

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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SHIVA—THE YOGI OF YOGIS	123
PAYING OUR DEBTS	129
ASTROLOGY—SCIENCE OR FRAUD?—I	133
THEOSOPHY OF RAMAYANA	139
SELF-DEPENDENCE	145
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	149
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	154

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SHIVA—THE YOGI OF YOGIS

...the adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths—the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, Siva the Creator, the Destroyer, and the Regenerator. Nature alone can incarnate the Spirit of limitless contemplation. “Absorbed in the absolute self-unconsciousness of physical Self, plunged in the depths of true Being, which is no being but eternal, universal Life, his whole form as immovable and white as the eternal summits of snow in Kailasa where he sits, above care, above sorrow, above sin and worldliness, a mendicant, a sage, a healer, the King of Kings, the Yogi of Yogis,” such is the ideal Siva of *Yoga Shastras*, the culmination of Spiritual Wisdom.

—A MASTER OF WISDOM

SUCH is the awe-inspiring word-picture of Shiva, bringing before our mind’s eye an exalted being lost in highest contemplation, isolated from the world and sitting on “snow-capped heights, heights that are trodden by no sinful foot,” described in *The Voice of the Silence*. The inner state is that of total freedom from conditionality, from personality and personal consciousness.

Mahashivratri is observed on the 13th day of the waning moon of the month of Magha. Mahashivratri means *the Vigil Night of Shiva*. People think that the most important feature of Mahashivratri is fasting and keeping awake on this night. Unfortunately, we

interpret the stories and legends associated with the festivals to catch only their surface meaning. The thing to realize is that spiritual life springs from within and external observances help very little.

In fact, Mahashivratri signifies that the “Night of the Soul” is the stage in the process of initiation, when the candidate is made to look deep into his consciousness, face the dark side of his nature, and purify it. It reminds us to practise divine discipline, which alone can unite us with Shiva within.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva represent three aspects of the One Reality—creation, preservation and destruction—but unfortunately we have anthropomorphized them. There is a story that once Shiva’s father-in-law Daksha was performing a sacrifice, to which Shiva was not invited. However, Shiva’s wife Uma was most anxious to attend it. But when she reached there, she was insulted by her father, so she voluntarily gave up her body. At Uma’s death, Shiva was angry and he created the terrible demon, Virabhadra, the thousand-headed, thousand-armed monster, to destroy the sacrifice prepared by Daksha. Thus:

...Siva [is], the *destroying* deity, *evolution* and *PROGRESS personified*, who is the *regenerator* at the same time; who destroys things under one form but to recall them to life under another more perfect type. (*S.D.*, II, 182)

This shows that Daksha represents physiological or biological evolution, and since evolution cannot proceed through physical form only, Shiva destroys Daksha’s sacrifice. Theosophy speaks of the triple line of evolution—physical, intellectual and spiritual or monadic. Shiva is concerned with the latter two. The destroying of Daksha’s sacrifice also signifies that from moment to moment life involves destruction. There is a continuous or moment-to-moment destruction and regeneration going on not only in the physical body but even at the level of thoughts and feelings.

Siva-Rudra is the Destroyer, as Vishnu is the preserver; and both are the regenerators of spiritual as well as of physical

nature. To live as a plant, the *seed* must die. To live as a conscious entity in the Eternity, the passions and the senses of man must first *DIE* before his body does. “To live is to die and to die is to live,” has been too little understood....Siva, the *destroyer*; is the *creator* and the Saviour of Spiritual man, as he is the good gardener of nature. He weeds out the plants, human and cosmic, and kills the passions of the physical, to call to life the perceptions of the spiritual, man. (*S.D.*, I, 459 fn.)

In the course of evolution a stage was reached when man was human-animal with perfect form but without self-consciousness. The mind in man was made active through the intervention of *Kumaras* (chaste youths). *Shiva* is described as sometimes the chief and sometimes the father of *Kumaras*. *Kumaras* gave human beings the fire of spiritual consciousness, producing self-conscious and thinking men. Before the incarnation of *Kumaras* or the lighting up of *Manas*, there was no link between Spiritual potentialities and the highly developed physical form. *Kumaras* are the perfected beings from prior *Manvantaras* or prior worlds. Shiva’s destruction of Daksha’s sacrifice also shows that Shiva and the *Kumaras* are not concerned with emotional satisfaction or lower passions and desires but they are concerned with progress of animal man to human man and finally human man to Spiritual man. Shiva and *Kumaras*, therefore, completely reject worldly pursuits. It is in that sense that Shiva is called “Bhola” or simpleton and not because he easily gives to his devotees all that they ask.

There is seen to be a double atmosphere around Shiva. On the one hand, he is *terrible*, a *destroyer* of ordinary passions and desires. On the other hand, he is *auspicious*, as far as man’s higher strivings and aspirations, love for knowledge, etc., are concerned. To this aspect in us, Shiva is auspicious. Thus, we are assured that there is a power in the Universe, which supports and is ever ready to help if we decide to live the spiritual life. Shiva is called *Pashupati*—the shepherd, the lord of the flock, because all souls attempting to learn the esoteric truths are tended by Shiva.

The Secret Doctrine describes Shiva as the fountainhead, “the-ever-living-human-bunyan” from whom all the historically known Sages and Hierophants, such as Rishi Kapila, Hermes, Enoch, Orpheus, etc. have branched off. He is the MAHA GURU (the great guru) under whose guidance other less divine teachers and instructors taught the first lessons of arts, sciences and spiritual knowledge to infant humanity and laid the first foundation-stone of the ancient civilizations. An inspiring passage in the *S.D.*, describes Shiva as a GREAT SACRIFICE, a being who has nothing more to learn and yet remains in the atmosphere of this earth—in contact with human misery—in order to help humanity to cross over the ocean of life safely. Thus:

Why does the solitary Watcher sit at his self-chosen post?...Because the lonely, sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE. (*S.D.*, I, 208)

It is said that upon losing Sati (Uma), Shiva in his intense grief had become insensible of love. The gods instigated Kama, God of love, to assist, by wounding him with his arrows. As Kama aimed an arrow at Shiva, Shiva felt within him the stirring of desire. He realized that this could not have happened of its own accord, and then he spotted Kama. Shiva is supposed to have *opened his third eye* (spiritual intuition, which also represents exercise of Spiritual Will) and burnt Kama. But then at the request of Kama’s wife Rati, Shiva transformed Kama to *ananga*, or formless, *i.e.*, Kama became Kamadeva, meaning he ceased being a tempter—*passion being transformed into compassion*. Shiva is a destroyer and regenerator. He destroys things on one plane to bring them to life

on a higher plane. Kama, at one level, is the desire for sensual gratification, but at another level, it is desire for the happiness of all beings.

Kama is the first conscious, *all embracing desire* for universal good, love, and for all that lives and feels, needs help and kindness, the first feeling of infinite tender compassion and mercy that arose in the consciousness of the creative ONE FORCE, as soon as it came into life and being as a ray from the ABSOLUTE. Says the *Rig Veda*, “Desire first arose in IT, which was the primal germ of mind, and which Sages, searching with their intellect, have discovered in their heart to be the bond which connects Entity with non-Entity,” or *Manas* with pure *Atma-Buddhi*. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

The great discipline or Yoga is not undertaking physical austerities, such as, standing in one position with one arm raised, or standing on one leg, gazing at the sun, etc. How shall we unite with Shiva within by austerities? As most stories point out, he is not to be won over by offerings of wealth nor by beauty of form. Symbolically, Uma could not draw his attention with all her beauty, but when she smeared her body with ashes, and wore simple clothes, did he notice her. *Divine discipline* involves preserving from day to day the memory of who we really are, and keeping to the middle way of asceticism, such as eating or sleeping neither too much, nor too little.

The great discipline is to realize that we are not our personalities. Shiva is therefore called the *dweller of Ghats* (*burial places*), where he is shown as sitting in meditation with ashes smeared over his body. He has burnt (overcome) the personality. There must dawn this realization that all composite things are subject to change and destruction. Since Shiva presides over the death of lower passions and desires, he is shown as wearing a *garland of skulls*. He is *Kala-bhairav*. *Bhairav* is that which makes you “Bhiru” (afraid) and we are all afraid of time, which snatches away things and people most dear to us.

To die is to live. To live is to die. It is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. When life of personality ends, spiritual life begins. The Imagery is given of chrysalis and butterfly. Chrysalis means cocoon. A pupa after breaking the cocoon—which it has built by its own saliva—comes out as a completely transformed being, *i.e.*, a butterfly. So we need to break the cocoon of personality, made of flesh and matter, of desires, of likes and dislikes. No one else can accomplish this for us. *Letters That Have Helped Me* mentions that as the person advances in the spiritual life, with every new period and with every new step, he finds a new self rising before him. When he looks back over a group of weeks or months, he is amazed to find what kind of person he was then, and smiles a pitying smile. It requires a strong person to come out of the humdrum existence. Thus:

What our Eastern brothers call “the sheaths of the heart” fall away one by one; when the last bursts open there is a silence, the silence of the mystic death. But “the dead shall arise,” and from that death springs up the first tender growth of eternal life.

Shiva is the divine dancer of three different dances. In the Cosmic dance, he is shown playing the drum, and the rhythmic sound of his drum changed chaos into cosmos. In the *Tandava* dance, he dances in the burning ground, a terrible place of death and decay. This is the dance of destruction of evil, of lower desires and emotions, of wrong thoughts and actions. There is the dance of Nataraja. It shows him at the centre of the Universe. He has four arms; in one right hand he holds the drum, standing for creative sound; with the other he makes the sign of *Abhayam* or “do not fear”; in the third hand he holds fire—the fire of change and destruction, and the fourth points to his triumph over the dwarf. Around him is a halo of fire. This is his eternal dance of creation, maintenance, destruction and deliverance. The macrocosmic dance must find its reflection at the microcosmic level, in the heart of the individual.

PAYING OUR DEBTS

AS man advances in years, he finds that in his life he has to contend with things that are temporal as also with things that are spiritual. He is often told that he is expected to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; but there is hardly any stress laid on the other part of the same injunction which requires him to give unto God the things which are God’s. In fact, the injunction points to two sets of functions—duties rather—which have to be undertaken, the one by the personality, the other by the individuality.

The discharging of debts due to Caesar is not all that easy. Loyalty, righteousness and correct living which are his due are at a discount in our troublous times. At every turn we encounter corrupt politicians, the violators of justice, tax-evaders and those who deliberately flout the law in order to seek their own aggrandizement at the expense of state and nation. This sliding away from the paths of rectitude is the harbinger of the nation’s degeneration of character. With but few exceptions, our lawyers are no longer upholders of the law. They have now become adept at advising how a murderer or a traitor can escape conviction or how a wealthy man may successfully evade payment of taxes (his contribution towards the welfare of his state). Caesar is no longer respected. Caesar is feared and steps are being constantly devised to erode his sovereignty.

No student of the higher life can hope to progress unless he recognizes and discharges his dues to the temporal authority. Any cheating or shutting of eyes injures his inner make-up and stays his progress. The laws that govern the state must remain inviolate for him who chooses to stay in that state. He cannot be a rebel except in the case where he seeks by legitimate means to modify laws in a direction that could elevate the race. That state is the ideal one where each law and edict seeks to reflect on earth one or the other of the Eternal Verities that are the corollaries emanating from the Eternal LAW which has its roots in that which is Nameless

and Formless. Unfortunately, men in the mass have departed from a close proximity to the spiritual. They have gravitated towards matter and their thoughts and ideas now run to material things with only rare and short-lived sorties into quasi-spiritual realms.

To discharge the debts due to Caesar, to offer unto God the things that are God's, knowledge is required for the due performance of the correct act and the true ritual—not ritual in the sense now prevailing, but in that wider sense which embraces the man's mental posture, his mien and behaviour, his equipoise and the manner in which he approaches moments of darkness as of light. The knowledge of things earthly may be sufficient for paying homage to the Caesar of a day; but Caesars change and with them there is often a change in the laws conforming to the new outlook on life—social, political and economic. Knowledge which pertains to change is but short-lived and is found to be obsolete as one century follows another.

When the man first hears of the high Nirvana Way or the Heart Doctrine—be it through religion or literature—there is aroused in him an urge to which he is not accustomed. He is enthused by his first real contact with the abstract and the spiritual. It is during such moments that he is apt to forget his duties to the temporal side of his life. Such a lapse is bound to react upon his progress towards the spiritual; for spirit is universal harmony and failure in any duty causes a disturbance which like the ripple generated by a stone thrown in a lake moves in ever-expanding circles until it touches the shores.

The knowledge that makes the unrighteous triumph and which feeds and fattens the personality exists. That knowledge gives power and releases a force which becomes inimical to soul-life and has therefore to be avoided. One may remain ignorant of the dangers of this lower power at one's own peril. This force has the power to becloud the mind and leave the unwary an abandoned wreck. Like a derelict ship, the storm-tossed soul becomes dangerous to other souls and this potential danger can be avoided only by a studious

adherence to the true.

The Voice of the Silence gives the following yardstick for conducting a self-appraisal. It can be used daily by the Soul for self-introspection and self-study. *The Golden Precepts* say that the Soul has not transcended the pull of matter (1) if it smiles while bathing in the sunlight of life; (2) if it thinks that joy can be found by it when wearing the vestures of flesh and matter that it inherits at birth; (3) if it weeps inside its castle of illusion; (4) if it struggles to break the link that binds it to the Master-Soul; (5) if it listens to the world's turmoil and responds to illusion; (6) if it flinches from the sight of the pain and distress of others and withdraws itself into isolation.

To walk along the paths of Soul and Spirit, the pupil is advised above all things to learn how to hear and comprehend the voice of *Nada*—the Soundless Sound—also called the Voice of the Silence because this voice speaks where there is none to speak. To come to the stage where this hearing becomes possible, the pupil has to learn the nature of *Dharana*. This means that he has to achieve such an intense and perfect concentration of the mind as to make it impervious to the external world or the world of the senses. It is here that we part company with modern science which draws exclusively upon the senses for the gathering of its data. The student has to impress upon himself the truth that to gather the hidden knowledge, to grasp the kingly science, he *has* to become indifferent to objects of perception.

A knowledge that embraces all aspects of the seen and the unseen comes to the man of Spirit spontaneously. This knowledge is *sui generis*, *i.e.*, self-born. It is incommunicable from one person to another. The Teacher can but adjust his pupil and help him to remove the impediments which block the inner lines of communication between the aspirant and his starry soul beyond.

Misguided ones have advocated questionable means to obtain this knowledge. They have in their ignorance advocated a studied isolation from the world, which means that the aspirant has to

cultivate indifference to all mankind, including parents, wife and child. They recommend inaction, and with it a retirement into dark forests with a life sustained on roots and plants. Torturing of the body, mere repression of desires, atrophying of limbs and encouraging or inhibiting of physical modes and actions may give certain powers over material nature, but they open no celestial doors and may lead the practitioner into a sliding back into materiality.

It is well to bear in mind that knowledge alone—however high—is ineffectual for the Soul unless it be transmuted into Wisdom. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: “True knowledge is the flour....If thou would’st eat the bread of Wisdom, thy flour thou hast to knead with Amrita’s clear waters.” The steps by which these clear waters may be obtained are given in the later *shlokas* and in the divine Paramitas.

To Laugh often and much;
 To win the respect of intelligent people,
 and the affection of children;
 To earn the appreciation of honest critics,
 and endure the betrayal of false friends;

To appreciate beauty;
 To find the best in others;
 To leave the world a bit better,
 whether by a healthy child,
 a garden patch, or
 a redeemed social condition;
 To know that even one life has
 breathed easier because you lived.
 This is to have succeeded.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

ASTROLOGY—SCIENCE OR FRAUD?

I

THERE has been an upsurge of interest in the fields of mysticism, psychic phenomena and astrology. But there has always been a select group of nonbelievers. The ancients believed in the influence of planets and stars on human destiny and on the affairs of the earth. They regarded celestial bodies as abodes of the gods. Those of scientific temper call it a superstition, arguing that with scientific discoveries we have been able to ascertain the distance of various planets from one another and from the earth. It is evident that even the gravitational pull that any planet can exert on earth is nearly negligible—leaving aside any other planetary influence. More often than not it is an *a priori* rejection. Herbert Spencer says that the greatest bar to knowledge is contempt before examination.

At the other end of the scale are the believers in Astrology who go to the other extreme, saying that planets, stars, etc., not only influence, but, as it were, completely determine the destiny of man. That the Astrologers are so powerful that they can actually propitiate the evil stars and change the destiny. Between these two extremes is to be found the truth. Blind belief in Astrology has given rise to two fallacies. Firstly, we do not have any free will—when we are born, everything is predetermined or predestined. Secondly, it makes us feel that nature’s laws are some playthings that an astrologer can cause to deviate.

H.P.B. describes Astrology as a science as infallible as Astronomy itself, with the condition, however, that its interpreters must be equally infallible. And it is this condition, *sine qua non*, so very difficult of realization, that has always proved a stumbling block. She calls Astrology a mathematical science. Pythagoras, a great mathematician, who lived around 580 B.C., was one of the leading advocates of the study of astrology. Kepler, who tried to prove the Pythagorean theory of the music of the spheres, believed

in the validity of Astrology. Plato and Aristotle also believed in the influence of planets and stars. In fact, Plato mentions that our souls have their origin in these planetary gods and to them they return. Theosophy has something definite to say on this. Paracelsus, the great physician, perpetrated the theory that the principal organs in man's body have a correspondence with planets and various astrological signs. In books on astrology we come across a chart of correspondence which shows that Scorpio rules the generative organs, Aquarius rules the ankle, Leo rules the heart, and so on. However, Paracelsus observed that no planet or star *determines* anything. It would be absurd to say that it is the stars which make a man.

The etymology of the word Astrology shows that it means the message or the wisdom of the stars. *The Theosophical Glossary* describes Astrology as a very ancient science, which defines the action of celestial bodies upon mundane affairs and claims to foretell future events from the position of the stars. Astrology dates back to old Babylonian civilization, and in Babylonia no distinction was made between Astronomy and Astrology. Babylonians used planets and stars for reading omens. For instance, if the first day of the month was not a no moon day (*amavasya* day) then that was taken as an indication that the country would be peaceful that month. There were Babylonian priestesses who slept on the topmost floor of these towers, so that they could remain in communication with the gods and goddesses. They used to make use of aerolite—in modern terms, it may be called meteorite—a chunk of stony or metallic matter from space which falls on earth. They would put this stone against the forehead and be able to predict the future. This is known as the art of psychometry. A psychometer can hold a ring or a thing worn by a person and predict the past, present and future of that person. Besides Babylonia, in Egypt, Chaldea and in Somathrace, too, aerolites were used for foretelling future events. They used to consider these aerolites as souls, as it were, of the heavenly bodies.

The fundamental question is: Do planets have an influence on human beings, human destiny and various things that happen on earth? When planets, as viewed from the earth, coincide, then they are said to be in conjunction. H.P.B. points out that to have two planets in conjunction is a rare thing and to have three planets in conjunction is rarer still, while conjunction of five planets is the rarest event. It was only in 2449 B.C. that five planets were in conjunction and that was the time when Chinese astrologers predicted a great disaster for China. And 500 years later it was found that there were lots of social upheavals and internal wars and the golden period of China almost came to an end. In 1563 A.D., there were three planets in conjunction—Mars, Saturn and Jupiter—and that had no good forebodings, as entire Europe was covered in a massive plague in which thousands of people died. H.P.B. wonders why people do not believe that planets can have influence on earth.

What has science to say on this subject? There is a branch of science called Cosmo-biology that is concerned with studying the effect of planets and stars on the events that take place on earth. Studies have shown that sunspots produce a lot of social upheavals, revolutions, epidemics, bad weather conditions and are linked with an increase in suicide rates. Sunspots are the areas in the Sun with very high magnetic density and emit certain radiations and charged particles. Mr. Crosbie points out that planets do have influence not just on the affairs of the earth but also on human beings. H.P.B. has this to say:

The earth is very seriously affected by what takes place in the sun... a connection is strongly suspected between epidemics and appearance of the sun's surface. One of the best known vegetable epidemics is that of the potato disease. The years 1846, 1860, and 1872 were bad years for the potato disease, and those years are not very far from the years of maximum sunspots [says Prof. Balfour Stewart].... Surely the destiny of man deserves as much consideration as that of a turnip or a

potato....And if a disease of the latter may be *scientifically* foretold whenever the vegetable crops out during a “sun-spot period,” why should not a life of disease, or health, of natural or violent death be as scientifically prognosticated by the position and appearance of the constellation with which man is as directly connected and which bears the same relation to him as the sun bears to the earth? (*The Theosophist*, June 1888)

Mr. Crosbie observes that man is not just his physical body. There is the astral body, mind, desire nature and so on. Planets too, are not just the physical orbs that we see, but there is also intellectual something, astral something and spiritual something to them and behind every orb there is divine intelligence—call it Planetary Spirit, Regent or Rector. Theosophy points out that our present astrology, as it is known, deals only with the personality of man, whereas *true* astrology deals with the spiritual and psychical aspects. Now the Sun as we know is the giver of life, light, warmth etc., but depending upon the position of the planet, not all planets receive the same amount of heat and light from the Sun. It depends on the distance from the Sun and the position. So also, Moon is known to affect the weather, the tides, fertility in women, and is associated with insanity. We know that insane people become more insane during certain phases of the moon. These things have been observed. From the known we can go to the unknown. There is hardly any room for doubt as far as the planetary influences are concerned. Mr. Crosbie makes three important points:

We are influenced by other planets, just as we are influenced by other people in our daily walk in life. All have their direct effect upon us, the influence of one planet predominating over another in accordance with the *angle* or position....It is not the conditions nor the circumstances, but the attitude we hold towards them, which matters;...The fact that at any given time or place we are subject to certain beneficial or malevolent influences, that we were born as persons at a certain time and place, under certain conjunctions of the planets,

means only fulfilments of the Karmic Law....Planetary influences express our tendencies, yes; but there is no “God” above to compel us, and there is no possibility of our being pushed into following certain wrong tendencies unless we want to be pushed. If we have made up our mind not to be influenced, then we can not be...So, we make another kind of birth possible. (*Universal Theosophy*, pp. 148-150)

How do the planets influence us? Mr. Judge’s answer is very clarifying. He gives the example of a man who relied too much on astrology and consulted the astrologer to predict the happenings of the next day. He would have it ready that such and such a thing was going to happen to him according to the chart. Now as it happened there was an astrological prediction regarding conjunction of certain planets, and that—as he worked it out—indicated that he was going to have his leg broken. Knowing this he remained at home. At home he climbed the ladder to hang curtains; but the ladder gave way, he fell and broke his leg. Mr. Judge says that no doubt the planetary conjunction may have very bad influence, but what precipitated that influence was the attitude of this person. We cannot attract to ourselves anything that we do not think about. Whatever thoughts we have, there is a consubstantiality of thought and influences. We attract to ourselves influences that are of similar nature as our thoughts.

It is not just the planets but the heavens as a whole—planets, stars and all the heavenly bodies, which is known as the *ambient*—which affects the person. Planets are only the focal points, indicators or pointers that describe what is going to be the influence of the whole of the heavens on a particular man or on the earth or nation. The influence of certain very powerful stars must also be taken into account. For instance, when one such powerful star was ruling, London was burning. At the time of the reign of another powerful star Napoleon’s downfall happened, writes Mr. Judge.

But planets are only *indicators*. They are like a clock. A clock can indicate time, but can a clock change time? Influence time?

No. Only a human being can. If we are going from India to America, we can adjust our clock to suit the time which is in America. Astrologer is like the clock maker. If we tell a clock maker that it is 3 o'clock, then he will be able to tell us that the small hand must be pointing to 3 and the big one must be pointing to 12. He can even tell us where certain cogs, wheels, etc. inside the clock will be when the clock shows that particular time. In the same way, depending on the planetary position, the astrologer predicts, but neither he nor the planets influence the destiny of the individual.

(To be concluded)

ASSUME that the Ego is a “god on a higher plane,” and there is no impossibility in supposing that, coming to this plane, it is so surrounded by the clouds of matter as to become latent or hidden until the time when the form suitable for this plane is evolved. This also is what Theosophical writings say to me, and among those writings, I place the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In that, Krishna, the Supreme Being, identifies himself with *Ishwara*, who is the Ego “seated in the hearts of all beings.” Patanjali also says the same, naming that Ego, who is the Spectator of all things, by the name *Om* or Lord of Glory. *The Secret Doctrine* continues the same view. The Christian view and Theosophy must also agree, since Jesus, in exhorting his disciples to be perfect as the Father in heaven, must have had in view the doctrine that the Father dwelt in and is Man; otherwise we could not become perfect as he is.

—W. Q. JUDGE

THEOSOPHY OF RAMAYANA

LORD Rama or Ramachandra, as he is called, is considered to be not only an ideal king but also an ideal man. Lord Krishna was considered an ideal teacher, but in *Krishna Divinity* was made manifest for the helping of mortals, while in *Rama Humanity* became manifest so that we mortals may copy his example. For, while it is true that Ramachandra was great as king, as father of his subjects, it must not be overlooked that he was that by virtue of being a dutiful son, a humble youth, a courageous prince, a noble husband and a protecting elder. We might put the difference between Krishna and Rama thus: Krishna taught by precept and example how *not* to belong to this world while Karma kept us still in the world, but Rama taught how to belong to this world without forgetting the world of Spirit. Krishna is the Great Doctor who warns against the great disease and offers a cure; but Rama is the great sportsman who teaches how to play beneficently the complex and difficult game of life. The respective yugas to which they came, also give us a clue. Rama came to close the *Creta Yuga*—the Age of Silver—and to open the *Dwapara Yuga*—the Age of Bronze; but Krishna came to close *Dwapara Yuga* and to open *Kaliyuga*—the Age of Iron. H.P.B. points out that Rama was the first king of the divine dynasty of the early Aryans (the Fifth Race), while his foe, Ravana, was the last of the Atlanteans (Fourth Race) who had become black with the sin of pride and were spiritually degraded. We may notice that Krishna was Solar Being who incarnated in the Race of Yadus or Yadavas; but the house of Dasaratha (Rama’s father) belonged to the Solar Race, and yet Rama has a suffix to his name, “Chandra”—an aspect of the Moon. Still another significant fact is that Krishna was born divine, *i.e.*, he began showing his divinity at once as a babe. He was the Divine Babe, He was the Divine cowherd; He had no teacher and had no need to learn. Different is the case with Rama—Vasishtha first, Visvamisra next, and even Agastya, later, taught Rama. Krishna suffered no

despondency, for he knew not only the worthlessness of sense life but also why this *Maya* (illusion) had to, and did exist. But as a youth, Rama passed through the *Vairagya* stage (detachment) like unto Arjuna's *Vishad* stage (despondency).

Poetry and *history* combined is one of the numerous devices employed by the Great Instructors of humanity to convey great truths. Drama has also been used. But the particular mode of these two epics—*Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*—called *Itihasa* (history) is a peculiar one. It was Carlyle who said that history is a collection of biographies; and sacred history deals with sacred and holy figures—divine men. These two epics, as also the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of the Greeks, are an account of the sayings and doings of gods who came to live on earth as men. Thus, *Ramayana* tells us of gods and goddesses who descended from heaven and incarnated in bodies of flesh and blood for a definite purpose. Not only were Rama and his brothers incarnations of Vishnu, not only was Sita an incarnation of Laxmi who came to do her duty and fulfil her mission, but all other great characters in the poem are just that. Just as all the actors in a play are chosen and assigned their roles before the drama begins, so also all the characters, according to their Karma and capacity, are assigned parts to be played in the Drama of Incarnation. They always descend to help the race in its next step forward. Biography and history mingle to produce one grand symphony.

If, however, biography is related to history, it does not mean that history is no more than a collection of biographies. One phase of occult history—and *Ramayana* is an occult history book—deals with races of men and their evolution. These characters not only represent individuals but also stand for collectivities of individuals. For instance, Ravana not only represents an entity whose biography we come across in *Ramayana*, he also represents and stands for the remnants of the Fourth or Atlantean Race which became black with the sin of sensuality and pride and which in Indian terminology we name, *Rakshashas*. Therefore, each character in *Ramayana*

unfolds more than one lesson. *Psychologically*, each character is the biography of a soul; *historically*, each is also the story of a race, a sub-race, a family race; and then each character also stands for a spiritual verity of the invisible worlds. Thus, to each character three keys must be applied: (1) The *psychological* key which explains the position of the individual. (2) The *anthropological* ethnological key which explains the racial evolution. (3) The *Astrological* or Astronomical key which connects the world of spirit with the world of matter—Avatars and Rishis, Devas and Devatas, with men and mortals. There are four more keys that are very difficult to understand. About *Itihasa* and *Puranas*, H.P.B. has this to say:

In the *Puranas* one may find the most scientific and philosophical “dawn of creation,” which, if impartially analyzed and rendered into plain language from its fairy tale-like allegories, would show that modern zoology, geology, astronomy, and nearly all the branches of modern knowledge, have been anticipated in the ancient Science, and were known to the philosophers in their general features, if not in such detail as at present! (*S.D.*, II, 253)

H.P.B. also says that in every line of the Epics there is hidden soul-instruction for the intuitive student. In *Ramayana*, who is the real cause and original mover to whom Valmiki is indebted and without whom there would have been no war and nothing to narrate and describe? The cause of the trouble is two ladies. Why did Rama march on Lanka, the kingdom of Ravana? It was to rescue his wife and queen, Sita. But why did Ravana steal Sita? To avenge Rama and Laxman's insult to his sister—Shurpanakha. What happened is this: Shurpanakha was the sister of Ravana, and while roaming in the forest her eyes fell on the foot-marks—majestic, strong, clear-cut, with lotus-wheels impressed on them, and she fell in love with the original! No blame to her for that, for who would not fall in love when the foot-marks of the Lord are seen? But her attraction and love were highly personal—not *Bhakti* (Devotion), but the love

of possession was her problem. She traced the whereabouts of Rama and insisted that he accept her as spouse. In the bargain her nose was cut off and on her was put that brand of shame. The first lesson is: Beware how you approach—with low human feelings—those who walk the Path of Divinity. Jealousy was incarnate in Shurpanakha, and she ran to her brother and injected her jealousy and wrath into him. Shurpanakha became the cause of the war. But why was Rama in the forest?

There was another lady, Queen Kaikeyi, whose motherly love became ambition, to which the Ramayana war must be traced. Sometimes it is overlooked that the real culprit was not Kaikeyi but her maid-servant Manthara, not Ravana but his sister Shurpanakha, whose nails were like big winnowing baskets—symbol of jealousy. Love of Ravana for his sister; love of Kaikeyi for her son; jealousy of Shurpanakha; and envy of Manthara worked upon love; thus vice ever corrupts virtue, if virtue does not rise to the place of impersonality. We must beware of our affections and love and raise them, elevate them, and impersonalize them, lest they turn to jealousy, envy and anger.

But to turn from these four characters, who wrought havoc through their personal attachments, to that queen of characters whom India worships as Sita: Sita, beautiful in body, peerless in morals, whose mind was lighted and whose heart was obedient, has left behind as the central message of her incarnation this mighty virtue of *Impersonalized Love*. To be with her lord and husband, Sita went into exile; but she had to learn the lesson of separation so that she might impart it to us; she had to free herself from personal attachment. There are a few verses in *Ayodhya Kanda* of *Ramayana*, of Sita's strong and stately speech favouring jungle-life in company of Rama.

With what majesty and might the love of Sita demands her boon, and it was granted! And so she went to the forest. But such love evoked the test of separation, and she met it. However lofty, however grand, however legitimate and lawful and even dutiful, was her

love for Rama, it had still in it the touch of the personal and she had to get over that. That is why the Law of Karma, which is called the sifter of men's hearts and duties, produced the test, and she was abducted by Ravana. Sita was separated from Rama! It was terrible agony; it was a wound to the heart. But it was a purificatory process and prepared her for the great initiation, the trial by fire. Imprisoned by Ravana, her woe washed her clean, her pain purified and her sorrow brought her strength. After her rescue from Ravana, although Rama was convinced of her purity and chastity, his subjects were suspicious. When the cloud of suspicion was upon her, it was a chastened and impersonal Sita who spoke—not claiming Rama's company but seeking the door of death. We have these verses in *Uttara-Kanda* of *Ramayana*:

Madhavi, goddess, Devi of the earth, I beg of you—If I have never, even in thought, loved any but Rama, then accept me, goddess...If I have in thought, in word and deed, only dwelt on Rama and on Rama only, then earth-goddess, accept me...If it is true that I know no man but Rama, then, devi, accept me, take me in you, earth-goddess.

What is the lesson? Love ever causes suffering when it has the tinge of personality in it. By magnanimity, by chastity, let us transform our love; let us impersonalize it. It is that particular message which we in our world of today badly need. The power to make our love pure, chaste and impersonal comes from knowledge and wisdom. Turn to that chapter of *Ramayana* which tells us of "The Bridal of Sita." Rama won her by his mighty act of wielding the Bow, which Rudra-Shiva had given as gift to the House of Janaka (Sita's father). This bow, it is said, was the one that Rudra himself held at Daksha's sacrifice. This *Bow of Shiva* is the symbol of Shiva's Wisdom. Sita was born of the Earth; she was the pure daughter of *Prithvi*, and if we want to possess the world so that we may teach and serve, then we must be able to wield *Rudra's Bow*. When we get knowledge, love is born, and then that love has to be

purified. Rama represents wisdom, Sita represents Love; on both of these Laxmana, the attentive mind—attention incarnate—waits. But that wisdom is not only for the person we love; nor is that Love only for the one we have wedded—both must be used in the service of all. Seek knowledge if Real Love is to be born, and purify and elevate that Love, till like the Love of Rama it embraces the whole kingdom.

PERHAPS it will seem to you that the sunshine is brighter and that everything has a new charm. I believe this is always the result of deep love, and it is a beautiful thing. People who think love prevents one from thinking clearly are wrong; for then one thinks very clearly and is more active than before. And love is something eternal—the aspect may change, but not the essence. There is the same difference in a person before and after he is in love as there is in an unlit lamp and one that is burning. The lamp was there and it was a good lamp, but now it is shedding light too, and that is its real function. And love makes one calmer about many things, and in that way, one is more fit for one's work.

—VINCENT VAN GOGH

SELF-DEPENDENCE

THE perception of our times needs the kindly attention of a Divine Occultist. It suffers from inverted images. In reaching for the glittering brass in the promise of “out there,” the followers of religions loosen their hold on the gold of the “within.” Vicarious atonement is mistakenly considered as compassion. For the materialist, self-interest becomes an all-sufficient “reason” for jungle warfare. Mutual mistrust and deadly conflict are the progeny of this “struggle for existence”; while, as a result, our hospitals are filled with the mental diseases arising from an overwhelming sense of anxiety and hopelessness.

And yet, all this may be remedied by a true appreciation of Self-reliance, the polar antithesis of self-interest. For, it is only through Self-reliance that spiritual knowledge may be obtained; and “every action without exception is comprehended in spiritual knowledge” (*Gita*). Furthermore, it is through Self-reliance that the spirit of good-will and mutual help arises and leads to the path of Brotherhood. And finally, on the basis of Self-reliance real Self-knowledge may be obtained, far beyond the mundane knowledge now available through modern methods.

The attitude of Self-reliance is a natural outcome resulting from an appreciation of the significance of Reincarnation and Karma. For the central pivot of this whole process is the fact that the same Individual goes through all incarnations, meeting situations which he created in the past by his own choices. He must experience the lower to gain an appreciation of the Higher. “Shadow is that which enables light to manifest itself and gives it objective reality” (*S.D.*, II, 214). Thus, by acting on the basis of Reincarnation and Karma, one becomes to a certain extent Self-reliant. It requires only that one accept the principle of responsibility, and that duty, Karmic duty, become the prime consideration in all relations.

However, to gain Self-knowledge a more concentrated approach is needed. For this, desire is the motor, desire for Truth; and a

certain capacity for self-observation is required. If the capacity is weak, strong desire will help to build it.

In order to apply the key of Self-reliance in the search for Self-knowledge, the prevailing situation in the mind should be recognized. For this three steps are necessary. First, the principle of continuity must be perceived—that which goes from life to life and is therefore present now in Consciousness. Its name is “I”; not the day-by-day fluctuations of John Jones, but that “sense” which knows itself as the same “I” from childhood to death. Theosophy calls it the Individuality as distinct from the personality. The seeker must find this “I,” not so much through thought, as through the direct contact of the sense of Self. Then he must proceed to separate this “I”—in mind—from everything that changes: body, feelings, thoughts. This is the most important element in man’s manifold make-up.

Second, he must recognize that, aside from “I,” the mind is the field of choice, the field of battle. Thought, feeling, imagination, memory offer kaleidoscopic images, impressions, impulses ranging from the satanic to the divine. It is the culmination of aeons of evolutionary preparation. It is the focus of the Soul’s contact with the life of matter.

And point the third—the “I” or Soul is the chooser! “I” am the thinker, the feeler, the experiencer. Nothing can happen in the mind unless “I” choose it to happen. True it is that “I” am seduced or frightened by the false tales of religion and abdicate my position. Sad it is that “I” accept the surface reasonings of materialism and decide that “I” don’t exist. But “I” can awake from these nightmares and realize that “I,” am, in the words of the *Gita*, “eternal, universal, permanent.”

This, then, is the situation as it exists in the mind of every man. But, where the latter places reliance outside of himself, Arjuna, the awakened “I,” begins to perceive that the remedy for this profoundly mistaken practice lies within the mind itself.

For example, few people seem to realize that experience is a

dual process. “I like the taste of chocolate cake”—the taste is a physical sensation; the “liking” is an attitude of “I,” in the mind, toward the sensation. Similarly, pride, vanity, kindness, generosity are feeling-experiences of the “I,” about something or someone “out there.” This dual process suggests that the impact of outer sensations may be controlled and directed by the “I” in the mind.

Because of the acceptance of the concepts of religion and science, the “I” has created a set of values based upon the satisfactions of the personal self. True it is that selfish mind-feelings are modified by the experiences of kindness and love. But, for the most part, the satisfactions of the separate self are in the ascendancy.

It is of value in this regard to observe the nature of experience itself. It has its own cycle of birth, fulfilment, death. Delight, pleasure, happiness derived from bodily sensations inevitably change to habitual acceptance, indifference, satiety. Why is this? Because the Soul is here to learn. Once it has assimilated the nature of specific sensation, it seeks further. If blocked by Karmic circumstances from enlarging its field of sensations, it retreats into boredom. But others seek “new” sensations, and so pass into the use of alcohol, drugs and perverted practices.

There is another aspect of change in experience. Ambition aims at advancement in the firm; the feeling of security rests upon an accumulation of money; personal happiness depends on the other person. But promotion is not forthcoming; money is lost; and the other person dies or has a change of heart. The world, in the mind of the dependent Soul, suddenly turns from bright sunshine to deepest gloom. Can we not see here why the Buddha taught that personal desire is the cause of sorrow?

The world goes through its cycles of experience slowly, painfully, consuming many incarnations. Whereas the ordinary man must await the fruition of “outer” circumstances to bring him the “results of attachment,” the awakened “I” may achieve the same insight more quickly and efficiently.

To do this he must learn to observe that the beginning and the

end of any personal (selfish) event lie in the dependence on that feeling in the mind that is called personal satisfaction. It begins with anticipation or desire, and ends in pleasure or pain. The whole gamut of dependence-experiences is the result of attachment of the “I” to the mental centre concerned with selfish desire.

The true seeker has learned theoretically that the one great obstacle to spiritual attainment is the strength of the personal idea. Now he becomes aware how, practically, this emancipation may begin—detachment of “I” from the selfish desire-centre in the mind.

Action along this line will soon convince him that he is on the right track. Checking with the devotional books will confirm that his new experiences are those of the Predecessors. Now he must take to heart the supernal fact that the real “I” is indeed invulnerable, that nothing can truly harm It; and arming himself with the power of true desire, proceed along the Path.

As varied experiences crowd around him, he learns to depend on the fact that the observer is more important than his observations; the feeler is more important than his feelings; the experiencer is more important than his experiences.

Thus does the awakened “I” set his own mental ship in order, and chart a course toward his True Home.

THE Credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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: Do “fairies” exist or are they only a figment of imagination? What is the theosophical view of fairy tales?

Answer: We disbelieve in “fairies” because we have got into the habit of thinking that men and animals, birds, fishes and insects are the only living things in the world. But there are invisible beings or “lives,” whose actions we do not ordinarily see, just as there are colours seen by some people which others cannot see; or there are sounds heard by some which others cannot hear, and so on. The belief in Nature Spirits, variously known as devatas, elementals, Djins, sylvans, elves, dwarfs, trolls, goblins, moss people, fairies, etc., is universal, though modern man dismisses them as fictitious. These invisible beings under certain conditions take objective shape and become visible to people who have always believed in them. In countries like England and Ireland, people have always believed in them. These invisible beings are the tiny “lives” in the atmosphere and we might say that *air* fairies are made of these lives. We call them sprites and *sylphs*. We may say there are many kinds of fairies. Those that dwell in fire element are called *Salamanders*; those of the water are nymphs and *undines*; while those of earth are gnomes and elves. They are described as centres of force or elementals, and are without intelligence, without moral character, but directed by human thoughts. It is our thoughts that, consciously or not, give them form and to a certain extent intelligence. In their simplest form, they are visible as disturbance in a transparent medium. It would be like the disturbance produced in the air by the movement

of the invisible and transparent glass fish, writes Mr. Judge.

These fairies or Nature Spirits influence all human beings, but more pronounced is that influence on some psychic constitutions. Such is said to be the case of fairy-tale writer Hans Christian Anderson. There is no better tool to develop the imaginative faculty in children than listening to and pondering upon these fantastic-sounding fairy tales. Fairy tales hide deep truths. It is felt that genuine fairy tales can only have been told in days of old, by people who had knowledge of the spiritual world. The Djins and fairies in *Arabian Nights* are these Nature Spirits. Mr. Judge mentions that *Arabian Nights*—and it is applicable to all old-world fairy stories—are “faint reverberations of a louder echo which reached their authors from the times of Lemuria and Atlantis.” There are elemental spirits connected with metals, and to those who know how to communicate with them, they help to find as well as hide treasures. Some of the *Arabian Nights* stories deal with wicked genii or elemental spirits. In one tale, a fisherman hauled up a large iron pot, with a metal cover, with Solomon’s Seal engraved upon it. When the fisherman opened the pot, vapours arose which on condensing gave rise to a monstrous form. He told the fisherman that he was confined there by Solomon—the adept king, and that he had vowed that he would reward anyone liberating him within two to five hundred years, but kill the man who liberated him after a thousand years. He asked the fisherman to prepare for his death. The fisherman said that he was unable to believe that such a large Djin could have been within the pot. To prove it the Djin assumed the vaporous condition and sank back into the pot. The fisherman closed the lid and threw the pot into the sea. Mr. Judge explains that since the pot was made of metal and as there was a talismanic seal on the lid, the Djin was prevented from escaping. His spreading himself into vapour shows that he was one of the elementals of the airy kingdom—the most powerful and malignant, and that is why he took the oath to destroy his liberator. His spreading into vapour, instead of springing out of the pot, shows his invisibility. H.P.B.

mentions four classes of wicked elemental spirits—the generic name for them is “Madan.” *Shudala Madan* is half-fire, half-water demon, who can assume any shape, and it is he who blinds people “to see that which *they do not see*.” For instance, making people see a snake, where there is no snake. *Shula-Madan* is the elemental spirit that keeps underground and helps the juggler in raising a tree from the seed in a quarter of an hour and ripen its fruit. *Kumila-Madan* is undine proper—the elemental spirit of water. He helps in showering rain and showing the future to those who will resort to hydromancy or divination by water. *Porthu Madan*, helps the juggler in performing feats in which physical force is required—such as levitation and taming of wild animals.

H.P.B. mentions that under the general designation of fairies and fays, these spirits of the elements appear in the myths, fables and traditions of all nations, ancient and modern. They have been seen, feared, blessed, banned, and invoked in every quarter of the globe and in every age. Shall we then concede that all who have met them were hallucinated?

Question: The priests of every religion justify the use of incantations and mantras, going by the occult property of sound, and thus perpetuate the superstition of miraculous effects of prayers and rituals. What is the Theosophical rejoinder? Often some words in old languages like Pahalvi, Sanskrit, etc., are used, and they are supposed to have spiritual power.

Answer: In *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, H.P.B. describes some occult arts, and one of them is *Guhya-Vidya*. It is “knowledge of the mystic powers residing in Sound (Ether), hence in the Mantras (chanted prayers or incantations) and depending on the rhythm and melody used; in other words, a magical performance based on Knowledge of the forces of Nature and their correlation.” *The Secret Doctrine* describes six *Shaktis* or primary forces in Nature, and one of them is *Mantrika-Shakti*. It is “the force or power of letters, speech or music. The *Mantra Shastra* has for its subject-matter this force in

all its manifestations....The influence of melody is one of its ordinary manifestations.” The *spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected and disbelieved in*, by the modern man. “Sound and rhythm are closely related to the four Elements of the Ancients; and because such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results, as the case may be” (*S.D.*, I, 307). Mr. Judge writes that “a *mantram* is a collection of words which when sounded in speech, induce certain vibrations not only in the air, but also in the finer ether, thereby producing certain effects.” There are many men in Germany, Austria, Italy and Ireland who can bring about extraordinary effects on horses, cattle, and the like, by peculiar sounds uttered in a certain way. Mr. Judge points out that groups of men can be aroused by expressions having mantram quality, such as “do or die,” “peace with honour.” Here, the effect is produced not by the *sound*, but by the words bringing up the ideas. But there are scientific *mantrams* that are to be found not in modern western languages but in ancient Sanskrit and other early languages. The laws governing their use are also to be found in those languages. The vocalizations of these *mantrams* can produce certain effects in the *akasa*, by means of which men, animals and elementals can be influenced even without the knowledge of the language (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 154-58). The efficacy of the *mantram* depends upon the form given to it, and that in turn depends upon many things, such as, numbers and syllables of the sacred metre, rhythm, correct pronunciation, intonation, etc. If pronounced slowly and in certain rhythm one effect is produced; if quickly and with another rhythm, there is a different result. It can be responded to either by the gods or the *Rakshasas* (bad spirits).

This great significance of the metrical speech is derived from the number of syllables of which it consists, for each thing has certain numerical proportions....The Gayatri metre, for example, consists of *thrice eight* syllables, and is considered the most sacred of metres. It is the metre of Agni, the fire-god,

and becomes at times the emblem of Brahma himself, the chief creator and “fashioner of man” in his own image....

There are words which have destructive quality in their very syllables, as though objective things; for every sound awakens a corresponding one in the invisible world of spirit, and the repercussions produce either a good or bad effect. Harmonious rhythm, a melody vibrating softly in the atmosphere, creates a beneficent and sweet influence around, and acts most powerfully on the psychological as well as physical natures of every living thing on earth. (*Isis*, II, 410-11)

H.P.B. mentions that a Brahman who recites certain mantras for a scorpion-bite or snake-bite according to the method and intonation prescribed in the *Yajur-Veda*, would certainly heal his patient, while others without this knowledge may recite it for a long time without producing any effect. *Yajur-Veda* is called “white” when sung by those who know and “black” when recited by those whose accent is impure.

Mantrams could be used with bad motive for hurting another. H.P.B. points out that “the *mantram* ignorantly employed may, and often has, proved a treacherous weapon, whose mystical power has caused it to turn and *stab the user*.”

PEOPLE “died” all the time....Parts of them died when they made the wrong kinds of decisions—decisions against life. Sometimes they died bit by bit until finally they were just living corpses walking around. If you were perceptive you could see it in their eyes; the fire had gone out...you always knew when you made a decision against life....The door clicked and you were safe inside—safe and dead.

—ANNE LINDBERGH

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What makes bad habits so tough to quit? Why do people stick to bad habits even when they know them to be lethal? In a recent study, a group led by Cindy Jardine of the University of Alberta found that people were aware that driving while drunk could be lethal, and smoking could be hazardous to health, and yet they continued to take these lifestyle risks. Scientists assign various reasons, such as: innate defiance, need for social acceptance, inability to truly understand the nature of risk, individualistic view of the world, the ability to rationalize unhealthy habits, and genetic predisposition to addiction. Jardine suggests that when the behaviour is socially accepted, or even considered desirable, people tend to reconcile and justify their bad habits by saying that “everybody’s doing it.” Often, we use individual experience to justify chain-smoking or overeating, saying, “it has not hurt me yet,” or “my grandmother smoked all her life and lived to be 90.” (*The Times of India*, December 11, 2006)

Our body is made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of “lives.” Every atom has a life and memory of its own. Memory in the “lives” when *innate* is called instinct. But the “lives” in the body can be repeatedly given certain kind of impressions, day after day. It is the natural tendency of the “lives” to repeat the impulse given to them and thus we set up a habit. What we call habit is the result of automatism of the body, but the original impulses have come from thought. “Sow a thought and reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny.” The motto on Plato’s ring said, “It is easier to *prevent* ill habits than to break them.” To conquer the habit one has to give opposite impression to the “lives” of the body and for this one has to bring will into action. We would eventually succeed in breaking the habit, if we keep up the effort long enough. There are cases where people have been able to kick smoking, using strong will and determination.

But there is a positive aspect of habit. It is said that practice makes a man perfect. In a sense, “practice” is a form of habit, as it involves repetitive performance. We train the “lives” of the body to perform certain tasks—for instance, typing, playing musical instruments, etc. The “lives” in the fingertips retain the memory, are habituated, so that after several attempts we are able to perform the task effortlessly.

One of the biggest mysteries in the solar system is why Venus has no moon (satellite). Alex Alemi and David Stephenson of the California Institute of Technology suggest that Venus may have had a moon but that it was destroyed. It is also suggested that Venus may have had two collisions. The first caused the planet to rotate counterclockwise and created the moon that began to drift away. The second impact caused Venus to rotate clockwise and cancelled the effect of the first collision. This also caused change in the gravitational interaction between Venus and her moon, setting the moon to move inward and ultimately collide with the planet. If the second collision created the moon, it might have been swept inward along with the first moon—toward doom, writes George Musser. (*Scientific American*, December 2006)

H.P.B. points out that it is still a mystery to science why Venus and Mercury have no satellites, and when they did exist, how they were formed. It is because science has only one key—the key of matter—to open the mysteries of nature, while occult philosophy has seven keys. H.P.B. writes:

Mercury and Venus have no satellites but they had “parents” just as the earth had. [Our moon is considered to be the mother of the Earth.] Both are far older than the Earth and, before the latter reaches her seventh Round, her mother Moon will have dissolved into thin air, as the “Moons” of the other planets have, or, have not, as the case may be, since there are planets which

have *several* moons—a mystery again which no Oedipus of astronomy has solved. (*S.D.*, I, 155-56 fn.)

In other words, it seems that Venus and Mercury have no moons at present, but may have had them in the past, and that they have disappeared because both these planets are in their Seventh Round.

Sometimes being sure that you are unsure is cleverer than a plain yes or no. This could well provide a missing link in the evolution of consciousness, writes Helen Phillips (*New Scientist*, December 16, 2006). Knowing what we know and what we do not know is considered to be a very important mental skill. Philosophers have long debated the significance of being able to think about thinking or know about knowing. This type of abstract thinking is termed metacognition. Some researchers believe that metacognition could be a first step in understanding various stages in consciousness: from the concept of self to self-awareness to full reflective consciousness. Studies with animals have shown that dolphins and monkeys exhibit metacognition while rats and pigeons do not. In the early 1990s, David Smith, a psychologist, and his colleagues from the University at Buffalo, were testing the ability of a dolphin, Natua, to discriminate between sounds. They found that Natua was able to discriminate high and low pitch sounds and indicated it by pressing one of two buttons. However, when closely similar sounds were introduced Natua was unable to discriminate. A third button was added which Natua could choose to indicate uncertainty and move to the next trial. The selecting of the third button, indicating, “I don’t know,” was considered to be the sign of metacognition. Studies involving monkeys showed that they too exhibited metacognition along with the sense of judgement and memory. Smith believes that metacognition could have additional implications. He writes, “These animals have active cognitive lives,

and that raises the bar towards making sure we treat them respectfully....My research makes you think that it’s not out of the question to get animals to report ‘I hurt’.” We know that animals do suffer, but do they reflect on pain and suffer emotionally as a consequence?

During H.P.B.’s time, works of some German physiologists pointed to cases of consciousness and positive discrimination—one is almost inclined to say *thought*—in the amoebas or animalculae, known to be microscopical protoplasms. L. Cienkowsky observed that a certain amoeba hunted only for spirogyra among a number of other aquatic plants, rejecting every other food. This naturalist never saw it take any other food, and it never touched any of the numerous plants placed by Cienkowsky in its way. “The way of acting of these monads during their search for and reception of food, is so amazing that one is almost inclined to see in them *consciously acting beings*.” writes Cienkowsky. As observed by a physiologist, when poisons are injected directly into the blood, lymphatic cells allow for selective absorption and separate out the poisons that reappear through the intestinal walls (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 20*). In higher animals the power of discrimination is exhibited more markedly. However, though animals have mind, it is still in the latent state. It is only in the human kingdom that the monad (*Atma-Buddhi*) is *individualized*. In other words, when mind was lighted up, it linked the Spirit of God above (Divine nature) with the personal or animal man. Thus, in the human kingdom, the monad is individualized and as a result man is endowed with the power to think, choose and reason and also with self-consciousness and apperception, whereas in the animal kingdom we speak of “monadic essence.” However, in animals, this process of individualization of monad is gradual, and in the higher animals it almost comes to the point of being individualized. Hence, some of the animals *seem* to exhibit self-reflective consciousness.

Like children, animals too have the power of forgetting the pain

and the hurt, and are unable to re-live the pain in memory, like an adult person. But there is pain by association. When a dog sees the stick, he recalls the beating, and similarly the sight of a coat and a hat may remind him of being taken for a walk by his master. Thus, the more developed and sensitive the nervous system, the deeper is the suffering. A horse, an elephant, a cow suffer more than a worm.

To sum up the idea, with regard to absolute and relative truth, we can only repeat what we said before. *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.* Were even the goddess who dwells at the bottom of the well to issue from her place of confinement, she could give man no more than he can assimilate. Meanwhile, everyone can sit near that well—the name of which is KNOWLEDGE—and gaze into its depths in the hope of seeing Truth’s fair image reflected, at least, on the dark waters. This, however, as remarked by Richter, presents a certain danger. Some truth, to be sure, may be occasionally reflected as in a mirror on the spot we gaze upon, and thus reward the patient student. But, adds the German thinker, “I have heard that some philosophers in seeking for Truth, to pay homage to her, have seen their own image in the water and adored it instead.”

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

ATTAINING THE GOAL OF LIFE

Like threads of silver seen through crystal beads,
Let love through good deeds show.

—*The Light of Asia*

WHATEVER his station in life, each person cherishes a goal round which his life revolves. It may be that he is not aware of his having chosen an objective, but it is there. Unconsciously, but nonetheless surely, it exerts its pull upon his faculties and drives them in a larger or a tighter orbit round itself. Most often, it is some form of ambition that rules the man, and so powerful is its hold upon him that all else but the one dominant end is brushed aside and often enough is not even noticed. The more intense the desire to achieve, the more concentrated becomes the effort. The starving man loses sight of all else but the gratification of his appetite. So does the devoted man who braves all and everything in order to attain to wisdom, and so too does the evil man who goes wrong and deliberately chooses the darker side of existence.

The average man is a bundle of desires—some of them conflicting—and even these are wont to change with time, circumstance, the stage of growth from adolescence to old age and the maturity or decadence of his thoughts. The man of manifold desires divides his energies, giving to each a larger or a smaller portion of his vitality. His desires thus lack the backing of an undivided concentration and can only colour his life with insipid hues. Under such circumstances, the man finds himself divided, with a mental state bordering on continued distraction. It is this state where man oscillates between one desire and another that makes him unstable and therefore incapable of lifting himself from out of the particular stratum of thought into which he has fallen. Being in such condition, he is not capable of developing that kind of energy that will make him receptive of the knowledge that pertains to planes above the one where desires prevail. Shut off

from the stream of divine knowledge, he remains ignorant of the great forces and energies that would otherwise have been his, and his incarnation may close on a note of frustration for the indwelling soul. Man has still to learn that his lower desires can be stilled only by a force which is superior to them. This force resides and has to be searched for within the secret recesses of his soul and spirit.

For the majority, the culmination, the coveted end of any effort, is the act of possessing, the glory of having achieved, the attaining in fullest measure of a sense of reflection or the losing of all interest once that the goal is attained. In each such case, the end of any effort is the securing of something for oneself as a being distinct and separate from others. However, the act of attainment is seldom the close of all ambition. Satisfied in one direction, it springs up in another. The desire motivated energy now turns towards the protecting of the fruits of effort against the claims, longings and depredations of others. Wading through dubious or even corrupt practices towards his seat of power, the man seeks to retain his hold on it by the use of the very forces that raised him. He thus perpetuates a string of falsehoods, iniquities and deceits and even stoops to torture and death. He does this because the forces that he used to raise himself to power are the forces that are familiar to him, and he relies on them to see him through all difficulties. The ends which the bad among men covet are several and the means to attain these are as varied as the tortuous ingenuity of man can invent.

Since man is a compound marvellously mixed of the animal and the angel, he finds that he is a strange mixture of the bad and the good. Ignoble aims rub shoulders in him with noble aspirations and he finds that if at one time he has the potentialities of a Dr. Jekyll, at another time he lapses into the evil ways of a Mr. Hyde. This oscillation between good and evil tears a person apart unless he grasps his individuality firmly and by the force of his awakened spiritual perceptions he crosses the threshold and enters his place of peace. It is a tragedy of life that man, because he is so near to

the forms of matter, gravitates towards them, not realizing that too great an alliance with perishable things is bound to result in evil.

The deliberate choosing of a goal for the entire lifetime is no light exercise. The man must know and be cognizant of all choices that are open to him lest in his ignorance he omit that choice which alone can make him more than man. But long before he can exercise his power to choose, he has to make his perceptions far freer than before from killing action. Unless he is willing to play at blindman's buff and yield himself to the vagaries of chance, he has to train himself to see things and events as they get revealed under the benign light of spirit. It thus happens that the search for a goal becomes an end in itself and may in some cases require the devoted pursuit of a lifetime of effort. That search requires the stifling of the voices of erstwhile desires and the letting go of ambitions that may still appear desirable. The past karma of wrong choices may retard progress, but it is inevitable that what one has sown, one must also reap. These stages have to be gone through as the first hesitant steps towards living. They are important lest later, when pursuing the true goal, the latent force of an unrequited desire may raise its head and precipitate a fight at the very moment when the soul needs calmness for its efflorescence.

The average man pursues life as though he were a thing apart from other men and from the teeming life that surrounds him. He makes of himself a pivot round which his world of make-believe revolves. He will no doubt have virtue and charity; but these are his to display and crow over on appropriate occasions. But apart from such persons who think only of themselves, there are others—and they are not few either—who view life differently. They know intuitively that all souls have emerged as sparks from the same great fire and must return to and be absorbed by it, some sooner, others later. If this is the destiny of the spark that indwells the man, then he cannot but be a unit in a vast Host that was led out of its homogeneous existence to go forth and achieve. The complete plan for the manifestation of a universe remains in the safe custody

of him who heads the Host of emanations; while the plan for any man of his numerous incarnations remains with the Higher Self and is perceptible by him who desires perception. The aspirations, the longings and the ambitions—if one can call immortal leanings by that name—of a man who sees life in such perspective are vastly different from those of the common run of men. His vision is different, his aim and purpose become different; and the power which can lift him out of the morass of misery producing desires is also different.

Many a great mind has formulated the fundamental truth that outside of true Religion there is no solace for man. It is Religion alone which indicates that there is a plan consciously formed and as consciously being executed that bridges life and death and spreads its ramifications over trillions of years. It is in accordance with that plan that the march towards ultimate progression and perfection is undertaken. This great knowledge about evolution and the essence of things is no religion as the world knows “religion.” It is not of the variety that depends on bell, book and candle; nor is it that which is being sold by self-styled Swamis and heads of sects that are mushrooming at present and are doing a flourishing business in both the East and the West. There is today, as there has been in existence for millions of years, a Wisdom which is ancient and which has come down to us unaltered. Men have called it the “Wisdom-Religion.” Modern Theosophy is an exposition of such portions of it as can be grasped by the average human. The student of life requires time to take the fundamental propositions of this Wisdom-Religion to heart. The Secret Doctrine enters his life unobtrusively and, strange as it may seem, the import of one page after another gets revealed only as he advances along the Path. No explanations from outside can reveal to him the “secret” within the “Doctrine.” The key to understand the inner, hidden meaning, has to be fashioned and forged by himself—unaided. In this task, the ethics of performance assume their full and total importance. Any misguided aim (all personal longings

are that), any misshapen means raise a cloud of doubt and ambiguity which envelops the mind and the doctrine of the ancient wisdom continues to remain secret. To make the man ready for the receiving of Wisdom, ethics have to be invoked to translate metaphysics into action—into a living, throbbing, vitalizing force for good. It is one part of the ultimate aim of any man that he make the great universal ideas a living power in his life.

Without the study of the genesis of worlds, Gods, Powers and Man, the student will not be able to grasp the true import of that much used and often misunderstood term “Universal Brotherhood.” If he cannot see himself as an integral part of the vast whole, then must his philosophy of life and the manner in which he sees himself vis-à-vis other men lead him into erroneous ideologies (as regards ends) and dangerous conclusions (as regards the means). The fanatics of any religion have an imposing array of weapons in their armoury ranging from persuasion, pressure and casuistry to subjugation, torture and death. Inquisitions and burnings on the stake were common means to a benighted clergy for achieving their ends. Their spirit of intolerance has not disappeared and is traceable even in this century, now in politics, now in science, and may yet revisit large sections of humanity. The sectarian and the bigot try to portion out the Absolute and put up barriers to the Infinite. What sordidness such aims can hold is seen mostly in the retrospect. What degeneration can befall man is seen also in the retrospect by examining the means he uses to achieve those ends.

Once that the goal of life is visualized and formulated, the means for the attaining of that end have to be sorted out. The intrinsic value or worthlessness of any means lies in its moral and ethical content. There are and there will probably always be Robin Hoods of religion—they who go on robbing their Peters to pay their Pauls. Regardless of their motives, their actions bear the tinge and colour of robbery. The ill-gotten gains get saturated by the hurt feelings of the person robbed and will sooner or later produce weeds where roses were expected to bloom. Money has this peculiarity that it

seldom carries the message of life to the masses. If it had that power, the Christs and Buddhas of the race would have revelled in riches. The life of poverty (without the stigma of insolvency) is a way of life and becomes a means to reach the goal. Poverty is a legitimate means to achieve humility of spirit and becomes a gesture by which the man acknowledges his kinship with large masses of men.

The real and perhaps the only means to reach the great goal are within the man himself. His own individualized incarnation was according to a plan and had a distinct purpose which took in its sweep not only the man himself but his family, nation and race. This plan remains in the custody of the Inner Ruler—the true Krishna who guides the chariot of life now here, now there, so as to place the disciple in the midst of such circumstances as are needed for his experience.

No plan that stems from out the spaceless Soul can base itself on any principles save those of Brotherhood, Altruism and Sacrifice. Not one of these but reflects the other two. These are the “means” to open the gates to fulfilment. In the final analysis, these three are both “ends” and “means”; the goal, the resting place, the asylum and the friend of him of the mystic and the fast-moving Soul.