically to the human kingdom and are natural to man when he has developed the qualities of a human being." After having taken birth as a human being the difficulty is to get to hear the true Law. The final difficulty is to attain to enlightenment.

In *Viveka Chudamani*, Shankara says that foolish is the man who does not strive after freedom from bondage—after obtaining, at last, a human birth. He adds that any amount of knowledge of the Vedas, performing sacrifices, doing good works and worshipping the gods cannot free one from bondage even after a period of a hundred *Brahma-yugas* without the knowledge of union with the Self or Spirit.

Therefore let the wise one strive after Freedom, giving up all longing for sensual self-indulgence; approaching the good, great Teacher (the Higher Self) with soul intent on the object of the teaching. (Verse 8)

The *Gita* points out that knowledge enables us to be humble

and to serve well our fellowmen. Acquisition of such knowledge is not easy and is not given to everyone. The pupil must have willingness and ability to learn, and the teacher must be willing and capable of imparting his knowledge to the pupil. The motive of the student should be pure. Even when one becomes learned, it is not easy to speculate on the ultimate basis of life, because of our lower nature, which is all the time under delusion. Hence Krishna says, "Take refuge alone with me; grieve not, for I shall deliver thee from all transgressions" (*Gita*, XVIII). Buddha, the Enlightened One, tells us, "The Self is the Lord of self; what higher Lord could there be? When a man subdues well his self, he will find a Lord very difficult to find." (*The Dhammapada*, verse 160)

When the disciple takes refuge in the Self—Krishna—who is called the *Jagat Guru*, Universal Teacher—he has found his *Guru*. Arjuna was indeed fortunate to recognize in Krishna his *Guru*. Sankara says that faith (*sraddha*) and penance (*tapas*) are parts of meditation and these must be inherent in the disciple. The seeker should possess discernment and dispassion, control of the mind, desire to obtain emancipation; for these are *four preparatory steps of training*. Discernment means that the Eternal is the only reality, all else is evanescent, *i.e.*, learning "to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting." This is followed by Dispassion resulting in renunciation of fruits of action, whether in this world or in the next. Dispassion is aversion to all sensory pleasures of sight, sound, etc.—all that are derived from transitory objects of enjoyment—what the *Upanishads* call *Preyas*—pleasures of little worth. After pondering over their temporary, evanescent nature, one should avoid them.

Then, Shankara delineates the third of the four achievements, *viz.*, the six Graces or Treasures which the disciple should try to cultivate. These are:

(1) "*Sama*" or control of the mind. *Sama* means that steady state of mind through which one can concentrate on the ultimate goal or reality.

Mr. Judge says that the mind, though called an "internal organ,"

is only an instrument of the Soul in gaining experience.

But the Mind is a most important factor in the pursuit of concentration; one indeed without which concentration cannot be obtained, and therefore we see in the first book that to this subject Patanjali devotes attention. He shows that the mind is, as he terms it, "modified" by any object or subject brought before it, or to which it is directed. (*Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, p. xi)

The mind taking the shape of the object or subject to which it is directed is called its modification. Patanjali says that the modifications of the mind are of five kinds: "They are, Correct Cognition, Misconception, Fancy [or imagination], Sleep and Memory. Correct Cognition results from Perception, Inference, and Testimony. Misconception is Erroneous Notion arising from lack of Correct Cognition" (*Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, p. 4). Imagination is the creation of a mental image of an object without any direct observation, but merely based on words. Sleep is that activity wherein there is complete absence of cognition or memory. Memory is the retention of what one has observed.

To attain to concentration one must discipline the mind through the means of Exercise and Dispassion. Exercise or *abhyasa* is uninterrupted effort and Dispassion is detachment from desires. "The obstacles in the way of him who desires to attain concentration are Sickness, Languor, Doubt, Carelessness, Laziness, Addiction to objects of sense, Erroneous Perception, Failure to attain any stage of abstraction, and Instability in any state when attained." (*Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, pp. 12-13)

To overcome the above obstacles, Patanjali's advice is: "Through the practising of Benevolence, Tenderness, complacency and disregard for objects of happiness, grief, virtue and vice, the mind becomes purified." Then he goes on to enumerate eight steps which are conducive to concentration.

(2) The second of the six Graces is "*Dama*"—the control of the senses. Shankara says that it consists in the withdrawal of two types of sense organs—*Jnanendriyas* (organs of sensation) and

*Karmendriyas* (organs of action) from their objects. There is a story narrated by Sage Yajnavalkya in *Brihadaranyakopaniṣad*. The threefold offspring of Prajapati—Gods, Men and Demons—lived as students of sacred knowledge with their father. When their learning was completed they all asked him for practical instruction. “Tell us, *Gurudeva*, our duty.” Prajapati said to each of them, “Da, Da, Da.” Then he asked the Gods, Men and Demons their understanding of “Da.” The Gods understood “Da” to mean *Damyata*, control of oneself. Men understood “Da” to mean *Datta*, “to give.” For Demons the word implied *Dayadhvam* or compassion. In other words, “Da, Da, Da” means the practice of self-control, charity, and compassion.

(3) The third of the Graces is *Uparathi*, which means turning away from objects of sense—which is the true withdrawal. (4) The fourth is *Titiksha*—endurance of all pain and sorrow—patience and tolerance without a thought of dejection, lamentation or retaliation. “*Kshanti*, patience sweet, that naught can ruffle,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. “Enduring patience is the highest tapas,” teaches Lord Buddha. (5) The fifth is *Shraddha* or faith, which means absolute faith in the teachings and the teacher by which the goal is reached. (6) The last of the Graces is *Samadana*, which means right meditation, or fixing the mind on the pure eternal Spirit, without being deluded by worldly objects.

Finally, the last of the four qualifications or preparations is *Mumukṣutva*. It is the desire to be liberated from delusive thoughts, selfishness and sensuality by cultivating true discernment and knowing one’s true self. Initially, our desire to free ourselves from bondage may be slight. But by cultivating control of the mind through dispassion and other graces like faith, meditation and patience, and with the grace of the Guru we can certainly master the four perfections. In *Vivekachudamani*, Shankara says:

Therefore mind is the cause of man’s bondage, and in turn of his liberation; when darkened by the powers of passion it is the cause of bondage, and when pure of passion and darkness it is the cause of liberation. (verse 175)

Where discernment and dispassion are dominant, gaining purity, the mind makes for liberation; therefore let the wise man who seeks liberation strengthen these two in himself as the first step. (verse 176)

Sickness is not cured by saying “Medicine,” but by drinking it. So a man is not set free by the name of the Eternal without discerning the Eternal. (verse 64)

Elsewhere Shankara says:

There is no known comparison in all the three worlds for the venerable teacher who bestows knowledge. Among all means of liberation, devotion verily is the most potent. The fixing of the attention on the true Master, the Divine Self, is declared to be devotion.

The “Great Master” is the term used by the Lanoos or Chelas to indicate one’s “HIGHER SELF,” writes H.P.B. To overcome all ills she advises the practice of Altruism, Altruism in thought, word and deed, for it purifies the sheaths of the soul and permits the light from the Higher Manas to shine on our brain-mind.

On the plane of spirituality, to reach the Sun of Truth we must work in dead earnest for the development of our higher nature. We know that by paralyzing gradually within ourselves the appetites of the lower personality, and thereby deadening the voice of the purely physiological mind—that mind which depends upon, and is inseparable from, its medium or *vehicle*, the organic brain—the animal in us may make room for the spiritual; and once aroused from its latent state, the highest spiritual senses and perceptions grow in us in proportion, and develop *pari passu* with the “divine man.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, pp. 2-3)

In *Kaivalyopanishad*, Brahma tells Ashwalayana, who wanted to acquire knowledge of the ultimate truth, “By faith, devotion and meditation you can understand the ultimate truth.”

It is only through faith, devotion and meditation that we can free ourselves from bondage and realize the One Reality. Then we will no more be acting on the plane of duality, of thine and mine,

but will become one with the Supreme.

To sum up, the various steps that are to be followed, which will enable us by constant meditation to be united to Krishna, the Higher Self within, are: Detachment from all objects of sense; Mind-control—mental equilibrium or calmness; Control of the Senses; Patience and Forbearance; Renunciation of the fruits of action; Study of the Scriptures; Meditation on the Supreme Reality.

When we realize that we are the very Brahman, our delusion will be destroyed and we will carry out the will of Krishna—the Supreme Master of Devotion, residing in us while in a body.

“I salute the lineage of Teachers, beginning with Siva, the Lord (linked by) Sankaracharya in the middle; and extending down to my own teacher.” (Sloka on *Guruparampara*)

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KIRKEGAARD warns us of too comfortable living: A wild duck settled in a cozy barn-yard where he ate his fill for many months. He did not spread his wings to fight the strong winds that blew over his head. He stilled within him the instinct to fly north or south with his brothers. A year passed. One day he saw over his head wild ducks in flight. His heart moved within him, and he flapped his wings mightily as he tried to rise from the ground. But the poor duck had grown too fat. He could not rise. He is still in the barn-yard.

So there are people whose hearts are moved, their eyes light up, and they know where they ought to be, but comfortable living has made them too weak to respond and rise.

—*Words of Comfort*

## THEOSOPHY IN DAILY LIFE

Men cannot all be Occultists, but they can all be Theosophists. Many who have never heard of the Society are Theosophists without knowing it themselves; for the essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man, the adjustment of his godlike qualities and aspirations, and their sway over the terrestrial or animal passions in him. Kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, good-will to all beings, and perfect justice to others as to one's self, are its chief features. He who teaches Theosophy preaches the gospel of good-will; and the converse of this is true also—he who preaches the gospel of good-will teaches Theosophy.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

THERE is great confusion and misunderstanding in the public mind about the beneficent influence of Theosophy. It would be wrong to judge and condemn the great philosophy because of the limitations and weaknesses of its students and votaries. To belittle the teachings of the Buddha because professing Buddhists are not living according to the *Panchasila* would be an injustice to the Teacher and his pure teachings. Similarly, professing theosophists, being human, often do fail to live up to the very high ideals, the lofty principles and noble precepts of Theosophy; and further, they do err in numerous ways; but that should not deter a justice-loving mind from examining and accepting Theosophy on its own merits.

If one wants to ascertain what the pure and genuine doctrines of Jesus are, one must go, not to the priests and prelates of any church, but to the Sermon on the Mount and his other authentic sayings. Similarly, if anyone desires to find out what Theosophy actually is, he should not just read and listen to those who call themselves theosophists, but must read what the Teacher of Theosophy taught. Let a truth-seeking enquirer or a justice-loving doubter go direct to the writings of H. P. Blavatsky; let him read the simple, straightforward presentation given by her in *The Key to Theosophy*, for instance.

In her very first book, *Isis Unveiled* (II, 124), Madame Blavatsky gave three propositions which constitute the basis and foundation of Theosophic living:

- (1) Everything existing, exists from natural causes.
- (2) Virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment.
- (3) The state of man in this world is probationary.

Anyone desirous of living the life of the Soul will find in these three propositions all that is necessary. No doubt he will require further knowledge to grasp their implications, but as a starting point, and as a stable foundation for day-to-day living, any person will find these propositions of great practical value. As Madame Blavatsky herself wrote:

We might add that on these three principles rested the universal foundation of every religious creed: God, and individual immortality for every man—if he could but win it. However puzzling the subsequent theological tenets; however seemingly incomprehensible the metaphysical abstractions which have convulsed the theology of every one of the great religions of mankind as soon as it was placed on a sure footing, the above is found to be the essence of every religious philosophy, with the exception of later Christianity. It was that of Zoroaster, of Pythagoras, of Plato, of Jesus, and even of Moses, albeit the teachings of the Jewish lawgiver have been so piously tampered with.

These three propositions may be examined briefly:

- (1) *Everything existing, exists from natural causes.*

This is not at all difficult for anyone to accept in this era when modern science is so greatly worshipped, for it only extends the scientific axiom that law governs the whole universe. Modern science asserts that law and order prevail everywhere in visible nature—in the dust below our feet and in the stars above our head. Theosophy or ancient science accepts this teaching, but extends it to the invisible universe. Moral and mental conditions also are governed by Law, and there is the rhythm, harmony and order of

Justice in the realm of human thought, will and feeling. In other words, there is no miracle and everything that happens is the result of Law—eternal, immutable, ever active. So-called miracles are but the results of the operation of natural laws not yet known to the world of ordinary knowledge; but such laws were and are known and their working can be theoretically understood and practically used in human service, just as the modern scientist utilizes the law of gravity, etc.

From this recognition of the entire universe as manifesting and existing under Law, men and women have to admit that their own love and labour, their own thoughts and feelings, their own relationship to others, are also governed by that Law. There is, therefore, the second proposition:

- (2) *Virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment.*

Our greatest puzzle when we ourselves experience misery or face the sufferings of others consists in explaining the reasons. The religious explanation that vices, weaknesses, diseases and evils of all sorts are created by God is a most unreasonable, depressing and blasphemous doctrine. How absurd is the notion of an all-powerful God creating weaknesses, an all-wise God creating ignorance, an all-loving God creating hatred, an ever-living immortal God creating disease and death! Even man-made law does not without a trial condemn a person for crimes committed, but an all-just God visits agony upon the bodies of infants who have not had even an opportunity to commit wrong! Many sophistries are advanced as possible explanations, but none will satisfy our intelligent minds if we persist in our enquiry, and none will bring relief to our hearts troubled by afflictions of a hundred kind. There is one and only one explanation and that is to be found in the Law of Karma or of Ethical Causation, which is embodied in our second proposition—“Virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment.” This Law teaches that each one of us must pay his own debts; that the hands which smite us are our own hands; and that we reap whatever we have sown.

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true  
 Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;  
 Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge,  
 Or after many days.

By this the slayer's knife did stab himself;  
 The unjust judge hath lost his own defender;  
 The false tongue dooms its lie; the creeping thief  
 And spoiler rob, to render.

But even then, in the final analysis, it is not yet clear to us why we are here and what the purpose of life is. The puzzle and the riddle of life is solved when to the Law of Karma or Justice we add the truth of the third of our propositions:

(3) *The state of man in this world is probationary.*

All repeat that this world is a school and that each one of us is here to learn the lessons of life, to know himself as he really is, joined to this universe in which good and evil, light and darkness, continuously alternate. Shall it be ever and ever so? Shall we wake up but to go to sleep and then wake up again—for ever and for ever? Shall we go through the round of pleasure and pain for ever and for ever? The answer of Theosophy is simple and self-evidently true: “When the lesson is learnt, the necessity ceases.” When we have perceived and realized life’s objective, when all the lessons of life are learnt, Liberty and Enlightenment of Soul become ours. Life in this world is probationary—we are on trial; pleasures tempt and pains test us; when the temptations are resisted and overcome and when the tests are faced and passed, the Soul enjoys the Bliss-*Ananda* of its own divinity and its own immortality.

Liberty of Soul springs from the enlightenment of the Soul; we therefore need knowledge of how to free ourselves from every kind of slavery, limitation and weakness. Theosophy is the science which enables us to achieve this illumination and to realize this liberty by making us stand on our own feet, breathe the air of freedom, and accept the responsibility for our own deeds.

## 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:** Why is it so difficult to forgive and forget? It is said that time is a great healer, but some painful or traumatic experiences are never forgotten. What is the remedy?

**Answer:** In our age, competition, one-upmanship, supremacy, exploitation of those weaker has become a way of life. Therefore, when someone wrongs us or exploits us, a strong feeling of hurt and anger is experienced. Also, the society we live in has given us our ideas and false values as regards “human dignity” and “self-respect.” When these are violated, man is outraged. It is much easier to forgive a loved one, but much more difficult to do so when that other person happens to be someone we do not particularly like; happens to be our opponent or a competitor; happens to be (often deservedly) ahead of us, or appears to be favoured by fortune for no apparent reason. No one can hurt us unless we give him the power to do so. Our mind is a free bird, which cannot be chained or hurt unless we consent. Somehow, unless we give back, hit back, make the other suffer as we have suffered, and make him pay, we cannot rest in peace—not realizing that the one against whom we feel hatred is our own erring brother; forgetting that the law of Karma works ceaselessly, justly and accurately. It is because, often we do not see the wrongdoer “pay” for his actions that we are tempted to take the law, as it were, in our own hands to mete out “justice” ourselves. We are not expected to supinely accept ill treatment or injustice, though according to the highest standard of spirituality, if the injustice is against oneself, one must let it go. We must point out the wrong, gently but firmly, wherever possible, and do our best to redress the wrong, but having done all in our

power, we must resign.

We are asked to “forgive and largely forget.” If we are able to forget, then the question of forgiving does not arise. One of the methods for forgetting is that when thoughts return, we do not lend them energy. We can allow the thoughts to pass without identifying with them. A French proverb says: “To understand is to forgive.” At first, we need to try and understand the “why” of things, as a theosophical discipline, for it helps to know *how* to forgive and forget and *how* to overcome obstacles. If we have taken care to understand the experience with all its implications, *i.e.*, what caused it; what was the lesson to be learnt; what in our nature needs changing, etc., then there results conscious acceptance. However, when the memories come back, as it were from behind, it often becomes difficult, especially when we are already depressed, tired or unwell. It is then that these memories get the upper hand and we end up feeling self-pity or regret or bitterness or anger. That is why “memory” is considered a great hindrance on the spiritual path.

If we have learnt to take smaller experiences in our stride, then the bigger losses do not throw us off-balance—even when they do, we are able to bounce back.

What is the lesson we can learn? Those particular incidents, which leave a deep impact or rather scar on our being, are indicators that we have not learnt to cope with problems in those areas—because all those traumatic experiences which we describe as unforgettable and which we are unable to face without being shaken, others are able to face without much perturbation. It is a sure indication that we need to work in those areas. We are especially vulnerable in some parts of our psychological make-up, and that may be the result of similar experiences in the past. In the case of a person who might have burnt himself in a particular life, his physical and mental memory is so impressed by that experience that in the next life he will instinctively stay away from fire. In the same way the *Kama* principle can be given such strong impressions that in coming lives we have instinctive likes and dislikes for the

same. These impressions are made stronger and deeper by encouraging them so that all the sheaths of the soul are, as it were, soaked through and through with it. The only remedy is to learn to analyze the root cause of our resentment and learn to deal with it. The chief cause of hurt feelings is our own exaggerated self-image and the sense of our egoistic importance.

We need to cultivate detachment. The more we remember that *we* are not the personality and stop identifying with its experiences, the less is the force of those experiences. We have to be able to take objective position. We have to see that it is not the whole of me. Rape can leave lifetime trauma, but we know that we are not the body. We tend to wallow in self-pity instead of facing the facts. Now that it has happened, what can I do? As shown in a movie, a woman who was a victim of rape decided to give birth to the child and then groomed him to be a musician. Thus, we can use that very experience constructively to get over the trauma. A man whose son had died of pneumonia, as a result of getting wet in the rain, could not get over the trauma of the loss, till he decided to help all those without shelter, by reaching them to dry places. Another man having lost all his family members in an accident went into deep depression. Then at one stroke he got over the trauma by undertaking to educate slum children. All sorrow left him. A new family was found.

The above instances of overcoming life’s trauma by diverting our energy and concern to more creative pursuits show why Theosophy recommends “*sat-sang*”—companionship with the true, the good and the beautiful. “Forgetfulness of the personal self and sincere altruism,” is H.P.B.’s remedy for all woes. Participating in another’s joys and sorrows, we tend to forget ourselves and therefore it becomes easy to forgive people who are after all only instrumental in bringing Karmic misfortunes to us. There is a prayer:

Teach me to feel another’s woe, to hide the fault I see;  
The mercy I to others show, that mercy show to me.

Life is a school and it is all made up of learning. Traumatic experiences are often opportunities to turn inward for the solution.

**Question:** It seems everything in life is a matter of luck—good or bad. Are some people more “lucky” than we are, all the time? It seems they are most advantaged from the beginning of their life.

**Answer:** To begin with, “lucky” people are those born in favourable circumstances. When we say that someone is lucky, generally there is a tinge of jealousy and disappointment that we do not have those advantages. There is a feeling that he/she is favoured, failing to realize that the “luck” which manifests in advantageous surroundings or in having all things going smooth and right is the result of Karma of this or previous lives. Often, it results from the attitude of complete resignation to whatever comes in life. “Lucky” people are often those who are not anxious but display faith in the law. “Anxiety” puts an invisible obstacle in the path of what we want done. In the absence of anxiety, there is clarity of perspective and it facilitates to turn the tide in a favourable direction. At times, it is not as if the person is advantaged, but he has the knack of turning to his advantage whatever comes his way. The most arduous task is done with such pleasure that it can make others feel that he is lucky to be doing it. For instance, when Tom Sawyer was asked by his aunt to paint the compound wall, he began doing it with such interest and pleasure that other boys actually bribed him with apples, shiny buttons, souvenirs, etc., to allow them to do his work! Often it is the case of “the grass being greener on the other side.”

We must not be in a hurry to judge everyday circumstances as “lucky” or “unlucky.” Often, an obvious setback proves to be an opportunity in disguise, and *vice versa*. There is the story of a poor farmer in China. When he lost his only horse that helped him in his fieldwork, people pitied him and considered him unfortunate. The farmer himself was so calm, that admiring his attitude the villagers donated him a horse. At this, people said, “What a lucky man!” A few days later, when his son riding the horse fell and broke his leg, it was judged unfortunate, but when due to his broken leg the son missed getting enrolled in the army, again the farmer was considered lucky, and so on. All through the various circumstances, when people judged him lucky and unlucky by

turns, the farmer kept saying, “We will see.”

While it is true that so-called luck or advantages are the result of Karma, whether they are conducive to spiritual progress or not is determined by the way we handle them. It appears that seldom have we the wisdom to use the advantages beneficently. As Mr. Judge writes:

It is quite true that we may often find persons surrounded with great advantages but who make no corresponding use of them or pay but little regard to them. But this very fact in itself goes to show that the so-called advantageous position in life is really not good nor fortunate in the true and inner meaning of those words. The fortunate one has money and teachers, ability, and means to travel and fill the surroundings with the works of art, with music and with ease. But these are like the tropical airs that enervate the body; these enervate the character instead of building it up. They do not in themselves tend to the acquirement of any virtue whatever but rather to the opposite, by reason of the constant steeping of the senses in the subtle essences of the sensuous world. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 9)

On the other hand, what the world considers as disadvantage is the real “advantage” from the point of view of soul. Struggle, adversity, poverty, etc., help in gaining strength and building of character.

It therefore depends on us how we define personal luck or ill luck. One person who “misses the bus” may growl at his bad luck, another who is used to taking everything in his stride moves on without wasting energy in wailing or becoming ineffective. Even when good fortune smiles on him he is doubly cautious to use the opportunity advantageously for himself and for others, since the higher goal of life is ever kept in sight.

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MAKE ye the world a bit better or more beautiful because ye have lived in it.

—FRANCIS BACON

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Who was William Shakespeare? Was he the author of the 38 plays, 150 sonnets and five long poems attributed to him? Some believe that he never wrote anything. In a recently published book—authored jointly by two scholars, Brenda James and Prof. William Rubenstein—the authors claim to have found historical evidence to the effect that the “real” Shakespeare was some unknown personality called Henry Neville—a Tudor politician and landowner. Shakespeare’s will shows that he bequeathed large sums of money to three London actors, which shows his association with the playhouse, as the theatre was then known. But his will makes no mention of any plays or poems. “All that posterity knows for certain about William Shakespeare is that he died a wealthy man and dealt in real estate and grain,” writes Raj Chatterjee. (*Times International*, October 25, 2005)

Critics and contemporaries could never fully appreciate the genius of Shakespeare. We get to know something of the “real” Shakespeare from certain statements in Theosophical literature. H.P.B. writes: “Aeschylus, like Shakespeare, was and will ever remain the intellectual ‘Sphinx’ of the ages” (*S.D.*, II, 419). Mr. Judge says, “The Adepts assert that Shakespeare was, unconsciously to himself, inspired by one of their own number.” A Master of Wisdom writes approvingly of Shakespeare’s method of handling old legends. Thus:

I agree entirely with Dr. Cromwell when he says that “true talent will become original in the very act of engaging itself with the ideas of others”; nay, will often convert the dross of the previous authors, into the golden ore that shines forth to the world as its own peculiar creation. “From a series of extravagant and weak Italian romances, Shakespeare took the plots, the characters, and the major part of the incidents of those dramatic works which have exalted his name, as an *original* writer, above that of every other in the annals of literature.”

The article, “Shakespeare,” (*The Theosophical Movement*, Vol.

13, No. 2), attempts to show how great a genius was Shakespeare and points out that Adepts have always sought to instruct humanity through the channel of Literature. In fact, at one time it appears to have been the most direct method used to change the Mind and Buddhi of the race. It is not easy to unravel the mystery locked up in allegory, symbol and character portrayal in his great plays. Further:

The very medium of poetic drama used is indicative of the fact that the teachings which the Adepts planned to give were not to be imparted in a direct manner. Their intention must have been to provoke thought, to relieve heart perplexities purposefully engendered, by pointing to moral verities—all by a correct use of Suggestion; thus to clarify and to elevate human perception, and so to raise the moral sense of the masses, and prepare individuals for a more direct contact in the future with the truths of Occult psychology.

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We live in an age of marvels, daily swallowing the news of fantastic happenings reported by the media. We are told about a 16-year old boy in Nepal who has been in a meditative trance for six months, without nourishment; the statue of Virgin Mary in a European town sheds tears of blood, and so on. We live in an age of credulity and unquestioned cynicism, which are two sides of the same coin. “They represent two faces of mental laziness, a disinclination critically to think things through; to ask those all-important questions: Is it really so? If so, why is it so? Could it possibly, just possibly, be otherwise than it seems?” asks Jug Suraiya. (*Times International*, December 10, 2005)

In this hectic world we often neglect questioning. We need to question things, even if we do not get final answers. Questioning is the middle path between gullibility and cynicism; and that is the steep path of the skeptic, which never seems to end. The skeptic is a true learner and seems to say: “Let us argue; if you prove me

wrong I will learn a new truth, and if I prove you wrong it will reaffirm my reasoned conviction that what I hold to be true is indeed true.” Further:

As J.B.S. Haldane said in *The Duty of Doubt*, scepticism is the way of the scientist who must forever question the existing order (Does the Sun really go round the Earth?) to establish another order, which in turn must be questioned again (Did the apple fall on Newton’s head because of gravity or because of an Einsteinian space-time curvature?)

Scepticism, as another scientist, Carl Sagan, never tired of pointing out, is also the duty of everyone who wants to live in a democracy. Because scepticism is about constant questioning, continuous discourse and debate, the life-breath of all free societies.

“So keep the faith, but skeptically,” says Jug Suraiya.

Doubt is a cancerous growth, says H.P.B., but it is also said that there lies more faith in *honest* doubt than in a thousand creeds of the world. Honest doubt or healthy skepticism drives one to an ongoing quest for truth, which in turn endows one with a depth of mind. It is the willingness to probe deeper and not be satisfied with the first explanation offered.

Questioning is an integral part of spiritual life. An unquestioned life is not worth living. In one’s quest for spiritual knowledge, Shri Krishna’s advice is: “Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility.” Theosophical teachers have insisted upon mental exertion—the need to question, weigh and judge—before accepting the teachings. In the Preface to *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. writes:

To the mentally lazy or obtuse, Theosophy must remain a riddle; for in the world mental as in the world spiritual each man must progress by his own efforts. The writer cannot do the reader’s thinking for him, nor would the latter be any the better off if such vicarious thought were possible.

A Master of Wisdom calls scientific men pioneers of modern thought, saying that every fresh discovery drives them a step

forward. “So keep the faith, but skeptically,” is an allusion to having reasoned faith—being always ready to revise one’s opinion or so-called facts. There must be readiness to accept the truth from whichever quarter it comes.

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Mary Magdalene, who travelled with Jesus and is now considered a saint by major religions, is at the centre of the debate and mystery that raged round Dan Brown’s novel, *The Da Vinci Code*. “There are many questions that may never be answered. Was she the lover and wife of Yeshua Ben Joseph (Jesus)?... There are many hints in Gnostic texts that she and Yeshua had an intimate connection.... Perhaps Magdalene was an initiate of the Egyptian mysteries and a priestess,” write Lila and David Tresemer (*Utne Reader*, November-December, 2005). Jesus called her *koinonos*, which means companion or partner. Maybe this aspect of partnership only hints at intimacy, without involving sexuality. It is said that she asked insightful questions of the spiritual teacher. She is the first person to witness his successful initiation rite, the rising from the tomb. “Accepting that Magdalene was part of Jesus’ inner circle could make a significant difference to us now, at a time when people need to know that powerful, capable women are essential to solving the world’s problems.” Magdalene might be looked upon as another archetype besides Virgin, Mother and Whore.

Mary Magdalene represents the archetype that finds place in Gnostic literature. Like Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the Bible, one reads about Simon (Magus) and Helena in the Gnostic system of the earliest centuries of Christianity. People talked about the actual union of Simon with Helena. In the *Philosophomona* we are told that Helena is the *manas* held in bondage within the body. Helena, like Mary, was considered a prostitute and also the “lost sheep.” Simon is represented as the Saviour descended on Earth to rescue the “lamb.” Union of Simon and Helena is the union of

*Atma-Buddhi*, or the divine principles in man with *Manas*.

While commenting on *Pistis-Sophia*, which H.P.B. describes as the highest and the noblest of Gnostic systems, she writes:

Mary, called also Mariham and Maria Magdalene, must not be confounded with Mary, the corporeal mother of Jesus. This Mary is by far the most intuitive (pneumatic), and the most prominent interlocuter of all disciples.

From *Philosophomona*, V, 7, we learn that the School of the Naaseni claimed to have received their teachings from Mariamne, to whom “James, the brother of the Lord,” had originally imparted them. Origen also...speaks of the Gnostic school, which derived its teachings from Mariamne.

Esoterically, however, Mary the Mother, Mary the sister of Martha and Mary Magdalene correspond to *Buddhi*, *Manas* and the lower *Manas*. (*Lucifer*, 1890-91)

Thus, Mary Magdalene represents lower mind and Jesus Christ is the divine nature or *Christos* principle in man. When mind is caught up in the clutches of *Kama* (passions and desires), the powers of the mind get wasted and it amounts to prostituting these powers—hence the depiction of Mary Magdalene as prostitute. It can be redeemed only when *Manas* frees itself from *Kama* and unites with the divine nature. Hence in the *Philosophomona* of Simon Magus, the Soul is represented as the “lost sheep” struggling in the meshes of the net of matter, passing from body to body, and the Spirit is represented as descending, in order to rescue its syzygy (co-partner) from the bonds that are about her. When this mystery is represented dramatically, and personified, the two aspects of the Soul are depicted as two persons.

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THERE are thousands hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.

—HENRY THOREAU

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## The United Lodge of Theosophists

### DECLARATION

**T**HE policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion.

The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF, a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable *Basis for Union* among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is “*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching*,” and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that *basis*. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and

It welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

“*The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all.*”

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Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its “Declaration,” I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signature will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance furnished Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local Lodges. There are no fees of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with.

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