

**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"*

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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# THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

**A Magazine Devoted to  
The Living of the Higher Life**

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- (a) To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour;
- (b) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and
- (c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### GOOD AND EVIL—SOME REFLECTIONS

WHAT is the origin of evil? Christian theology states that evil came into the world because the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, and because of Adam's sin every other human being is and has been a sinner. Interestingly, this first man was made in the image of God—he was *perfect*—and yet, he was unable to restrain himself from doing forbidden things! There was in him the tendency to do wrong, writes Mr. Crosbie.

Hence, the Christians have the doctrine of *original sin*, which says that everyone is born sinful. This means that we are born with a built-in urge to do bad things and to disobey God. This marked the *fall* of man, from perfection to imperfection. However, how does original sin reach from Adam to the present humanity? According to one explanation, the whole of humanity is somehow contained in Adam, and hence the humanity fell with the fall of Adam. Another explanation is that original sin is hereditary and was passed on from Adam and Eve to their descendants. Difficult as it is to understand the transmission of the tendency to do evil from Adam to the human race, there is a further dilemma. Did evil *originate* with Adam and Eve? If evil did not exist before Adam sinned, how could he know that it was wrong to disobey God?

H.P.B. explains that Adam and Eve represent a stage in human evolution when the hermaphrodite man separated into male and female sexes. Since the mind of man was not yet lighted up or

activated, the "Sons of Wisdom" or *Manasputras*, who later endowed human race with the light of mind, had warned humanity to leave alone the fruit forbidden by Nature. In other words, humanity was warned to leave alone physical procreation through union of the sexes, until its physiological nature had adjusted its instincts in the right direction. But some of the humanity disobeyed the warning and begot progeny. Being still mindless at the period of separation it begot, moreover, anomalous offspring, by uniting with huge she-animals. Thus, the warning proved of no value. Men realized the *unfitness—we must not say sin*—of what they had done, only when too late, *i.e.*, after the light of mind was given, but till then humanity had remained simply physical, like the animals generated by them, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 267). However, the "forbidden fruit" is also the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, eating which would endow humanity with Divine Creative Wisdom. In the article, "The Origin of Evil," H.P.B. argues that had there been no sin or evil before Adam and Eve, there could exist neither the *tempting* Serpent nor a Tree of Knowledge of *good and evil*. On eating the fruit their eyes were opened and H.P.B. points out that they knew many more things besides becoming aware that they were naked. Eating the forbidden fruit is equated with evil, perhaps because, as H.P.B. points out, "Too much knowledge about things of matter is thus rightly shown as evil."

In Ancient Philosophy the birth of the Kosmos is attributed to ONE becoming the many, or homogeneity becoming heterogeneity, creating the contrasts. The creation of contrasts or "pairs of opposites" has given rise to evil, *i.e.*, free will through choice created evil. Moreover, one-third of evil is inherent in manifestation. Evil is *not immanent in matter*, which is eternal, but in the illusions created by it. To be free from evil one must recognize that matter and material things are continually changing and are ephemeral. Yet, it is only when spirit (or soul) passes through envelopes of matter and learns to discern between good and evil, or light and darkness that it can reach experience and knowledge. It is only then that the soul

achieves self-consciousness, which is described as reaching the original condition of a god, plus experience gained.

Pagans regarded good and evil as twin brothers born from the same mother—Nature. However, when people started believing in a just, merciful and perfect anthropomorphic god, there was a need to create his opposite, the *Devil* or *Satan* to explain injustice, cruelty and evil in the world. H.P.B. points out the absurdity by arguing that if God is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Infinite, that God must also include evil. Either God must include evil, or he must be the direct cause of it or he must cease to be Absolute, Supreme and all-embracing. The Ancient philosophers defined evil as lining of God or Good. If good is represented by Light, then evil could be represented as its shadow, and hence inseparable. If evil disappeared then good would disappear along with it from Earth, as depicted in the story of *Kaliyadaman*. When Krishna found that the poisonous serpent Kaliya had been contaminating the river water with his poison, he jumped into the river and after long struggle, subdued him. The story of Krishna and Kaliya, is the story of triumph of good over evil. However, we must not forget that Krishna does not *destroy* Kaliya, but asks him to retire into the fathomless depths of the sea. It implies that even if we may get rid of evil from our *individual* natures, evil will always remain in the Kosmos as the opposing power to active goodness which maintains the equilibrium in Nature, writes H.P.B. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 26*, p. 15)

What is good? What is evil? Good and evil are relative terms and there could not be one single set standard of good or evil for every human being. It is true that there are *universal* ethics and morals that guide us as to right and wrong, or good and bad conduct. Also, there are actions that are forbidden by the scriptures. Then, there are actions that are recommended to be performed, such as, acts of *Dana* (charity), *Tapas* (mortification) and *Yajna* (sacrifice). However, there may be false asceticism, like piercing the cheeks or standing on one leg, and likewise one may perform charity with the ulterior motive to gain recognition. Hence, as the *Gita* teaches, all

actions are involved in faults, like fire is surrounded by smoke, SO that a perfectly good-intentioned action may end up bringing about harm.

Yet, we might say, to follow our conscience is good and to stifle it, is evil. What we call conscience is a faculty, which may be stilled or made active. It is the inner voice of warning, which although it arises from our divine nature, could be limited by our life and education. It could be based on things we were taught in our early childhood and throughout life as not proper to be done. Some of the religious fanatics who indulge in religious persecutions sincerely believe that they are doing the "right thing" and are acting according to their conscience. This form of conscience is bound to vary with the family, the community, the nation and the civilization. It is often based on customs and traditions, and grows with knowledge. Knowledge enables us to decide whether our conscience was based on moral principles or customs. But there is also the conscience with which we are born. It is deep seated and based on experiences in other lives, when we learnt that certain things ought not to be done. It is our innate moral code. For instance, if a money purse were found lying on the road, most of us would try to return it to the owner instead of keeping it with us. This form of conscience grows with experience. Knowledge and experience allow better expression of the inner or "still small voice," producing a higher and deeper sense of lightness.

How should we fight evil? We might begin by fighting the evil within. When another person finds fault with us, then we might reflect upon the accusation or criticism. If found to be correct, let us learn not to repeat it and that would be a victory of good over evil in a minor way. When we find something bad in us, we must not justify, nor make excuses, or be lenient, saying, "Only this once, next time I will be careful." We need to be firm and take measures. Lord Buddha says, "A man should hasten towards good; he should restrain his evil thoughts; if he is slack in doing good his mind inclines to delight in evil." This verse might lead us to think that man is

naturally *more* inclined to evil than to good. However, its real implication could be understood when taken in context of the evolutionary progress of the innumerable incarnations. As explained in the magazine *Theosophy* for August 1956, it is easy to see that a person who makes no positive effort towards self-improvement will lose touch with the meaning of the forward march of progress. While other fellow beings are at least making intermittent efforts to be good and are striving towards a wider perspective, this person makes no such effort and hence gradually he is separated from them. His will is set in opposition to the very idea of progress. He tends to become vindictive and revengeful. On the other hand, even a man of most evil ways can hope to become righteous, through right choices, like a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water.

Good and Evil are relative terms and we all have in us the germs of all the evil and wickedness we find in the world. It would be a folly to categorize action as good or bad on appearances, without taking into account the motive, the inner state of the person, the degree of his development and knowledge. Under the Law of Karma, wrongs done in ignorance attract physical consequences but not moral responsibility. The severity of karmic backlash is more when the action is performed with knowledge. As mentioned in the *Preface to the Dhammapada*, we need to retain ethical awareness but reject *categorical morality*, which then leads to self-righteousness. Mr. Judge points out in *Letters That Have Helped Me* that what seems evil and "painful" may be necessary for the soul's progress.

To check evil in the society, nation and the world at large, we might arouse public opinion by spreading right ideas. Let human laws be reformatory and not punitive. Though punishment works as a temporary deterrent and is inevitable at times, punishment is not a permanent solution to eradicate evil. We may aim at bringing about inner conversion or transformation in the evil-doer. The article, "The Inner Conversion of Tojo," (*Thus Have I Heard*, p. 35),

mentions the story of the Japanese General Tojo, described as the Dictator of modern Japan, who was tried, found guilty and executed in 1948. It is the story of his (and also of his fellow-prisoners') remarkable conversion to a higher perception through the efforts of a Buddhist monk, who preached and discussed with them spiritual matters so that all of them went to their execution in serene submission. The monk, the follower of Buddha Way of Compassion, illustrated that the true helper of the heart must himself possess the light of peace to overcome darkness of might in warriors like General Tojo. Individually, we may not encounter criminals, robbers or terrorists, but we do experience "meanness" of human nature at every step of life. Shall we condemn it? Shall we isolate ourselves? Shall we despair and become bitter? Mr. Judge advises us to cultivate a lot of compassion in our hearts for our own benefit and for that of the evil doer. Thus:

In order to off-set the terribly cold effect of perceiving the littleness of human affairs, one must inculcate in oneself a great compassion which will include oneself, also. If this is not done, contempt comes on, and then the result is dry, cold, hard, repellent, and obstructive to all good work. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 130)

Two-thirds of world's evil is due to man's inhumanity to man. Our behaviour should always be such that ultimately, it inspires the other to turn the corner and reciprocate our goodness. A boy playing along the hill-side shouted something and he felt that another boy from behind the hill was repeating the very same thing that he spoke. He then shouted, "go away, you bad boy," and back came the answer, "Away, you bad boy." The boy started crying and went to his mother. And the mother told him to go and shout, "Come, play with me, you good boy," and the same answer came back from the boy who was behind the hills. As we begin to be watchful of evil in us, at the level of thought, word and action, we begin to make a difference to the sum total of evil in the world.

## REMEMBERING H. R BLAVATSKY

### I

H. P. BLAVATSKY, the founder of the present Theosophical Movement, passed away on May 8th, 1891, and couple of days later a leading American newspaper, *The New York Tribune*, in the course of an editorial, observed:

Few women in our time have been more persistently misrepresented, slandered, and defamed than Madame Blavatsky, but though malice and ignorance did their worst upon her there are abundant indications that her life-work will vindicate itself, that it will endure, and that it will operate for good....

Some day, if not at once, the loftiness and purity of her aims, the wisdom and scope of her teachings, will be recognized more fully, and her memory will be accorded the honour to which it is justly entitled.

Many years have elapsed since then, and all who have kept themselves abreast of the developments in scientific and philosophical thought during this period will agree that the writer of the editorial in *The New York Tribune* showed true prophetic insight when he penned the above words. During the last few years a profound change has occurred in the attitude of the intelligentsia towards Madame Blavatsky and her famous books. A distinguished American man of letters, in the course of a review of her works, referred to her "encyclopaedic knowledge" and observed:

As one turns from theme to theme, finding invariably thereon the print of the giant's thumb, no one imaginatively gifted can help feeling in the presence of an overwhelming and essentially noble personality.... This appreciation may seem exaggerated, emanating from one who is not and has never been connected with the Theosophical Society; but it is now due to suggest that possibly, when the true history of the period she covered

comes to be recorded, with all its effects and ramifications, H.P.B. may be hailed as the greatest figure of her Age.

This high tribute paid to H.P.B. by a prominent non-theosophic man of letters can be paralleled by similar tributes by other men of light and learning illustrating the profound change in the attitude towards her. One of the reasons for which H. P. Blavatsky has come to occupy a high place in the estimate of the intellectual class may best be given in the words of Dr. Ivor B. Hart, a writer of several well-known books of science. In a series of articles he subjected H.P.B.'s monumental work, *The Secret Doctrine*, to a careful examination in the light of the developments in science, and he reached the following two very striking conclusions:

One is that most of the problems that are confronting the modern physicist today were certainly discussed from the special angle of Eastern philosophy by Mme. Blavatsky ...and the second point is that the general trend of research and speculation on the part of our European savants is actually bringing them into line with the pronouncements of *The Secret Doctrine* on these topics.

Several other writers of note have shown how the discoveries and researches of science have gone to corroborate the teachings given by H.P.B. so many years ago. We shall here quote the comment made by Theodore Besterman, Research Officer of the Society for Psychical Research and a well-known writer on psychic and philosophic subjects, on a certain passage in *The Secret Doctrine* on the constitution of matter:

With a few verbal alterations of little importance this striking passage could stand as the latest pronouncement of a contemporary physicist. But how absurd it must have seemed when it was written, at a time when the atom was considered to be the irreducible unit of matter!

Perhaps nothing has raised H.P.B. higher in the estimation of the intellectual classes than the fact that her teachings, which were

rejected by scientists when first published, are being slowly corroborated by the subsequent discoveries of the scientists themselves. Years ago, when materialistic science reigned supreme in the West, such tenets of that science as "the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile" were looked upon as irrefutable and almost axiomatic. H.P.B. had to open all her batteries against this materialistic science. In the Preface to *The Secret Doctrine*, published in 1888, she stated that one of the objects of that book was to show that Nature was not "a fortuitous concurrence of atoms," and with that object in view she fearlessly assailed the materialistic science of the day, some of the most glaring absurdities of which had been already exposed by her in her earliest work, *his Unveiled*, published in 1877. Where does science stand at the present day? We shall answer in the words of a great scientist, Sir James Jeans:

Fifty Years ago, the universe was generally looked on as a machine: it was said that the final aim of science was to explain all the objects in the world, including living bodies, as machines, as mere jumbles of atoms which would perform mechanical dances for a time under the action of blind purposeless forces and then fall back to form a dead world. Modern science gives but little support to such materialistic views.

That the materialistic science of that earlier day is dead now is universally admitted, but it should be gratefully acknowledged that even in those days there was one heroic and solitary figure who, taking her stand upon purely scientific data, dealt sledge-hammer blows at that science and with prophetic insight predicted its early death. She gave to the world profound scientific truths far in advance of her age, some of which at least have been tardily accepted by science, and therefore it is small wonder that she has now come to occupy a high place in the estimate of men and women of culture.

It was not merely with the materialistic science of the day that H.P.B. had to fight. She found in the growth of so-called "spiritualism" and "psychism" a distinct danger to the moral and

spiritual well-being of mankind, and it was part of her mission to give true and sound teachings on these subjects. An altogether mistaken importance had come to be attached to the seance-room phenomena, and people who had no real knowledge about the constitution of man and about after-death states deceived themselves into believing that they were receiving genuine communications from the dead. H.P.B. wrote incessantly against the craze for "phenomena" and pointed out the dangers of mediumship and of visiting mediums for obtaining so-called messages from the dead. In 1877 she published her first great book, *Isis Unveiled*, in which she explained in great detail the rationale of various phenomena—e.g., telepathy, clairvoyance, mediumship, hypnotism, psychometry, and so on—and laid down the safe and sound lines on which knowledge of psychic subjects could be gained and the deeper mysteries of Nature could be unravelled. Western scientists, however, went on in their own blundering way, and five years after the publication of *Isis Unveiled* some of them established the Society for Psychical Research.

Sir Lawrence Jones, a former President of the Society, in an address delivered at Oxford, had to admit with regard to various psychic phenomena that a vast mass of facts had been collected but "we are still ignorant of the underlying laws of thought which made such things possible." Although a large number of scientists and psychologists of world-wide fame have for several decades given their close attention to what is called "psychic research," the fact remains that they are still for the most part experimenting blindly and have not been able to give a satisfactory and convincing explanation as to how the various phenomena occur.

*(To be concluded)*

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

### THE SAGE—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Arahantavaggo* (meaning "one who is worthy") or "The Arhat," or "The Sage," or "The Saint." According to Buddhist tradition, an Arhan is supposed to have reached the fourth and the highest degree of perfection. *The Voice of the Silence*, the Mahayana Buddhist text, describes the four states as four paths. An aspirant starts his spiritual journey by becoming a *Swtapatti*, "he who enters in the stream" that leads to the Nirvanic ocean. But it is rare for a *Swtapatti* to reach *Nirvana* in one birth. Usually a *Chela* is said to begin the ascending effort in one life and reach *Nirvana* only in his seventh succeeding birth. The name of the *second* is *Sakridagamin*, "he who will receive birth (only) once more." The *third* is called *Anagamin*, "he who will be reincarnated no more," unless he so desires in order to help mankind. *The fourth* Path is known as that of *Rahat* or *Arhat*. This is the highest. An Arhat sees the *Nirvana* during his life. For him it is no post-mortem state, but *Samddhi*, during which he experiences the Nirvanic bliss. In the Northern Buddhist phraseology all the great Arhats, Adepts and Saints are called Buddhas. The popular reverence calls "Buddhas of Compassion" those *Bodhisattvas* who, having reached the rank of an Arhat (*i.e.*, having completed the *fourth* or *seventh* Path), refuse to pass into the *Nirvanic* state or "don the *Dharmakdya* robe and cross to the other shore," as it would then be beyond their power to assist men even so little as Karma permits. They prefer to remain invisibly (in Spirit, so to speak) in the world, and contribute toward man's salvation by influencing them to follow the Good Law, *i.e.*, lead them on the Path of Righteousness. In other words, instead of entering the *Nirvana* he *remains* in the glorious body he has woven for himself, *invisible* to uninitiated mankind, to watch over and protect it. The innate and right popular perception, owing to that self-sacrifice, has placed a *Bodhisattva* higher in its reverence than a Buddha. They choose the path of Renunciation or that *Secret*

Path which leads the Arhan to mental woe unspeakable; woe for the living dead (the ignorant), and helpless pity for the men of Karmic sorrow. He is called a Saviour of mankind, who will lead men to final *Nirvana*. Arhans are said to possess boundless vision or superhuman sight. They are rare, as is the blossom of the Udumbara tree, says *The Voice of the Silence*.

The Wise Man who becomes a Sage identifies himself with the "life of the gods," for he has "completed his journey" in the mundane world for this particular round of existence. But he is compassionate; he can be reached by those who seek him, even though he no longer himself needs to seek a focus for work in the world. It is in this sense that, for him, "there is no round of births and deaths." For, seeking nothing, he undergoes no disappointment nor is he attached, even in the purest and noblest way, to any success. By learning to rise above *psychological* death and birth, he has transcended literal death also; his consciousness has become an unbroken stream. Again, he is not remote from men who aspire to reach a similar high state of consciousness, but only remote from the travails that becloud their perception. This is why he must be *sought*, but he no longer dwells in the abodes of men. His presence is sensed, at times, even by lowly members of the multitude, and even dim awareness of his presence stands as witness to the fact that it is possible for any manasic being to "throw off the fetters and free himself in all ways." (*Theosophy*, June 1956)

1. *He who has thrown off the fetters and freed himself in all ways, he is free from sorrow; for him there is no suffering; he has completed his journey. (90)*

The verse describes the state of the *Srotapatti*, who having plunged into the stream that leads to *Nirvana*, finally reaches the other shore and becomes an Arhat. He reaches this state by destroying all fetters which bind man. Having risen above the likes and dislikes, having cultivated perfect equanimity, he obtains freedom from suffering. He attains highest perfection possible in a given cycle

and thus reaches the end of his journey. He has nothing more to learn from the world. He obtains highest freedom by forsaking anger, not clinging to name or form, living without the sense of possession. The canto of "Craving," in the *Dhammapada*, tells us about the fetters that keep us chained to the world. Thus:

Wise people do not call that a strong fetter which is made of iron, wood or fibre; but jewels and precious stones, sons and wives form stronger fetters. These latter drag down, and though they can be overcome they are difficult to undo. Having destroyed such a fetter let a man renounce the world, let him be free of longing, and having forsaken the pleasures of the senses, let him not look behind.

Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher further explains these four stages and ten fetters, in his book, *A Guide to the Buddhist Path*. Buddhism mentions ten fetters which bind a person to the wheel of life or *bhavachakra*. The Stream-entrant (*srottapati*), is one who has developed great spiritual insight into the nature of existence, and has been able to break three of the ten fetters. These three fetters are: (1) *Satkaya-dristi* or personality view. To break this fetter is to understand that after death, there is neither the complete annihilation of the personal identity, nor does the personal identity persist *unchanging*. The second fetter is *vicikitsa* or skeptical doubt, which is the doubt or indecision of a person who wants to sit on the fence, and waver all the time, without any commitment. The third fetter is *silavrata-paramarsa* or regarding ethical rules and religious observances as ends in themselves. Buddha always said that ethical precepts, religious observances and even study of the scriptures, are like a boat, a means to an end. The second state is that of the *Sakridagamin*, one who has broken first three fetters and he *weakens* two more, *viz.*, *kama-raga*, or the desire or urge for sensuous existence, and *vyapada*, or animosity and anger. The third state is that of the Non-Returner (*anagamin*), who *breaks* the five fetters, above enumerated, so that he is not born on human plane but is



born in the sphere called the "pure abodes." The fourth is the *Arahant* ("the worthy"), who has gained enlightenment, having broken five higher fetters, viz., *rupa raga*, or desire for existence in the world of form; *arupa-raga*, or desire for existence in the formless worlds; *mana* or conceit. The ninth higher fetter is *auddhitya* or instability, so that Arhat-to-be is poised between the last reaches of the phenomenal world and *Nirvana*. The tenth and the last fetter is, *avidya* or ignorance, which refers to spiritual darkness.

Next few verses explain how these fetters are thrown off by the wise man.

2. *The thoughtful exert themselves. They do not delight in any abode. They leave their house and home as swans their lake. (91)*

3. *Those who have no possessions, who nourish themselves according to knowledge and who realize the goal of freedom by perceiving that life is empty and transient, their path is hard to trace like the flight of birds through the sky. (92)*

4. *He whose appetites are slain and who is indifferent to food, who has perceived the goal of freedom by realizing that life is empty and transient, his path is hard to trace like the flight of birds through the sky. (93)*

The mindful keep up the struggle. They are not bound to any place or a thing. Earnestly pursuing the spiritual path, they leave their homes as swans their lake, giving up all their possessions and seeking highest freedom. This is not easy. When the rich young man who sought eternal life was told by Jesus to go and sell everything that he had and give the money to the poor and then follow him, he went away feeling sad because he could not give up his riches in order to follow Christ. For most men, the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing has become the central hub around which revolve their everyday life, in a fixed groove. But the truly awakened know that life is transient and empty and hence leave their secure home, charting their own path to seek the

permanent. The Monk is without any possessions. He moves from place to place, carrying a staff, a bowl and wooden slippers. He has no preference for any kind of food. He begs at fixed number of houses and eats whatever is given to him in the bowl or goes without food, if he gets nothing. He eats to keep his body and soul together. At a higher stage of spiritual development, one eats little, mostly vegetables and fruits, mindful about the "animalizing" effect produced by various types of food which impart, physiologically, some of the characteristics of the animal or the plant it came from. However, at the same time remembering that what is of greater importance is "what he thinks and feels, what desires he encourages in his mind, and allows to take root and grow there." But Arhats are much higher than a Monk or a *Sannyasi*. They nourish themselves according to knowledge and hence are indifferent to food. We are told in *Notes in the Bhagavad Gita*, "... each body extracts from any kind of food only that which conforms to the nature of the possessor of the body, and that nature is subject to change from within." (p. 223)

In India, sages are called *Hansa* and the perfected ones are called *Paramahansa* (great swans). Swans are said to eat pearl and possess the skill of separating milk from water. They are comfortable both in air and in water and migrate from one place to another. While the path of man or animal on earth can be traced and may even be predicted, the path of fish in the water or path of a bird in the air is hard to trace. According to some commentators, it is suggestive of their becoming karmaless; they leave no karmic residue; they offer no individual focus for Karma to bring back results. As *Light on the Path* puts it, "for him who is on the threshold of divinity no law can be framed, no guide can exist."

*(To be concluded)*

## ON SACRED ANIMALS

## I

THERE are many theories that seek to explain the origins of animal worship. For instance, the origin of animal-worship is explained on the basis of a myth in which the gods, supposedly threatened by giants, hid under the guise of animals. Even after the gods resumed their normal state, people continued to worship the animals that their gods had disguised themselves as.

When a god is respected or worshipped by means of a representative animal, an animal cult is formed. One of the most widely found modes of showing respect to animals is known as *totemism*, where a particular animal is seen as sacred to an individual or a group. In Central Australia there are ceremonies directed towards placating this mythical animal. The totem animal that is sacred to a given individual or a group may not be sacred to another individual or group. On the other hand, sacred animals in various *religions* are sacred to the gods, and to larger group of people, rather than to particular individuals or tribes. According to Native American tradition each individual is connected with nine different animals that will accompany him through life, acting as guides. Depending upon the kind of life lived, different animal guides come in and go out of a person's life. These animals are called *totem animals*. Among the nine animals, there is one totem animal which acts as a guardian spirit, who is said to guide the person through physical and spiritual world. It is said that for some people knowing their totem animal is an inward process and they know it because they are especially drawn to a particular animal or intrigued by one. It is also believed that the totem animal is often the one with the qualities that the individual needs to develop. Each animal has symbolic significance, and might embody characteristics that a person needs. Sometimes that particular animal could help a person to accept some psychological aspects about himself, which he is normally not ready to accept.

Man is more than an animal because there is the god in him. He is more than a god because there is the animal in him. We speak of subduing the animal nature or lower nature so that it can be used as a vehicle. In Indian tradition all gods have their vehicles which are worshipped along with the gods. There are stories, which tell us how a particular animal got associated with a particular deity. But also animal worship seems to be a definite stage in man's changing idea of God. It appears that God in Nature was worshipped by worshipping trees, stones and even animals. Tree worship has been very old, writes James Frazer, in his book, *The Golden Bough*. In the beginning, trees were worshipped as animated things, so that each tree was regarded as a conscious and living thing. Every tree was looked upon as the "body" or abode of the tree-spirit. From the remotest antiquity trees were treated with veneration and connected with gods and mystical forces in nature. Every nation had its sacred tree with its peculiar characteristics and occult properties. Certain groves were declared sacred to prevent their destruction. Likewise, at times, the qualities of the animal made it unique, leading to its deification and protection. Some animals are regarded as abodes of the souls of the dead. All the animals and birds now held "unclean" in the Bible had been the symbols of the Deity in days of old. "It was because they were too sacred that a mask of uncleanness was placed over them, in order to preserve them from destruction," writes H.R.B. (*S.D.*, 1,355). The word "unclean" is a blind, which actually may mean "holy." For instance, Moses forbids eating the pelican and swan, and classifies them as unclean fowls. (*S.D.*, I, 80 fn.)

In every nation there is superstitious dread of killing certain birds or animals. For instance, in Egypt ibis is considered sacred and having magical properties in common with other birds, such as, the albatross and the mythical white swan or the swan of Eternity. In Egypt, it was believed that one who killed ibis or the golden hawk, which was the symbol of the Sun and Osiris, could hardly escape death. In Zoroastrian tradition Cock has been considered a sacred bird who heralds the dawn and worships the Sun. Hence, it is

considered a great sin to kill this "holy" bird. Ancients have always believed in divination by birds and even zoomancy. There are methods of divination using the white and yolk of the egg. It is said that divination, using eggs, used to be a divine art, which is now degraded. There were fortune-tellers who read the future of the servant girls who were in search of husbands, by means of the white of an egg.

Christians, too, have their sacred birds and animals. The four sacred animals of the Ezekiel's wheel, *viz.*, the Bull, the Eagle, the Lion and the fiery-winged serpent, are the symbols of the four elements and the four lower principles in man. These four animals belong to four constellations that form, so to speak, *suite* or *cortege* of the Solar God, and during winter solstice they occupy the four cardinal points of the zodiacal circle. (*S.D.*, I, 362-63)

The Egyptians worshipped animals as some of them were regarded sacred to certain gods. Some animals were mummified because they were considered to be the living representatives of a god. For instance, cat was sacred to Bast, Hawk to Horus and Ibis to Thoth. However, we are told that the *wise* Egyptians never worshipped *animals*, only when the true ideas were lost the animals were worshipped by the masses.

Animal sacrifice is common in many religions. At times it appears that animal sacrifice was the result of dead-letter form of worship, where certain religious injunctions were taken literally. Often, sacrificing the animal is symbolic of sacrificing one's animal or lower, passional nature. However, when certain animals were *actually* sacrificed, the efficacy of the sacrifices rested in magnetic laws.

The "Day of Atonement" or *Yom Kippur* was the day when sins of Israel were removed and the sanctuary was cleansed. Two goats were procured, similar in respect of appearance, height, cost, and time of selection. One of them was dedicated to "Yaweh" and the other was marked "for Azazel." The ancient rabbis, interpreting "Azazel" as *Azaz* ("rugged"), and *el* ("strong"), refer it to the rugged

and rough mountain cliff from which the *scapegoat* was cast down on the Day of Atonement. In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, we are told that the priest, collected into his own person, the *bad effects* of the sins of the people, and communicated those deleterious influences to the animal—the scapegoat—by laying his hands upon it. The animal was then driven into the wilderness to exhale these influences. The killing of certain *clean* animals was recommended, as the death of clean animals attracted wholesome preservative influences. As Moses was dealing with tribal people, he ordained certain sacrifices as religious duty from sanitary reasons of his own. (pp. 88-91)

Goat or *Azaz-el*, meaning "God of Victory," is one of the animals regarded as sacred in the Bible. *Azazel* and his "host" are simply the Hebrew "Prometheus," and ought to be viewed from the same standpoint, writes H.P.B. The myth of Prometheus relates to evolution of man. There was a time in evolution of man, when man was really no better than a beast, though in human form. According to this myth, Prometheus stole fire from heaven and brought it to earth. Zeus punished him for this act by tying him to a rock and sending a vulture every day to peck at his liver. Every time that the bird tore out the organ, new organ would grow and once again the torture would be repeated. This agony lasted for thousands of years, until he was freed by Hercules. This myth refers to the "light of the mind" given to man by solar deities, endowing him with the power to think, choose and to reason. At incarnation this mind becomes dual. The aspect of mind, which is entangled with *Kama* (passions), represents the eternal vulture of unsatisfied desires, despair and regret. Zeus represents the Host of primeval progenitors, or "Fathers" who created senseless men without a mind, Prometheus stands for spiritual creators. "This drama of the struggle of Prometheus with the sensual Zeus, one sees enacted daily within our actual mankind: the lower passions chain the higher aspirations to the rock of matter, to generate in many a case the vulture of sorrow, pain, and repentance." (*S.D.*, II, 422)

In an individual it is his Higher Ego (Divine nature) which is the scapegoat for vicarious atonement. In *Transactions* (pp. 67-68), H.P.B. explains that in the Indian Philosophy, the "Higher Ego" is called *Kshetrajna*, or that which informs the body. If we etymologize this word we find that it contains the term *aja*, which means "first-born" and also the "lamb." The lamb symbolizes the Higher Ego in man. This is because though during life the higher and the lower self in man are separate, after the death of the body and the personality, the sins of the personality are, as it were, fastened upon the "Higher Ego." In other words, with personality gone, the Karmic focus is shifted to the divine nature, which though innocent and pure during life, has to bear the punishment of the misdeeds committed by the lower self, in a future life. Likewise, the lamb is also a symbol for all the spiritually advanced beings such as, Jesus, Buddha, etc. It is said of the spiritually advanced beings that they take upon themselves the sin of the collective bad karma of humanity. This is possible because *they completely identify themselves with humanity*. In both these cases, there is *vicarious atonement*, and the Higher Ego and the High beings, represented by "lamb," act as scapegoats.

Ram is another symbol of *Parabrahmam*. T. Subba Row points out that the twelve signs of the zodiac represent the evolution of the universe, from the unknown to its present state. The first sign is Aries or *Mesha* (Ram). The synonymous word is *Aja*. *Aja* literally means that which has no birth, and it is the term used for *Brahman* in some of the Upanishads. The first sign is intended to represent *Parabrahmam*, or the self-existent, eternal, self-sufficient cause of all.

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 is angry and he creates the terrible demon, Virabhadra, the thousand-headed, thousand-

armed monster, to destroy the sacrifice prepared by Daksha. Daksha's head is also cut off and burnt into fire, but later replaced by the *head of a ram*. Daksha is regarded as the Chief Progenitor or *Prajapati*. H.P.B. points out that the ram's head and horns are ever the symbol of generating power and of reproductive force. It is Daksha who establishes the era of men engendered by sexual intercourse. However, this mode of procreation did not occur suddenly but required long ages before it became the "natural" mode. Hence, Shiva is shown to interfere with sacrifice of Daksha, who represents physiological or biological evolution. (*S.D.*, II, 182)

*Hansa* (swan) or *Kalahansa* (Black swan) symbolizes Brahma. The Supreme Deity or *Parabrahm* is called *Hansa-vahana* or he who uses *Hansa* as his vehicle, as the One Reality manifests through Brahma or *Hansa*. Brahma or manifested Logos is *sagunabrahmam* (immanent aspect of God, with attributes) and is a finite god, and disappears at the time of dissolution and hence it is also described as swan-in-time. *Parabrahmam* is *nirgunabrahmam* (transcendental aspect) which is the Eternal Reality described as swan-out-of-time. Swans are supposed to reside in Lake Mansarovar in Tibet, but migrate to India only in winter. It is from Lake Mansarovar that Vedas were brought to India. The Seven Swans that are believed to descend from Heaven into Lake Mansarovar, are in the popular fancy the Seven *Rishis* of the Great Bear, who assume that form to visit the locality where the Vedas were written (*S.D.*, I, 357 fn.). AUM is represented by *Kala Hansa*, says the *Nadavindu Upanishad*. The syllable A is considered to be *Hansa*?, right wing, "U" its left wing, "M" its tail, and *ardhamatra* or (half metre) is said to be its head. The same Upanishad points out that a Yogi who bestrides the *Hansa*, *i.e.*, concentrates on AUM, is not affected by Karmic influences or crores of sins.

(To be continued)

## OCCULTISM AND IMPERSONALITY

TO KNOW anything, one has to hold that thing as a subject of experiment and view it unhampered by considerations of likes and dislikes. The consciousness that views and weighs and judges has to be unfettered, its powers not limited nor circumscribed by the ever narrowing boundaries of selfish motivations.

It would be wrong to assume that knowledge and the powers flowing from it do not come either to the selfish man or the man of evil. They do. However, such men touch the knowledge of things at levels at which the lower human consciousness functions. They do not have access to the spiritual side of things with its potency for the exercise of tremendous force. Even then, the fact that such men can subordinate great powers for their wicked purposes cannot be denied. It is dangerous to ignore this fact.

Occult knowledge deals with the essence of things and therefore with Nature's finer forces. It gives the key to the stupendous forces that reside in the secret side of Nature and therefore of man. Keeping such knowledge away from the ambitious as also from the shallow and the foolish is the responsibility of the Wise. The imposing of an oath of secrecy by ancient secret societies was no mere playing at heroics. It is of the greatest importance that the esoteric aspects of knowledge be kept in safe and trusted hands.

When a student of Theosophy starts yearning for occult knowledge he rarely knows what he desires. The word "occult" means "hidden." Occult knowledge is, therefore, knowledge that is kept hidden from the ordinary run of men. Why, then, does the student desire for himself the unveiling of that which has been purposely secreted from prying eyes? Does he feel that he is already an entity apart from the mass? For most students, it is curiosity that is back of the desire. Possibly there is the desire to shine, a desire to know more than others. For the studiously inclined, there is the urge to expand the vision beyond the horizons of the day. But occult knowledge is much more than worldly knowledge which is beyond

human horizons. This knowledge confers on the recipient incredulously potent powers, which he may use either on the white or the black side of life. A potential focus of danger is created when occult knowledge is given out even to the most promising of aspirants. This danger becomes real if the neophyte in moments of instability breaks his bond of secrecy. He may not be guilty of a deliberate violation. Yet he may do incalculable harm to himself and his fellow students by inadvertently disclosing the secret knowledge to those in whose hands that knowledge may become harmful to humanity.

It is therefore right that before desiring to secure the keys that will open the doors to the hidden knowledge, the student ponder over his own record as to how wisely he has used the powers which even his present limited knowledge has endowed upon him. More important still has he to judge for himself whether during psychic upheavals he has denied himself the use of the powers of thought and speech to escape the results of his own wrongdoings, or worse still, to pass the burden of his merited suffering on to another. One who yields to temptations cannot but disqualify himself. Selfishness in any form and on any plane is the agent which makes the student slip into black magic in one of its lesser or more virulent forms.

The greatest enemy of the student as of the Learned person is the stranglehold that the personality exerts on him and that forces him to use hands and mind heart to advance his own interest. There are those for whom the concepts of universality and brotherhood rank subservient to their ideals of personal advancement. For them, there is no mystery of the self to be solved. They were born separate—they choose to remain separate. They cannot be bothered with the welfare of others. If those others stumble and fall and fail, they could not care less. How very dangerous would it be to release occult knowledge to persons and nations who hold such views! What dire mischief can be caused by the sincere student who, being entrusted with occult knowledge, does not hold it secret and gives it out to persons who, if they themselves do not defile it, think nothing of

displaying it to satisfy their own little vanities!

Before rushing into Occultism, the student has to learn to erect safe guards against his own indiscretions. He has to be sure that if he ventures into the pure white precincts of the Soul, he takes there no soiling substances that defile the precincts and destroy their chaste whiteness. Therefore, if he finds that he has blemishes that make him unfit for the company of the truly wise, he may for the time being put aside his desires for the occult and prepare himself, however slowly, to climb from the personal to the impersonal. To him of the humble heart karma is generous in help and encouragement. If at his low level of unfoldment he cannot engage in sacrificial action, he can still serve, and serving, hope. It is no small favour to lend a hand to a stumbling soul. It is no trivial service to propagate the philosophy and thus perchance help a soul less tainted than oneself on to the path where the Masters are. One of the Great Ones has said: "If you want to know us, study our philosophy. If you want to serve us, serve our humanity." This should imply to the student that the greatest service he can render to humanity (in its impersonal vastness) is to make it study Masters' philosophy. By so doing, he helps units from that humanity to know Masters through that philosophy. This is impersonal service. It is service in *excelsis*.

Maintaining a constant fight against the lower self and thus loosening the bonds of personality may take lives and ages for some. Yet, their devotion to the Cause may make them render such service as will help souls who are less burdened to pass onwards. This is the hope and promise that Theosophy offers. *Light on the Path* has very valuable advice for the student-aspirant. Says the text:

Not until the bonds of personality are loosed can that profound mystery of the self begin to be seen. Not till you stand aside from it will it in any way reveal itself to your understanding.

It is this ability to stand aside from the personality, and thus

detached, to assess its walk in life, that makes the man. It is a spiritual exercise this—that each day the lower is reviewed and controlled by the higher. The true artist and the poet, the great surgeon and the high mathematician stand aside from themselves when devotedly engrossed in their work. The rest of the world goes by leaving them indifferent. The student has to achieve this dissociation to such a marked degree that no friend can enter his citadel, nor yet an enemy. The concentration that permits entry into occultism is, however, of a kind different from that known and practiced by the person of one-pointed ambition. The particular concentration that the aspirant has to cultivate has for its object things that do not concern the personal life; nor is it an abstruse theorizing that borders on mental gymnastics and fails altogether to blend the mind with the soul. The act of standing aside from the personality requires an anchoring of the consciousness on stable and not on shaky ground.

The stepping away from likes and dislikes that makes possible the entry into the realms of the impersonal is not that easily achieved as some so-called modern "gurus" would have us believe. The conquering of the lower self is a work of ages and is not achieved without an inner transformation. The road is thorny and full of pitfalls. But then each one knows that victories go to the daring and to none others.

THIS pearl of eternity is the Church or Temple of God within thee, the consecrated place of divine worship, where alone thou canst worship God in spirit and in truth....When once thou art well grounded in this inward worship, thou wilt have learnt to live unto God above time and place. For every day will be Sunday to thee, and wherever thou goest thou wilt have a priest, a church, and an altar along with thee.

—WILLIAM LAW

## 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:** More and more people are undergoing past-life regression therapy in order to be cured of phobias, anxieties and physical ailments. Is it advisable? Are these cures permanent? Can one be sure of having glimpsed or recalled *one's own* past life?

**Answer:** What is past-life regression? It is journey to one's past life or lives while one is hypnotised. Besides bridge technique where verbal or visual bridges are used, hypnotism is the widely used technique for the past-life regression. Once the person is put into a hypnotic trance, it is claimed that his mind travels in the direction of the source of the problem and the person is led to some past life, which might have relation to the present problem. For a long time psychiatrists have used regression therapy in which the consciousness of the hypnotized person travels through various incidences of his present life right up to childhood. However, it is possible for a patient to go beyond the present life and then he begins to narrate instances from prior lives. Dr. Brian Weiss, the past-life regression therapist, came across a patient who, under hypnotism, was able to recall many of her past lives. An article on "Time Travel," by Swati Sucharita and Sharmila Ganesan-Ram, (*The Times of India*, [*The Crest Edition*], January 23, 2010), mentions the case of a girl, who could not bear sight or sound of water because it brought before her the picture of a body floating in water. She could not sleep because every night she would dream of being raped. However, through past-life regression therapy she was able to see that in her earlier life she had watched her sister being raped and then pushed to her death under waterfall and then she herself was swept away by thundering

torrents. After re-living that terrible experience she was cured of her fears and nightmares.

It can be seen that not all cases of anxiety, phobias or illnesses are acute ones, such as the above mentioned. Yet, today, patients with everything from diabetes to depression line up for past-life regression therapy! One simple principle to be kept in mind is that one must first exhaust all the ordinary, physical means of cure, such as medicines or surgeries or even meditation and alternative therapies, before entering into invisible and metaphysical realms of which we know nothing. There are cases of couples who are on the verge of breaking their marriage because in a given life one of the partners is handicapped or suffers from prolonged illness. Thus for instance, a husband who is angry and frustrated at having to take care of his wife for a long time, goes through the past-life regression. When he learns that in two or more lives the role was reversed, so that it was this present wife who had taken care of him, then he is reconciled. In cases such as these, it appears that instead of past-life regression one needs to understand the doctrine of Karma and have faith in the working of that Law. It is not necessary to know the reason in such cases. All we need to learn is to accept the woes of birth, when it is not possible to change the situation.

A hypnotised person during the period of hypnosis loses his free will and he is open to any suggestion coming from the hypnotiser. We cannot rule out the possibility that the cause for the present problem might be only hypnotiser's suggestion and not necessarily an event from any past life. Moreover, in hypnotic trance one may simply read the impressions or events from the astral light wherein are impressed the records of all actions, thoughts and feelings of the whole humanity. Hence, the impressions picked up from the astral light need not necessarily pertain to *one's own life* but to another's life.

In genuine cases of regression there is another danger. In the article "Hypnotism," Mr. Judge explains that in a sane man the body, soul and astral man are properly in relation with each other. In

hypnotized state, the channel in the brain through which Ego, the real man, controls the brain is paralyzed, so that the person receives only the impressions from the hypnotizer. Thus, a hypnotized man is not wholly sane, since the relation between the Ego and the astral man is temporarily broken. Since the connection with the brain is broken during the hypnotized state, no memory of what transpires in that state is retained. However, the division between the soul and the astral man, releases the astral man from the limitations ordinarily placed by its association with brain and its memory, and as a result the inner memory may act and then the person begins to enact some part of former life or lives. But a second possibility also exists—that by this process another and different entity may enter the body and masquerade as the real person. Such entities do exist and are the astral shells of dead men and women. If they enter, the person becomes insane; and many a maniac is simply a body inhabited by an entity that does not belong to it.

Hypnotism tends to weaken the will and hence, self-control of the subject. As an English physician puts it: "The confirmed and trained hypnotic subject is a maimed individual in mind and body, and is likely at any time to be dangerous to himself and to society." It is very difficult to answer whether phobias, anxieties and diseases cured by past-life regression therapy are *permanently* cured or not. H.P.B. points out that whether hypnotic suggestion would bring about permanent cure or not would depend upon degree of magnetic relations between the operator and the patient. "If Karmic, they will be postponed, and return in some other form, not necessarily in the form of disease, but as a punitive evil of some other sort."

**Question:** We have the tendency to be selfishly attached to our family of the present life. Should we not try to expand our family, especially when we are told that we are not born in same family every life? How to achieve it?

**Answer:** An Ego seeking birth is drawn to a family for one or more of the following reasons: (a) Having generated causes for good or

evil together as members of a family, justice demands that the same Egos come together again to meet the effects they produced together in the past. In no other way may the effects be worked out and Karmic adjustment effected, (b) The Ego may be attracted to a family because most of its predominant tendencies and character are similar to and in harmony with those of the family. Thus, following the avenue of entrance into life that offers least resistance, the Ego is born in such a family, (c) The circumstances obtainable in a particular family may offer the best possible opportunity to the Ego for the gaining of such experiences as would strengthen its character and develop virtues and overcome vices, (d) The Ego's birth into a family may well be punishment by way of Karmic retribution for past transgressions.

We are also told that those who are like unto each other and those who love each other are born together, whenever it is possible under Karma. But this does not mean that we will be born in the *same family* again. Family is an institution where each one of us gets an opportunity to learn to love, to co-operate, to help and to learn lessons. In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna warns us against developing *self-identifying attachment* to wife, children and household. This calls for developing impersonality. On the one hand, we must realize that charity begins at home but it does not and must not stop there. In our dealings with our family members, we must keep in mind that each one is a soul, undergoing pilgrimage and evolution. When one learns to cultivate right attitude towards the family members, one is able to feel their sorrows and joys acutely. When we are able look upon our family members as pilgrim-souls—and that is a great step in impersonality—we are not likely to be unduly anxious about their mistakes and failures and at times, appreciate pain and adversities in their lives as something necessary for their growth. I however, such detached concern comes very gradually, at times with some eye-opening and deeply upsetting experiences of life. **Often**, when one's blind and excessive love and care are not only not reciprocated but are greeted with indifference by the family



members, then gradually one's eyes open. For instance, a mother whose children are indifferent to her love and care, may be led to divert her affections to other children. She may begin to feel that the children of neighbourhood are her own children. Sometimes the loss of an only child leads one to such a realization. Likewise, in some cases when a person experiences that all the family members are inimical to him then he ends up forming closer ties with friends whom he may even describe as, "just like my sister or brother"! The other case is of people who suddenly find themselves becoming alone through death of family members. In all such cases, it is as if Karma is pushing us in the direction of expanding the circle of loved ones, so that by becoming large-hearted we could learn to regard entire world as our family.

Realization of the true significance and ideal of family and family duties helps cultivate right attitude towards one's family—one of detached concern and not of indifference. Besides fulfilling one's obligations as wife, father, mother, child, etc., family duty consists in learning and cultivating co-operation, as also inculcating and strengthening noble qualities. The article "Living the Higher Life," (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*), mentions that family duty consists in cultivating and elevating *emotional nature* of ourselves and of our family, and not in pleasure hunting; in being equally "kind," not only to the members of the family, but also to all creatures. If we shirk family duty in one life, we set up a tendency so that we become *undutiful* sons, brothers or husbands, even in a new family we are born into. Moreover, some day we might discover with shock that this tendency extends in all directions. Some day we might find ourselves becoming apathetic to our nation, to our own divine nature, and even to mankind. "From the loving example of one family a whole state may become loving; and from its courtesies, courteous," says Confucius.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Ouija board is a very common medium of communication with the spirit world. Though these boards are available in toy stores, occultists warn against using them for fun. Many of us are scared of ghosts and the paranormal activities. But, there are those who are not satisfied with only hearing about the eerie tales, they seek to have first-hand encounters with the unseen and they reach out for "Ouija board" or "Planchette." Ouija derives its name from the French and German words for *yes*— "*out*" and "*ja*" respectively. The board has on it letters of the alphabet, numerals 0 to 9, and words "yes" and "no." There is a heart-shaped pointer, on which two or three people put their fingertips, and the pointer moves on the board to answer the questions. For communicating with the dead, instruments akin to Ouija boards seem to have been in use in China before the birth of Confucius (551 B.C.). Native American used such boards to find missing objects, persons, and to obtain spiritual information. During World War I, out of despair and desperation several people in Europe used *Planchette* to communicate with their loved ones who had died in war. Occultists warn that it is unsafe to use this board unless under an expert's or professional's help. Moreover, more often than not, the spirits that are contacted through these boards are those who reside on "the lower astral realms." They are mostly of those who have died violent or sudden deaths, such as murder, suicide, etc. "Therefore, many violent, negative and potentially dangerous conditions come to the fore when using the board," writes Smita Roy. (*Bombay Times, [The Times of India], March 4, 2010*)

Some experts and psychic healers say that the practice becomes most dangerous when a person is seeking for a physical proof of **the existence** of these spirits and that too without the help of a medium. In doing that they are giving an open invitation to these spirits to **enter** the physical world and it may result in possession. These boards **are a** window to nameless horrors. Some psychic healers advise

that those wishing to contact the dear-departed ones must go through a proper channel.

While the desire to communicate with our dear-departed is natural, have we ever asked ourselves whether they in turn have any desire to communicate with us after death? The *real* man is not the personality of Mr. X or Y, known to us and now dead. He is the Spirit within—which having achieved the specific purpose in a particular life, the *real* (immortal) man moves on. It is only in rare cases that after death, he remains behind for a brief period, if he has some intense unfulfilled desire or something important to communicate to someone. It is then possible for the real man—the spirit of man or soul within—to communicate with us. After this brief period, the soul has no more to do with earth until it reincarnates again. Can we believe that the *spirit* that has passed on to another plane can ever be attracted to the foul atmosphere of our seance rooms?

If Theosophy affirms that it is not our dear-departed one who appears at a seance, then what is that entity which appears, talks, answers questions with seeming intelligence through tapping or by writing on paper in the handwriting of the departed? What is it that repeats past incidents and happenings, moves objects without touching, and bears strong resemblance to the late being? Theosophy says that it is the shell, the *kama-rupa* (the mass of lower thoughts and desires impressed on the astral form) of our dear departed. Worse still, it could be the shell of another person masquerading as our loved one under the guidance of very wicked and depraved entities who are always present at seances. The shells of the suicides and executed criminals and all those who died violent and unnatural deaths get easily attracted to the seance rooms, and often live vicariously through the mediums.

However, it is important to note that while we miss the physical presence of our loved ones in our waking hours, we meet them during the quiet hours of our sleep.

Hence, although there is hardly a human being whose Ego does not hold free intercourse, during the sleep of his body, with those whom it loved and lost, yet, on account of the positiveness and non-receptivity of its physical envelope and brain, no recollection, or a very dim, dream-like remembrance, lingers in the memory of the person once awake. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 30)

*Santhara* or *Sallekhana* is a Jain spiritual practice, which involves a voluntary giving up of one's life through fasting. It has been in the eye of the storm since 2006, when Keila Devi Hirawat from Jaipur, in India, adopted the voluntary systematic fast unto death (*santhara*). Some lawyers protested and claimed that *santhara* was a social evil and should be considered suicide under Indian Law. They consider it as a fundamental breach of article 21 of Indian Constitution, which guarantees right to life but not death. Jains, on the other hand, defend the practice as being conducive to their spiritual well-being and, as a religious right. They describe it as a voluntary act of rational thinking. A person who decides to adopt *santhara* is someone who has begun to understand the inherently illusive and painful nature of earthly existence. They argue that *santhara* cannot be considered suicide because it is done with one's full intent and knowledge, whereas suicide is emotional and hasty. However, Vimal Sagarji maharajsaheb, a Jain monk, is of the belief that there is a thin line between *santhara* and suicide, because in certain cases people embracing *santhara* have faced immense mental and physical test while observing *santhara* and they were not at peace with themselves. "So, whether *santhara* is suicide or a holy practice to attain *moksha*, I feel, is for the person embracing *santhara* to answer for himself," says Vimal Sagarji. While the opponents contend long duration of *santhara*, the supporters argue that it gives enough time to the person to reflect on his life, and gives him a chance to change

his mind, write Mansi Choksi and Hemali Chhaphia (*The Times of India*, [The Crest Edition], March 20, 2010). The vow of *santhara* is as follows:

When all the purposes of life have been served or when the body becomes unable to serve any purpose, I wish to be able to adopt *santhara*, a religious fast to death. I will abandon my body, which is very dear to my mind, the abode of my faith, like a box of ornaments containing precious stones....

It is not easy to comment on the practice of *santhara*, especially, when no categorical answer is available in the theosophical books. However, *santhara* seems very close to the concept of "dying at one's own wish." We have heard of great or spiritually advanced beings "taking *samadhi*," when they slip into a state of meditation, and are buried in that state, and ultimately the soul leaves the body. *Light on the Path* mentions that a person in whom crude wish to live and to experience pain and pleasure has departed, he takes up the body only in pursuit of divine object, to accomplish the work of "the Masters." Once the object for which the birth was taken is accomplished, such a person can withdraw his "will to live" and thus leave the body.

The case of an ordinary person seems different. Even in an apparently useless life, even in case of people who are old, disabled or suffering from illness, there is a purpose. For ordinary people the purpose of life is to learn, and it is all made up of learning. An ordinary person is compelled to take birth because of his unexpended karma and *Tanha* or the desire to live and have experience. In the article "The Elixir of Life," we are told that we only die when our will ceases to be strong enough to make us live. So, for most of us, death comes when for some reason, for one single instant, our "clutch on life" or the tenacity of the will to exist, is weakened. Thus, a person in whom there is a *strong realization* of the sense of completing the life-task, or the feeling of worthlessness of one's existence, that

realization will produce death as surely as poison or a rifle-bullet. Thus, more intense and true is the realization, less would be the struggle in leaving the body.

However, when such withdrawal of desire is the mood of the moment, there must necessarily be an inner conflict. As Mr. Judge suggests, if the person who says life here is worthless were offered life on some other planet in most harmonious, beautiful and gratifying circumstances, he would find his deep seated *wish for life* suddenly blazing up, and he would express his wish to continue living. "The soul is bound to the body by a conversion to the corporeal passions; and is again liberated by becoming impassive to the body."

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It is felt that Sigmund Freud was a disaster to psychiatry because he had adopted an extremely non-materialistic approach. With the emergence of neuroscience in last two decades brain has replaced the mind, which it is discovered, is a disaster in curing addiction. Neurobiologists have identified brain circuitry that underlies addiction and craving. Dopamine and other neurochemicals tend to fuel addiction, and is characterised by deficiency of the neurochemical GABA. Thus, addiction is a brain disease and not a moral failing. An addict is not at fault for his craving just as a diabetic is not at fault for high blood glucose. As a result, more research has been done in the direction of discovering medications and vaccines rather than in the direction of *behavioural therapies*. When Cocaine vaccine was used on 55 cocaine users in 2009 study, it was found that only 38 per cent of the users produced enough antibodies to dull the effect of cocaine, and of those, only half stayed clean more than half the time. In contrast, a 2008 analysis of 34 studies of *behavioural treatments* for addiction to cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs showed impressive efficacy. Addiction is a behaviour, with social and psychological causes, so behavioural therapies that target those causes last longer than medication and are better at preventing

relapse, say some of the psychiatrists. Medication and vaccine alone cannot take care of addiction, notes Meg Haney of Columbia University. In a new study cocaine users were shown pictures of coke and coke paraphernalia, causing an increased activity in brain's limbic (emotional) region and causing intense craving. Cognitive therapists helped the drug users to suppress that activity providing hope for the cocaine users, writes Sharon Begley. (*Newsweek*, March 15, 2010)

The roots of diseases, habits and addiction go deeper than physical body or brain. It is said of illness that it is the discharging on the physical plane of an inner sickness of inner being. Medicine may cure it temporarily, but it recurs. Only a correct mental and moral position brings a sound body. When one resorts to medication, vaccine or submits oneself to hypnotic treatment one is only dealing with symptoms and the effectual side—leaving the root intact. H.P.B. points out that often Christian Science, hypnotism and mediumship also produce positive results, but then the subject can claim no merit. For instance, when a hypnotizer helps the subject to overcome his habit of lying or drinking, through suggestion, there is no merit in it for the subject. There would have been addition to good Karma of the subject, had *he made personal effort to reform*, of his own free will—which involved great mental and physical struggle, says H.P.B. (*H.P.B. Series No. 9*). Also, there is no guarantee that a person cured of alcoholism or drug-addiction through hypnotism or vaccines will not succumb to these addictions again.

To effect a permanent cure, it is very important to find out the *causes* of addiction. If the reason for addiction is stress, sorrow or difficulties then alternative methods of dealing with them could be adopted. If it is only for the thrill, perhaps efforts could be made to help him see at what cost is that fleeting pleasure acquired, and whether it is worthwhile. Alcohol and drugs put one's consciousness in an artificial state and hinder the development of intuitive faculty, besides making one lose self-control and clear judgment.