

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON INITIATION

INITIATION may be described as a trial or a test, which every earnest spiritual aspirant has to pass through and which helps to determine if the aspirant is ready to take the next step on the Path. There are levels and levels of initiation, wherein the aspirant is subjected to progressively difficult trials. Just as, when one learns horse-riding, one is made to ride the horse that initially walks, then trots, then canters, and only finally is he given to control a galloping horse, so, too, in the process of Initiation. We need guidance in the process of unfoldment, so that we do not get into serious psychological and moral problems.

Mr. Judge observes that there are two kinds of meditation: (1) Meditation practised at a set time, or an occasional one, and (2) Meditation of an entire lifetime, that single thread of intention, intentness, and desire running through the entire lifetime. “The mysterious subtle thread of a life meditation is that which is practised every hour by philosopher, mystic, saint, criminal, artist, artisan and merchant. It is pursued in respect to that on which the heart is set.” In the same way, Initiation can be a set and solemn occasion, for which the candidate is prepared and that he is aware of in advance. But before coming to that stage, writes Mr. Judge, each aspirant has to learn to face “daily initiations,” which come from moment to moment. They are met in our relation with our fellows, and in the way we react to all circumstances of life. And if we fail in these, we never get to the point where greater ones are offered. If we cannot bear momentary defeat, if a chance word

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from someone shatters our self-esteem, if we give way to the desire to harshly judge others, or if we are oblivious of our most apparent faults, then we cannot build up necessary strength to be masters of nature. Further:

It is in the life of every one to have a moment of choice, but that moment is not set for any particular day. It is the sum total of all days; and it may be put off until the day of death, and then it is beyond our power, for the choice has then been fixed by all the acts and thoughts of the lifetime. We are self-doomed at that hour to just the sort of life, body, environment, and tendencies which will best carry out our karma. This is a thing solemn enough, and one that makes the “daily initiation” of the very greatest importance to each earnest student....

Do you think that if a Master accepted you He would put you to some strange test? No. He would not, but simply permitting the small events of your life to have their course, the result would determine your standing. *It may be a child's school, but it takes a man to go through it. (The Path, September 1889)*

In *From the Book of Confidences*, when the disciple expresses his desire to know something concerning initiation, the sage advises him not to look for a special trial and that there would be hourly trials and daily initiations. The sage speaks of initiation through one's daily duties. When the disciple describes the daily duties as dreary routine that he could never bring himself to love, the sage explains that the world is kept going because everything in nature performs its repetitive duty without complaining. For instance, the stars follow their course through the sky, cyclically; the seasons and the tides repeat themselves, and the heart pulsates endlessly and repeatedly without complaint. How can you hope to come to your initiation by escaping the “repetitioned sweep of daily toil”? asks the sage. One has to be prepared to perform every humble labour as though it were exalted and to serve the powerful, the rich, the ignorant, as though they were Holy Ones.

Next, the disciple expresses his desire to be guided. He asks the sage that if only he was told “go here,” “do this” or “do that,” he

would rejoice to do as directed. The sage replies that if he were to guide the disciple through clear-cut instructions as to what and how to do, the disciple would surely fail in his initiation. He would deprive the disciple of the opportunity to strengthen the muscle of Will. “I would steal from thee thy sovereign power of choice which makes of thee a God.”

When one aspires to reach perfection and enlightenment, one is faced with strange and awesome trials of initiation. We are mistaken if we look for some special difficult test or trial through which we can show our moral strength. Mr. Judge writes:

It seems to me that many who think they would earnestly seek the light do not comprehend the true nature of the temptations to which they are continually subjected. They are looking for something unusual, something hard in the way of a trial, and think: If something of the sort would only come along, how I would show my power to stand it! At the same time, by their daily yielding to the small vexations of life they show their unfitness for meeting greater trials. Even if one who has waited long and patiently asks, “Why am I not given an opportunity, since my conduct deserves it,” he shows by the very question his unfitness....When a person loses his temper over a trifle, he is hardly likely to meet any greater temptation in the right spirit. Every time we successfully overcome even the slightest obstacle, we have made a step in our initiation into the mysteries. Let us remember that it is the unexpected that always happens in the way of trials to the novice. The devil never sends a herald to announce his coming....When we have learnt to encounter every vexation absolutely without complaint, either internally or externally—if it disturbs us in the slightest degree within, it is just as bad as if we expressed it in words or action—then, and not till then, can we expect to be given the opportunity to take a decided step forwards. For the secret of advancement is the development of the will through its union with the Divine Will. By meeting the ordinary ills of life with unvexed soul we educate and strengthen our will, fitting us for further advancement. Humbleness, Patience and Content are the first three steps that lead to the door.

For the earnest and devoted workers of Theosophy, Mr. Judge mentions that it is likely that they have successfully passed through some trials and have been initiated in some past life, but they do not carry its memory in the present life. Mr. Crosbie writes:

You will remember what W.Q.J. wrote: “None of us, and especially those who have heard of the Path, or of Occultism, or of the Masters, can say with confidence that he is not already one who has passed through some initiations, with knowledge of them. We may already be initiated into some higher degree than our present attainment would suggest, and are undergoing a new trial unknown to ourselves. It is better to consider that we are, being sure to eliminate all pride of that unknown advance we have made.” We may all take comfort and encouragement from what is there said, for it may be especially true of those who are fired with zeal for Master’s work. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 149)

There are various degrees of initiation. An occultist can see in the aura of the person signs and marks that indicate the degree of his advancement. Mr. Judge mentions that it is no use *pretending* to be more advanced than we actually are. He writes:

In just the same way as a polished diamond shows the work which gives it value and brilliancy, so the man who has gone through probation and teaching under the Adepts carries upon his person the ineffaceable marks. To the ordinary eye untrained in this department, no such indications are visible; but those who can see describe them as being quite prominent and wholly beyond the control of the bearer. For this reason that one who has progressed, say, three steps along the way, will have three marks, and it is useless to pretend that his rank is a step higher, for, if it were, then the fourth mark would be there, since it grows with the being’s development. Now, as these signatures cannot be imitated or forged, the whole inner fraternity has no need for concealment of signs. No one can commit a fraud upon or extract from them the secrets of higher degrees by having obtained signs and passwords out of a book or in return for the payment of fees, and none can procure the conferring of

any advancement until the whole nature of man exactly corresponds to the desired point of development. (*Echoes from the Orient*, p. 37)

In some so-called esoteric bodies there are initiations performed for money with elaborate rituals and ceremonies. In the ancient times, initiations took place in the crypts, caves, temples, and pyramids where the neophyte underwent a series of physical and psychological trials, through which he proved his strength and readiness for spiritual rebirth. During the Mysteries, the candidate for initiation was taught, by dramatic representation, “the origin of things, the nature of the human spirit, its relation to the body, and the method of its purification and restoration to higher life. Physical science, medicine, the laws of music, divination were all taught in the same manner.” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Swami Dayanand Saraswati describes *Diksha* or highest initiation, in his *Veda-Bhashya*, thus:

To obtain *Diksha* (highest initiation) and *Yog*, one has to practise according to the rules....The soul in human body can perform the greatest wonders by knowing the Universal Spirit (or God) and acquainting itself with the properties and qualities (occult) of all the things in the universe. A human being (a *Dikshita* or initiate) can thus *acquire a power of seeing and hearing at great distances*. (*The Theosophist*, October 1879)

After passing through a series of initiations, at the last initiation, the disciple comes face to face with the Dhyani Buddha of the hierarchy to which he belongs, and he is allowed to behold his future self—the *Augoeides*.

NATURE is too thin a screen; the glory of the One breaks in everywhere.

—RALPH W. EMERSON

H.P.B.—SYMBOL OF SACRIFICE

FOR two reasons, students of Theosophy consider the month of August as a very important and sacred month. It is on the midnight of August 11-12 that our Guru and Teacher, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, was born, in the year 1831, in a noble family in Russia. Again, it is during this month of August that the Hindu festival of *Gokul Ashtami* or *Janmashtami* takes place. This year the festival falls on August 26-27. It is also called *Krishna Jayanti*, the birthday of Sri Krishna—the great *Avatara*. He was born at midnight on the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Shravan*, in the city of Mathura. The peerless Teacher of mankind entered this world—covered with the darkness of ignorance—with His Light Supernal.

Therefore, it behooves us to pay homage to the Great Teacher of mankind and imbibe His teachings and apply them in our daily lives. We also pay homage to our teacher H.P.B., who was sent into this world by the custodians of the Wisdom-Religion as their accredited messenger, to reiterate the same old *Brahma-Vidya* or *Atma-Vidya* or Theosophy. The only way by which we can pay homage to H.P.B. is to “make Theosophy a living power in our lives.”

H.P.B.’s mission was to change the Mind and Buddhi of the race. Her appeal to the thoughtful portion of humanity is very strong in spite of her enemies and detractors. Her message is totally flawless. Her teachings have withstood critical analysis by philosophers, scientists and eminent thinkers for the past 115 years. She gave us the perennial philosophy that is constant, consistent, eternal and logical, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be subtracted.

Theosophy, the divine message, offers us a rational explanation of our existence and destiny. It points out that by voluntary self-discipline one may control one’s lower personal nature and acquire unselfish and noble qualities that can transform the animal man into a human man and then into a divine man. Her message inspires us to awaken the inborn desire to find the Path and to attain to

Self-realization. She points out that the “Way” lies within. Each man has the power to redeem himself.

During her lifetime “she was greatly beloved and as greatly hated. She was lauded and vilified, hailed as a prophetess and repudiated as a charlatan.” Unfortunately, the world at large has heard too much about her but has known too little. She was an embodiment of the law of sacrifice.

She sacrificed a life of ease and comfort to tread the path of woe, and wandered all over the globe for over 20 years—even to places where human beings do not have an easy access. It was done with a view to gain knowledge—not for herself, but for humanity. She gave up her all and devoted herself—soul, mind and body—to the service of humanity. Underlying all this, was the principle of compassion and sacrifice. She taught lofty metaphysics to enable us to practise Universal Brotherhood.

The personality of H.P.B. was remarkable and complex. It was, in fact, a perpetual enigma, even to those who knew her intimately and those most devoted to her. She was called the “Sphinx of the 19th century.” Behind the rough and unconventional personality of H.P.B. there was a nobility and force of character of the highest quality. Her heart was fixed on the great goal of Humanity, to show the path of Love and Truth. She worked with an iron will, unswerving purpose and spirit of utter self-sacrifice, so that at least a few might benefit from the Wisdom-Religion with which she was entrusted by the custodians—the *Mahatmas*.

H.P.B. was a great and remarkable woman who was a pioneer of the modern Theosophical Movement. In a letter written by her to her sister, Madame Jelihovsky, from Ostend, in 1886, we find:

I really do not know what to think! What am I to them? Why should the Countess (Wachtmeister) be so devoted to me, as to be ready to give her life for mine? What am I to Ellis who never saw me before, that he should think nothing of the risk, when leaving the hospital without permission, for a whole week for my sake; now he has lost his place, his handsome pay, and his rooms at the Westminster Dispensary. He went home and returned here laughing: he does not care a bit, he says! “He

will have more time to spend on Theosophy.”... Well what does all this mean? What do they find in me? Why should it be my fate to influence the destinies of other people? I tell you seriously, I *feel frightened!*... What a blind tool I am, I must own, in the hands of the one whom I call my Master! (*The Path*, Vol. X, p. 203)

She brought once more to light the Divine Nature of man and showed the path that will lead to it. She had inflexible purpose, a steadfast devotion to the cause of Theosophy and the Masters, whom she served. Theosophy reached the hearts and understanding of many people whose nature and intuition had reached a certain point of development.

She had a quality of unselfishness and an eager readiness for self-sacrifice. She worked ceaselessly for the cause of humanity. She had absolute devotion to the Masters and willingness to endure and suffer all, to the very last gasp of breath, in Their service. She sacrificed her last drop of life-blood so that those who have eyes to see could get a glimpse of the Path that leads to the Heart of the Universe.

She never asked for or sought anything, that this world could give, for her own self. She wandered the earth in search of occult knowledge and in due course found it. When it became her mission to direct others to the path that leads to the “Heart of the Universe,” she concentrated all her energies on that work, sacrificing her position, health, wealth and reputation, to give the message to the world.

Her life may be summed up in the words of *Light on the Path*:

When he [disciple] has let the blood flow from the heart he stands before the Masters as a pure spirit which no longer wishes to incarnate for the sake of emotion and experience. Through great cycles of time successive incarnations in gross matter may yet be his lot; but he no longer desires them, the crude wish to live has departed from him. When he takes upon him man’s form in the flesh he does it in the pursuit of a divine object, to accomplish the work of “the Masters,” and for no other end. He looks neither for pleasure nor pain, asks for no

heaven, and fears no hell; yet he has entered upon a great inheritance which is not so much a compensation for these things surrendered, as a state which simply blots out the memory of them. He lives now not in the world, but with it; his horizon has extended itself to the width of the whole universe. (p. 82)

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NARADA—THE STRIFE-MAKER

The few elevated minds... who only disbelieve because they do not know, we would remind of that apothegm of Narada, the ancient Hindu philosopher:

“Never utter these words: ‘I do not know this—therefore it is false.’ ”

“One must study to know, know to understand, understand to judge.”

—*Isis Unveiled*, I, 628

IN Puranic and Vedic literature Narada is shown to be one of the greatest Rishis and Yogis and is described as “Strife-maker” (*S.D.*, I, 413). In the exoteric works, he is also referred to as “Kapi-vaktra,” *monkey-faced*, and even “Pisuna,” the spy (*S.D.*, II, 48). In the *Vishnu Purana*, Narada is shown to be the progeny of Kasyapa and the daughter of Daksha. In the *Matsya Purana*, he is the son of Brahma. He is referred to as *Deva-Rishi* (divine Rishi, more than a demi-god) by Parasara. (*S.D.*, II, 47-48)

W. J. Wilkins writes that Narada is the messenger of the gods, and is often described as the one who imparts information that was known only to the gods. He informs Kansa that Vishnu will incarnate in the eighth child of Devaki and this leads Kansa to slaughter the earlier seven children of Devaki. He remains invisible—as true *Manasaputra*—on the cloud, and lauds Krishna, as he slays the monster Keshin, says H.P.B. Further:

Narada is here, there, and everywhere; and yet, none of the Puranas gives the true characteristics of this great enemy of physical procreation. Whatever those characteristics may be in Hindu Esotericism, Narada—who is called in Cis-Himalayan Occultism *Pesh-Hun*, the “Messenger;” or the Greek *Angelos*—is the sole confidant and the executor of the universal decrees of Karma and *Adi-Budh*: a kind of active and ever incarnating logos, who leads and guides human affairs from the beginning to the end of the Kalpa. “Pesh-Hun”... is the mysterious guiding intelligent power, which gives the impulse to, and regulates the impetus of cycles, Kalpas and universal events. He is Karma’s

visible adjuster on a general scale; the *inspirer* and the leader of the greatest heroes of this Manvantara. (*S.D.*, II, 48)

And yet, it is difficult to explain what Narada *really is*, observes H.P.B. In one sense, he is comparable to Jehovah, who tempts people by “suggestion” of thoughts and leads to “hardening” of the hearts. But this is not done through any ambition or selfish motive, but to serve and guide universal progress and evolution. (*S.D.*, II, 48-49)

Garga, the oldest astronomer in India, is supposed to have obtained astronomical knowledge from Sesha—the thousand-headed serpent, who bears seven *Patalas* and the entire world upon his head—who is also *Ananta*, the infinite, and also “Cycle of Eternity,” in esotericism. Narada is one of the few to have visited the nether or infernal regions—*Patala*. It is not sure if he got his knowledge of astronomy from Sesha, but he is supposed to surpass Sesha in the knowledge of cyclic intricacies. “It is he who has charge of our progress and national weal or woe. It is he who brings on wars and puts an end to them.”

Pesh-Hun (Narada) is credited in the old Stanzas with having calculated and recorded all the astronomical and Cosmic cycles to come, imparting science and astronomy to early humanity. The Atlantean Asuramaya used these records by Narada to determine the duration of all the past geological and cosmical periods as also the length of all the cycles to come, till the end of the Seventh Race. Asuramaya is considered the earliest astronomer in Aryavarta. “Mirror of Futurity;” is a work among the Secret Books that contains the record of Kalpas within Kalpas and is attributed to Narada. (*S.D.*, II, 49)

Narada—a great Rishi and virtually a Kumara—is one of the 10,000 sons of Brahma, brought forth for the purpose of peopling the world. Narada persuaded these sons to remain celibate and holy ascetics and twice frustrated Daksha’s aim. For this, Daksha curses Narada to be reborn as a man. On an earlier occasion, when Narada had refused to marry, Daksha had cursed him, saying: “Perish in thy present (Deva or angelic) form and take up thy abode

in the womb,” *i.e.*, become a man (*Vayu Purana*, Harivamsa, 170). H.P.B. observes:

Notwithstanding several conflicting versions of the same story, it is easy to see that Narada belongs to that class of Brahma’s “first-born,” who have all proven rebellious to the law of animal procreation, for which they had to incarnate as *men*. Of all the Vedic Rishis, Narada...is the most incomprehensible, because the most closely connected with the occult doctrines—especially with the secret cycles and Kalpas. (*S.D.*, II, 82)

“Narada is *the Deva-Rishi of Occultism par excellence*.” To fathom certain anthropological, chronological and Cosmic Mysteries, an occultist must ponder, analyze and study Narada from seven esoteric facets. Narada plays a vital role in the drama of evolution of this Kalpa from the beginning to the end, and is said to appear in every Root-Race of the present Manvantara. (*S.D.*, II, 82-83)

It is said that when Brahma cursed Narada for not bringing forth progeny, Brahma declared that Narada would not have a resting-place; hence his wandering nature. Narada curses back and leaving his Brahmanical body, becomes a *Gandharva*, a Chorister of Indra’s heaven. He is said to have invented the *Vina*, the Indian lute. “Narada sat watching, from time to time, his large *Vina*, which, by the impulse of the breeze, yielded notes that pierced successively the regions of his ear, and proceeded by musical intervals,” writes Sir W. Jones. H.P.B. explains:

There is not an Archangel that could not be traced back to its prototype in the sacred land of Aryavarta. These “prototypes” are all connected with the Kumaras who appear on the scene of action by *refusing*—as Sanatakumara and Sananda—to “create progeny.” Yet they are called “creators” of (thinking) man. More than once they are brought into connection with Narada—another bundle of *apparent* incongruities, yet a wealth of philosophical tenets. Narada, is the leader of the *Gandharvas*, the celestial singers and musicians; *esoterically*, the reason for it is explained by the fact that the latter (*the Gandharvas*) are

“the instructors of men in the secret sciences.” It is they, who “loving the women of the Earth,” disclosed to them the mysteries of creation; or, as in the Veda—the “heavenly Gandharva” is a deity who knew and revealed *the secrets of heaven and divine truths*, in general. If we remember what is said of this class of Angels in Enoch and in the Bible, then the allegory is plain: their leader, Narada, while refusing to procreate, leads men to become gods. Moreover, all of these, as stated in the Vedas, are *Chhandajas* (will-born) or incarnated (in different Manavantaras) *of their own will*—and they are shown in exoteric literature as existing age after age; some being “cursed to be re-born,” others, incarnating as a duty. (*S.D.*, II, 584)

Brahma’s cursing Narada to incessantly wander the Earth is to be interpreted as the curse to be constantly reborn. He shares the same fate with the *Jayas*—the twelve great creative gods produced by Brahma, to assist him in the function of creation—who, lost in meditation, forgot to create and for which they were cursed to be born in every manvantara. (*S.D.*, II, 585)

Manu, after writing the laws of Brahma in 1,00,000 slokas or distichs, which formed 24 books and 1000 chapters, gave the work to Narada, the sage of sages, who abridged it to 12,000 verses for the use of mankind. (*Isis*, I, 585-86)

CONTINUING to fill a pail after it is full, the water will be wasted. Continuing to grind an axe after it is sharp, will wear it away. Excess of light blinds the eye. Excess of sound deafens the ear. Excess of condiments deadens the taste. He who possesses moderation is lasting and enduring. Too much is always a curse, most of all in wealth.

—LAO-TSE

TIRUKKURAL—THIRUVALLUVAR'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

III

THE chapter on God is followed by the one on "Rain." This may seem strange to many, but neither virtue, wealth nor happiness could exist without rain. In the Christian Bible, in *Acts*, XIV, 17, we read: "Nevertheless, he left not himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

In the *Gita* (III, 4), Krishna says: "Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrifice is performed by action."

Thiruvalluvar therefore also praises rain. The first couplet reads: "Life's sole elixir is unfailing rainfall on which depends the world for its existence. Rain gives life to all creation, revives the dying vegetation and restores life to what seems dead."

H.P.B. mentions significantly in her article on "Zoroastrianism in the Light of Occult Philosophy" that Tistriya, son of Ahura-Mazda, is "the *rain-bestowing* god (the 6th Principle) that fructifies the parched soil of the 5th and 4th, and helps them to bear good fruit through their own exertions, *i.e.*, by tasting of Haoma, the tree of eternal life through spiritual enlightenment." Says H.P.B. : "Water" in a metaphysical and mystic sense, "is the base and source of material existence." (*S.D.*, I, 64)

In natural sequence, the next chapter is devoted to the Great Renunciators. Herein, Valluvar shows the greatness of Renunciation as also the whole subject of asceticism is dealt with in detail, in Chapters 25 to 37. Only the Wise Ones who have no attachments, who have risen above the pairs of opposites, can point out the "Way" and explain to mankind *Dharma, Artha, Kama, i.e.*, Virtue, Wealth and Happiness.

In the first verse Valluvar points out that the one supreme thing which all scriptures affirm is the great renunciation of those who walk in right conduct.

The greatness of the "renouncer" exceeds all other greatness.

To measure the greatness of one who has renounced, is like counting the number of the dead. He who has understood what birth and deliverance mean has accomplished the greatest thing, says Valluvar.

In the next three couplets he shows us the source of this greatness. (1) Restraint of the senses; (2) Ascetic practices (Yoga); and (3) True knowledge. He who with firmness bridles the five senses is himself the seed of immortals and of eternal bliss. Lord Indra is the witness to the might of those who have conquered their five senses. This is the kernel of the teaching of all the Great Ones.

Shri Krishna in the Sixth Chapter of the *Gita* points to the restraint of the senses and organs as a *sine qua non* condition for true meditation. Earlier in the same chapter he says: "The man who hath spiritual knowledge and discernment, who standeth upon the pinnacle, and hath subdued the senses, to whom gold and stone are the same, is said to be devoted."

The Voice of the Silence says: "Mistrust thy senses; they are false." "The WISE ONES tarry not in pleasure grounds of senses" (p. 7). In describing a Master, a Perfected Man, it says: "Yea, he is mighty. The living power made free in him, that power which is HIMSELF, can raise the tabernacle of illusion high above the Gods, above great Brahm and Indra." (p. 71)

Valluvar shows the difference between the Great and the Small thus: "Things hard in the doing (*i.e.*, the conquest of self and attainment of virtue) will great men do; things hard in the doing the small eschew."

In the last four verses the poet tells us that he alone is perfected who has completely subdued his senses and has a perfect comprehension of their operation. Speaking about the Powers of the Great Ones, he says that They can read the Past, the Present and the Future clearly and thus prophesy things and events to come. They have reached the summit, the terrace of enlightenment.

The last verse is important because in it he defines a Brahmin. It says: "They are the Brahmins who are righteous and love all

creation,” thus showing that Brahminhood does not come from birth in a Brahmin family but from possessing the qualities enumerated by Shri Krishna, in Chapter XVIII of the *Gita*.

Lord Buddha says virtually the same in the Canto of “The Brahman” (*The Dhammapada*): “Not by matted locks, not by lineage, not by caste does one become a Brahmana. By his truth and righteousness man becomes a Brahmana. He is blessed.” (Verse 393)

In Chapter 4, Valluvar asserts the value of *Dharma*, Virtue or *Arram*. The Tamil word “*Arram*” has great latitude of meaning. The nearest equivalent in English is “Virtue.” It denotes justice, charity, righteousness and all the good qualities in Man.

We may compare this with Chapter XVIII of the *Gita*: “Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity are not to be abandoned, for they are proper to be performed, and are the purifiers of the wise....The abstention from works which are necessary and obligatory is improper.”

Valluvar says that action is not to be forsaken. Ascetics are great; but in the performance of virtuous deeds men obtain their highest joy, and merit the greatest rewards. There is nothing higher than *Dharma* which gives eternal bliss and glory. There is no greater loss than to forget it. Valluvar then shows us how *Dharma* is to be practised—with the mind, by thinking good thoughts; with the mouth, by speaking good words; with the body, by doing good deeds. The same teaching Lord Krishna gives in the *Gita* (XVII), in enumerating the mortifications of the body, speech and mind. This Triad is the kernel of the teaching of Zoroaster (*Humate, Hukhte and Huvereshte*—purity of speech, purity of action, and purity of thought).

Valluvar emphasizes that the first requisite for virtue is purity of mind. Are we not told in several places in *The Voice of the Silence*, of the necessity for purifying our mind before entering the Path? “The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real. Let the Disciple slay the Slayer” (p. 2). “Before that path is entered, thou must destroy thy lunar body, cleanse thy mind-body, and make clean thy heart.” (p.

12). Later, we are told how the mind gets covered with the dust of our illusions, which must be brushed away by the “gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom.” (p. 28)

Valluvar then mentions the “three gates of hell” of which the *Gita* speaks in Chapter XVI. He says that only that course of conduct that steers clear of every desire, of wrath, and of offensive speech, is *Dharma*. Did not Lord Buddha say: “Shun evil, follow good; hold sway over thyself”? When is this to be done? Valluvar condemns Procrastination—the thief of time—thus: “Refer not virtue to another day; receive her now and at thy dying hour she will prove thy never-dying friend.” This is “destiny or fate” in the true sense.

Valluvar has devoted one full chapter (Chapter 38) to this subject. “A man’s good and evil deeds determine the state into which he passes after death, accompany him into that new state and influence his character and fortune therein. It is only when a human body is reached in the drama of evolution, that ‘virtue’ whose fruit is ‘eternal bliss’ can be practised; hence this mortal life is the time for prompt, virtuous efforts. All the true Teachers of Humanity have therefore emphasized the need for a virtuous life. Virtue alone is the immortal companion of a virtuous man. In the next verse we have Valluvar’s support of “Reincarnation.” He says: “If you were to practise righteousness every day, it would be the stone that blocked the way to rebirth.” In Chapter 34 on “Instability,” he says: “Death is like sleep; birth is the awakening from sleep.”

(To be continued)

TRUTH exists. Only lies are invented.

— GEORGES BRAQUE

TO DIE IS TO LIVE

Death is but a new birth, and spirit is immortal; thus humanity can never die, for the *Destroyer* has become the *Creator*....

—*Isis Unveiled*, II, 453

THE generally accepted view is that death means the extinction of life, and even in the dictionary it is defined as “the end of life.” Theosophically speaking, death is by no means the end of life, but is, on the contrary, as H.P.B. points out in *The Secret Doctrine*, “merely the door through which he [man] passes to another life on earth after a little rest on its threshold—Devachan.”

Death is a universal fact in nature, and, as H.P.B. points out, there would be no life possible without death. There cannot be regeneration or reconstruction without destruction. “Plants would perish in eternal sunlight, and so would man, who would become an automaton without the exercise of his free will and aspirations after that sunlight, which would lose its being and value for him had he nothing but light.”

Therefore everything in the universe is subject to constant change, and man’s physical body is no exception to this. From birth it is subject to nature’s orderly processes, which consist in an incessant borrowing and giving back of the atoms which compose it. Man faces a responsibility, for as he thinks and feels, so he can either help on the evolution of the beings who receive the atoms he has impressed, or retard their progress. There is no standing still. In the course of time, his body as also his thoughts will become more refined or grosser, depending on the direction they take and the impress the lives are given. This constant change is not limited only to man. *Nitya Pralaya* or constant dissolution, says *The Secret Doctrine*, is “the change which takes place imperceptibly in everything in this Universe, from the globe down to the atom—without cessation. It is growth and decay (life and death).”

Going deeper into the nature of man, we see that his emotions and desires and thoughts change. The emotions and desires of a

child are not those of a grown-up man; daily and hourly there is, or should be, the killing out of the old and undesirable emotions to make way for the new ones. The type of desires and emotions arising in man will depend upon the direction his thoughts take. He becomes either their slave or their controller; this means for him either a new birth in spirit and progress up the ladder of evolution, or a further descent into matter and the death of higher thoughts and desires. If no higher impress is given, man will go from incarnation to incarnation, sinking lower and lower, and become in time one of the “living dead”—one who thinks of nothing but himself. He retards not only his own evolution, but also the evolution of all those impressed by his lives.

Thus for man, whether we consider only his physical body or his inner nature, death is life, but the change from one condition to another will be for either good or ill depending on the type and kind of thoughts he has. He has within himself the power to make his new birth a higher and better one than the old.

There comes a time, however, when the cohesive power of the lives making up man’s physical body can no longer be maintained; that is, for one or another reason, whether it be disease or natural old age, the physical body ceases to be a fit instrument for the Real Man within to manifest through. Just as a craftsman cannot do good work using an imperfect tool, so too, the Ego cannot work perfectly through an imperfect instrument. The unnatural prolongation of life in the body through, for instance, the transplantation of various organs, with all that that entails, makes for an unnatural existence. Life and death have today become unnatural. Natural death means the gradual separation of the lives; just as birth is a gradual process, so too is natural death. This comes about when, as explained in the article “The Elixir of Life” (THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, July and August 1966), “our will ceases to be strong enough to make us live.”

It is at this point, when physical death takes place, that an important event occurs. In her *Key to Theosophy* H.P.B. describes what happens:

At the solemn moment of death every man, even when death is sudden, sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him, in its minutest details. For one short instant the *personal* becomes one with the *individual* and all-knowing *Ego*. But this instant is enough to show to him the whole chain of causes which have been at work during his life. He sees and now understands himself as he is, unadorned by flattery or self-deception. He reads his life, remaining as a spectator looking down into the arena he is quitting; he feels and knows the justice of all the suffering that has overtaken him.

This is the event which awaits everyone who dies. Another important point to be borne in mind is the attitude of those who assist at a death-bed, whether of a very near and dear relative or of a friend. It is natural to feel grief when the physical connection is broken. However, who is it who feels the grief, and why? Is it for the one who has gone? He is now released from his personality, is no more limited by it, while those left behind are still so limited and bound down. "Death comes to our spiritual selves ever as a deliverer and friend," says H.P.B. So pity and sorrow should not be felt for the one just gone, or, if felt, such emotions should be controlled in such a way that there is no disturbance. The reason for this is given by one of the Mahatmas, who advises:

Speak in whispers, ye who assist at a death-bed and find yourselves in the solemn presence of Death. Especially have ye to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers, I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought, and hinder the busy work of the Past casting its reflection upon the veil of the Future.

Therefore, just as we do not disturb a person who is sleeping, no more should we disturb the one who has just died, because it is a hindrance and upsets the quiet stream of thought within his inner consciousness.

After this event is over, the physical body is left behind, and, life-energy having departed, the remaining five principles enter the first of the after-death states known as *Kama Loka*. Those who

die a natural death enter this state without conscious remembrance. If pure, they pass through it quickly. "The rule is that a person who dies a natural death will remain from 'a few hours to several short years' within the earth's attraction, *i.e.*, in the *Kama Loka*." It is the habitat of shells and victims of accidental death, including suicides. It is a sphere, we are told, which is "divided into innumerable regions and sub-regions corresponding to the mental states of the comers at their hour of death." Therefore, in death, as in earth life, we reap the exact consequences of our thoughts and actions, and create our own place in the scheme of things in the universe.

When this stay in *Kama Loka* is over, the real man is reborn into another of the after-death states; he awakens to the joys and bliss of *Devachan*. Here, too, the thoughts and impressions and feelings generated during life will determine the time spent in this state. We create, while here on earth, our *Devachan*, and it will last "in proportion with the intensity of feelings that *created* it," and no longer. There comes, however, a time when the memories of the previous incarnation are "added to the series of other innumerable incarnations of the Ego, like the remembrance in our memory of one of a series of days, at the end of a year."

Then, just as the man at the moment of death has a retrospective review of the whole life just lived, so too

the moment he is reborn on to earth, the *Ego* awakening from the state of *Devachan*, has a prospective vision of the life which awaits him, and realizes all the causes that have led to it. He realizes them and sees futurity, because it is between *Devachan* and rebirth that the *Ego* regains his full *manasic* consciousness, and rebecomes for a short time the god he was, before, in compliance with Karmic law, he first descended into matter and incarnated in the first man of flesh. The "golden thread" sees all its "pearls" and misses not one of them.

Thus a cycle is completed, and, just as death is implicit in birth, so, too, rebirth is implicit in death, and man is once again reborn. His new incarnation will depend entirely on the quality of thoughts,

emotions and desires generated in previous lives. As man moves from incarnation to incarnation, he can make each new birth either a heaven or a hell for the Ego within. He can involve himself deeper into matter, or raise himself higher and higher in Spirit. He need not wait for a new incarnation for this to happen, for at each minute, each hour, and each day, a new birth can take place, either in spirit or in matter.

On a larger scale, we see this constant change, as H.P.B. says, “in everything in this Universe from the globe down to the atom—without cessation.” The seed must die to make way for the plant; old twigs and leaves drop off the tree to make way for new ones; universes come and go. When the time comes for a universe to die, it does not suddenly go out of existence, but “sends its energies into space and gives similar life or vibration to cosmic dust—matter” which results in the course of time in the birth of a new universe. Death in every case means life, because a new instrument is formed for the manifestation of life when the old form has ceased to be a fit vehicle, but at no time does life cease or is it extinct.

In each case the old but makes way for the new in a continuous chain. “The Present is the child of the Past; the Future, the begotten of the Present”; and all three are “the ever-living trinity in one.” So far as man is concerned, his goal is to strive to make his dreams a daily reality, so that he has no cause for *Kama Loka* and no need for *Devachan*. “To live is to die, and to die is to live.”

Is not religion all deeds and all reflection, and that which is neither deed nor reflection, but a wonder and a surprise ever springing in the soul, even while the hands hew the stone or tend the loom? Who can separate his faith from his actions, or his belief from his occupations?

—KAHLIL GIBRAN

NATURE’S MYSTERIES

THE Voice of the Silence, which contains chosen fragments from the *Book of the Golden Precepts*, is particularly meant for the daily use of Lanoos or disciples, and is therefore appropriately “Dedicated to the Few,” those few ready to follow the words of Wisdom enshrined therein. This book, translated and annotated by H.P.B., is in a poetic language and is full of beautiful and inspiring images and expressions. On page 71, the question is raised whether one is justified in using for one’s own benefit the gifts and powers acquired through laborious efforts, and the answer is supplied:

Nay, O thou candidate for Nature’s hidden lore! If one would follow in the steps of holy Tathagata, those gifts and powers are not for Self. (p. 72)

So, from the very start, it has to be impressed upon the mind of the individual that he is not working for his own reward of rest and bliss, that he has to follow the path of renunciation deliberately, the path trodden by the great Buddhas of Compassion, to confer benefit upon others and point out the way in all humility.

What is Nature’s hidden lore? Usually, Nature is considered to be what we see around us: the great mountains, the vast oceans, the starry firmament with two great orbs of light, the sun and the moon, the luxurious vegetation, the running rivers and the green fields and woods, the birds singing their divine melodies as they soar heavenward, a variety of animal species and crawling creatures—all these combined together are termed as Nature. That which is hidden is supposed to be in the mines and under the crust of the earth, in the depths of the sea and beyond the skies, within our and other creatures’ physical constitution and structure, and so there are various branches of knowledge for each department—mineralogy and geology, zoology and botany, astronomy and astrology, biology and physiology, and so forth. Science perceives visible objects and tries to probe the mysteries concealed behind them. It dissects the human body but cannot find the soul of man because the latter is not objective but pertains to something higher

and diviner, to the spiritual plane which science does not recognize. Therefore, in order to study and master Nature's hidden lore, one has to realize that there is something within the physical and objective, the invisible aspects of nature and man.

As the individual treads the spiritual path he comes to realize that the changing panorama of the objective world is but a reflection of the inner, invisible world, and he tries to explore and understand it in order to reach the supreme reality back of all manifestation. H.P.B. states in *Isis Unveiled*, in the Ten Propositions of Oriental Psychology, that both nature and man are triune. There is the physical, objective aspect of nature as of man; then the inner, energizing aspect; and both these are constantly changing. But above these two aspects is the Spirit, eternal and immortal. We are further told that when the inner man tries to unite with the divine Spirit he becomes an immortal entity. H.P.B. states in the same work (I, xvi): "The universe is the combination of a thousand elements, and yet the expression of a single spirit—a chaos to the sense, a cosmos to the reason." From the point of view of the sense-life, this universe is full of confusion, meaningless and purposeless, and therefore chaotic. But when an individual reflects upon the subject, meditates and tries to understand the source and nature of the universe, the operation of the just and divine law, then naturally it is a cosmos where order and harmony prevail. *The Voice of the Silence* advises the candidate to learn about the voidness of the seeming full, the fulness of the seeming void. Usually, what can be seen and felt and touched is considered a reality, and what is invisible is not even recognized, though it is the animating, energizing aspect of the physical and so more real than the physical. It is only by helping Nature and working on with her that true wisdom is gained.

What do we mean by helping Nature? In *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 200) it is stated: "Man ought to be ever striving to help the divine evolution of *Ideas*, by becoming to the best of his ability a *co-worker with Nature* in the cyclic task." So, to help Nature one has to be deliberately active on the mental plane and generate such

ideas as will assist the progress of human evolution. Ideas rule the world, hence the necessity of correct ideation and meditation so as to become a regular co-worker with Nature in its cyclic work. Nature works rhythmically, harmoniously, and so should we, so as not to create disturbances unnecessarily through wrong thinking and acting.

For pure thinking and right living the brain, the mind and the heart need to be cleansed. The brain is the exhaustless generator of force and form, and each human being is responsible for the force he generates and the forms he creates in his mind. The brain is the instrument of the mind and both are interlinked and interdependent and the very matter of the brain can be changed through right ideation. Purity of motive and of the emotional nature will cleanse the heart. Then only will man begin to help the divine evolution of ideas and become a co-worker with Nature in the cyclic task. "Nature is not 'a fortuitous concurrence of atoms,'" says H.P.B. in her Preface to *The Secret Doctrine*. And she further states that "the occult side of Nature has never been approached by the Science of modern civilization." So the divine evolution of ideas has to be stretched upward and onward through understanding the occult side of Nature, and made manifest through daily actions.

To work with Nature means not to go against her just laws and her order and harmony. A wise farmer prepares the soil to plant the proper seeds at the proper time, and takes advantage of the law of cycles. Human beings neglect to prepare the soil of the mind to plant the seeds of wisdom because they are allured by a hundred cords of desire and sense inclinations. So they are frustrated in their efforts to reap a good harvest. It is important to keep a vigil over the mind and heart activities and turn them in the right direction. Once they are purified they can become useful instruments of the soul, who is their owner. Then they can become perfect channels for the flowing of the waters of wisdom from within oneself, for the benefit of all.

The cyclic law operates everywhere in Nature and in man's own being. It is divine, so if man works with the law he works with

Nature and becomes one of her creators to whom she makes obeisance. Summing up the Ten Points of Oriental Psychology, H.P.B. states: “MAGIC is spiritual WISDOM; Nature, the material ally, pupil and servant, of the magician. One common vital principle pervades all things, and this is controllable by the perfected human will.” Nature’s hidden lore is spiritual wisdom. It can be obtained only when one is in attunement with the whole of Nature, man’s ally, pupil and servant, for the one divine principle is the underlying essence of everything and man is able to control it through his perfected will.

The Declaration of the United Lodge of Theosophists is full of noble and lofty ideas and prescribes the remedy for the chaotic condition of the world. The U.L.T. is fully occupied in disseminating the Fundamental Principles of Theosophy, which if applied in daily life would bring one to a truer realization of the SELF and a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood. Similarity of aim, purpose and teaching is the common basis for unity. It should be of such great strength as to be *unassailable*. Finally, it is stated that “The True Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all.” Living for and as the Self of all creatures, trying to understand the essence underlying all religions and philosophies, the true student does not belong to any particular cult or sect. So the U.L.T. Declaration inspires everyone to strive to help the divine evolution of ideas, become a co-worker with Nature in its cyclic task, and gradually acquire Nature’s hidden lore, remembering always to follow in the footsteps of the holy Tathagata, and offering what is acquired in the service of humanity.

He who teaches Theosophy preaches the gospel of good-will; and...he who preaches the gospel of good-will, teaches Theosophy.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

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: How are we to distinguish what action is *in line with Nature* and what is not? In other words, how to know what is right and proper, so as not to disturb nature’s harmony?

Answer: This is a large and central question of “Ethics.” Surely, what is right and proper is that which is always in line with “Nature and Nature’s laws.” Mr. Judge gives another criterion: “Good” is that which is pleasing to *Ishwara* (God) within. It is always in harmony with our deepest feelings or intuitive knowledge.

Besides these, we need to know, at least theoretically, the laws of nature—visible and invisible, pertaining to the choices to be made. Ethics and ethical principles are mainly based, not on traditional belief system, but on the *right knowledge* of nature, of man, and of cosmos. This knowledge can be applied, as the case may be, either in the matter of hygiene, or in the matter of mental and moral health, or a child’s upbringing and education, as also in all departments of life. *Knowledge*—intellectual and intuitive—alone is the key to right discrimination and action.

Before we consider the role of intuition as a “guiding angel” for the purpose of discrimination, the fundamental principles of Theosophy should be consulted and applied in every case under consideration. For instance, in the nature of things, most animals and vegetation sleep during the night, which is nature’s provision to preserve health and life of the creatures. But man can break nature’s cycle, and act not “in line with nature.” He may remain active all night and sleep during the day. Expert opinion states that even when he may have adjusted well with this new cycle he may have to pay the price in some form or other. No one can survive

long after taking a dose of a deadly potion. These are just physical examples of the ways of nature and how they affect us.

We may apparently escape the immediate consequences of disobeying certain known laws of nature. But the price will have to be paid. For, nature always tries to readjust disturbed inter-relationship. The effects must follow sooner or later. Artificial measures such as in prolonging the lifespan or delaying the effects of aging, reducing human population, and all applications of technology to escape uncomfortable realities of life and many such “escape routes” have been tried by clever men, ever since man became a thinker. Under the law of causation, the *appropriate effect must follow the cause*.

Still the question remains: How are we to know what is proper in our dealings with man and nature? The answer lies in sincere search for knowledge relevant to our choices. Just as the knowledge of physiology and hygiene helps to keep optimum physical health and well being, in all departments of life we must seek appropriate knowledge for proper application. And it is always available to a sincere seeker, although it may not be in the form of instant formula or as dictation of right and wrong line of action, or a list of do’s and don’ts. The Greater and more accurate our knowledge of the fundamental principles and of the occult side of nature, greater is the facility to apply them if we so choose, and greater still is our responsibility. For, it is possible that in spite of consciously knowing the consequences, people yield to other influences and choose wrongly.

We are influenced, on the one hand, by our individual characteristics (temperament) and on the other, by the belief-system and tendencies based on our upbringing, environment and self-education. Their combined effects help or hinder in our understanding of the laws of nature and choosing to be in alignment with them. Sometimes, our “inner voice” helps. For, if we are used to consulting our conscience that warns and our intuition that promotes right discrimination, we are most likely to be acting “*in line with nature*.”

Nature’s laws ever strive to bring about “order,” and its ways are cyclic or rhythmic, trying to bring about final harmony, progress and felicity. Hence, those of our actions that are not in consonance with the ways of nature are likely to be self-defeating in the long run. For instance, the well-known “seven deadly sins” are called such because they create disturbances in and befoul one’s own physical and inner constitution.

Some may think that Nature is our servant and we can bend her to our purpose. This has called for valid movements towards preservation of nature and its eco-system as against exploitation of its resources for selfish purposes, thus creating imbalance in life-support systems. A backlash is sure to come sooner or later since nature’s “Law of Retribution” prevails. Here, profound knowledge is necessary to foresee the consequences of our direct dealings with visible and invisible (occult) Nature. Simple people, who live their whole life in proximity to nature, are quite familiar with and receptive to the hints thrown by their environment. They have learnt to respond appropriately for mutual benefit. To them, what they call “Mother-Nature” is neither a rival, nor a servant, nor a master, but a beneficiary and friend.

Intuitive poets and mystics have always perceived, in their own way, “the natural order of things.” Hence they have responded with fellow feeling and with a certain belief that all are “living” entities. We too can strive toward this ideal, and Nature herself will guide us to make proper choices.

Question: What are the ways by which students receive help from the Masters of Wisdom or Holy Adepts? Should we expect help when we are desperately in need?

Answer: The questioner seems to be familiar that the Holy Ones or the Masters of Wisdom are living Adepts and are concerned with the welfare of humanity. But the question remains: Do those highly advanced Souls (*Mahatmas*) help individuals like us when “we expect help”?

From childhood we are made to believe in special “intercession”

of some known saints, angels, gods, *devas*, family *devatas*, etc., who are supposed to intercede on our behalf if we seek favour by means of some special rites or prayers. We are persuaded to believe that by invoking the name and form of one's favourite idol as ideal, we may expect favours. This attitude, according to "ancient wisdom," is purely personal and selfish and leads to dependence and passivity. We must understand the true nature, stature and mission of the Masters whose help we seek and about whom Theosophy and the ancient traditions speak with greatest reverence.

Many of us want the Masters to use their powers and lift us out of the difficult situations—which have been created by us. We also do not take into account the consequences of using occult force. Mr. Judge writes:

"Look here; here's a man who wants to know why the Masters don't interpose at once and save his business. They don't seem to remember what it means for a Master to use occult force. If you explode gunpowder to split a rock you may knock down a house. There is a law that if a White Magician uses his occult power an equal amount of power may be used by the Black one." (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 180-81)

Considering the astonishing height of spirituality they have reached, we can see that their main task is to embrace the welfare of all living beings and, especially, mankind *as a whole*, at all times, taking into consideration the limitations and possibilities of time and place, under Karma. They "people their currents in space" with entities powerful for good alone. If we admit such a vast perspective and extensive scope of the work they are engaged in, then those individuals who deserve some special help must be few and exceptional "students" or the true seekers after wisdom.

We must correct our views if we think that the Mahatmas are just like the gods or *devas*—nature's intelligent powers—who can be propitiated and cajoled into melting before our pleading when we "desperately need them." We are being helped, at all planes—physical, psychic, moral or spiritual—and each time such help is proffered, it comes from and through our own inner nature, if we

can but recognize it.

The *law* governing higher help and inner progress through spiritual discipline is that each one must first deserve before he desires a "star of recognition" from such mighty Beings. We do not expect a professor of mathematics in a college to tutor and help school children. But no one is out of the heart-concern of the "Compassionate Ones," even though theirs is a "bird's-eye view" from heights far above our work-a-day-world, and their method of help is unknown to us. They exist for the service and protection of the whole of humanity, out of which an individual student-seeker may draw their attention if proved to be worthy.

Are we frequently aware of and acknowledge the Presence within? Do we constantly remember with gratitude the great Gurus who are hourly concerned with human welfare and progress?

If we sincerely strive to be channels for their "grace" to flow through for the benefit of others, we too may profit to the extent we deserve. And the best help a seeker may expect is of the nature of inner adjustments within his imperfect nature under their benevolent influence, as also through appropriate inspiration and occasional intimations "from above"! But for them—the White Lodge of Adepts—the inexorable rule is of privacy and isolation. They keep themselves out of public view so that they can be more effective in their benevolent work of human upliftment and happiness.

DAMA or self-restraint, dana or self-sacrifice, and daya or compassion help us free ourselves from the sway of craving, greed and anger. When the Buddha asks us to put out in our hearts the monstrous fires of infatuation, greed and resentment, he is emphasizing the three virtues enjoined by the Upanishads.

—S. RADHAKRISHNAN

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Paradoxically, poison can kill as well as cure. Too much can kill; a little can cure. It is a matter of dose as well as intent. Not just too much of a bad thing like arsenic, but too much of nearly anything can be harmful. “Too much vitamin A, hypervitaminosis A, can cause liver damage. Too much vitamin D can damage the kidneys. Too much water can result in hyponatremia, a dilution of the blood’s salt content, which disrupts brain, heart, and muscle function,” writes Cathy Newman (*National Geographic*, May 2005). Our bodies are designed to protect us from both natural and man-made toxins. Toxicity is the result of high dosage. Newman writes:

You might say that a toxicologist studies substances that lead to death. But toxicology is also about life. What can kill, can cure. Said Paracelsus, a 16th-century German-Swiss physician and alchemist: “All substances are poisons; there is none which is not a poison. The right dose differentiates a poison and a remedy.” Poison is in the dose. Toxicology and pharmacology are intertwined, inseparable, a Jekyll-Hyde duality. A serpent coiled around a staff symbolizes Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine.

Because it [arsenic] is colourless, tasteless, and odourless, arsenic was the poison of choice for the Borgias, the Italian Renaissance family skilled at artful murder.

From death to life: In the fifth century B.C. Hippocrates used arsenic to treat ulcers. It became an ingredient in Fowler’s solution, created in 1786 and used for more than 150 years to treat everything from asthma to cancer. In 1910 an arsenic compound became the first effective remedy for syphilis (later to be replaced by penicillin). Arsenic derivatives are still used to treat African sleeping sickness. In 1890 William Osler, founder of modern medical education, pronounced arsenic the best drug for leukemia, and today it remains an effective chemotherapy agent for acute forms of the disease.

H.P.B. mentions that tobacco, when moderately taken, is not an

intoxicant, but when taken in excess, like everything else—bread and even pure water—it can be harmful. She points out that everything in this Universe of differentiated matter has a light and a dark side to it, and when applied practically, one leads to use and the other to abuse. A chemist who has mastered the science of “essences” knows that every one of them can both heal and kill. Every ingredient and poison, from the harmless wax to deadly prussic acid, or from the infant’s saliva to the poison of a cobra, can be used for dual purposes. “The essence of that subtle, traceless poison, the most potent in nature, which entered into the composition of the so-called Medici and Borgia poisons, if used with discrimination by one well versed in the septenary degrees of its potentiality on each of the planes accessible to man on earth—could heal or kill every man in the world,” the result depending upon whether the operator was a White or a Black Magician. There is neither “elixir of life” nor “elixir of death,” *per se*, nor poison *per se*, but all is contained in the universal essence—the good or bad effect depends upon the degree of its differentiation and its various correlations. The light side produces life, health, bliss, divine peace, while the dark side brings death, disease, sorrow and strife. This is proven in the case of some of the most violent poisons, where even a large quantity of it fails to produce any evil effect on the organism, while a grain of it can kill with the rapidity of lightning. Also, “the same grain, again, altered by a certain combination, though its quantity remains almost identical—will heal. The number of the degrees of its differentiation is septenary, as the planes of its action, each degree being either beneficent or maleficent in its effects, according to the system into which it is introduced.”

Americans debate if the growing influence and prominence of religion in public life is desirable. Skeptics and believers wonder whether faith is our only hope or a human flaw that keeps us

shackled to a violent past. Karen Armstrong, the British ex-nun and author, arguably the world's most authoritative commentator on religion, feels the need to address the enormous problem of religious fundamentalism, writes Michael Valpy (*Utne Reader*, March-April, 2005). "Religious fundamentalists, always and everywhere, become more violent under attack." She believes that human beings are naturally religious. Religion continues to play a major role in the world because we are creatures who seek transcendence. We are meaning-seeking creatures, falling easily into despair. Further:

[There is a need] to proclaim that human religiosity is not dead but that good religion is in danger of being engulfed by bad religion. Bad religion, she says, is the suffocation of the sacred by dogma, by man-made rules; it stifles the individual's anarchistic search for transcendent meaning and absolute truth beyond ego, often by investing worldly values in what is ultimately ineffable. As psychologist Carl Jung famously noted, so much religious practice seems designed precisely to prevent people from having a truly religious experience.

"Compassion is the key to religion, the key to spirituality," Armstrong says. "It is the litmus test of religiosity in all the major world religions. It is the key to the experience of what we call God—that when you dethrone yourself from the center of your world and put another there, you achieve *extasis*, you go beyond yourself."

She believes that only a new spiritual quest that begins with an honest understanding of religion in the world today can save our world. "We need to reclaim religion from the religious politicians (and terrorists) who run it, who are just like other politicians—they speak for their own party and they can't be sufficiently pluralistic."

Mr. Crosbie defined true religion thus:

True religion must give us a basis for thinking, and consequently, a basis for acting; it must give us an understanding of nature, of ourselves and of other beings. Religion is a *bond*

binding not only all Men, but also all Beings and all *things* in the entire Universe, into one grand whole. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 211)

Where is the religion which satisfies the above definition? Every religion is true at the base and false on the surface, overlaid with cobwebs of superstition, dogmatism, materialism, etc. We find that religions and religious creeds with their rituals and dogmas are intellectual extinguishers. Today, religion is corrupted by terrorists and politicians, who use it to their own advantage. John Bunyan's remark that "Religion is the best armour that man can have, but it is the worst cloak," is applicable even in the present situation. There is a need to shift from blind belief to enlightened faith. H.P.B. writes:

He who believes his own religion on faith, will regard that of every other man as a lie, and hate it on that same faith. Moreover, unless it fetters reason and entirely blinds our perceptions of anything outside our own particular faith, the latter is no faith at all, but a temporary belief, the delusion we labour under, at some particular time of life. Moreover, "faith without principles is but a flattering phrase for wilful positiveness or fanatical bodily sensations," in Coleridge's clever definition. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 1*, p. 2)

Neuroscientists are uncovering anatomical, chemical and functional differences between male and female brains. It has been found that these differences were not restricted only to hypothalamus and mating behaviour, writes Larry Cahill (*Scientific American*, May 2005). Research has shown that sex-based differences in the brain relate to male and female cognition and behaviour. For instance, when selecting toys, boys reach out for balls or toy cars, while girls select dolls. Researchers attribute these preferences partly to innate brain biology. There was difference in brain activity in men and women while handling emotional

memories. It was noticed that in men, only right amygdala—which is concerned with the ability to recall the gist of an emotional story—was lit up, and in women, only left amygdala—concerned with the ability to recall precise details of an emotional experience—was lit up. The National Academy of Sciences asserted in its 2001 report that “Sex, that is, being male or female, is an important basic human variable that should be considered when designing and analyzing studies in all areas and at all levels of biomedical and health-related research.” Research into these variations could lead to sex-specific treatments for disorders such as depression and schizophrenia.

Mr. Judge mentions that undue prominence is given to the question of sex by both men and women. Soul or Spirit has no sex, and at that level male and female sexes are coalesced into *one*. However, “in the psychical states there are still distinctions, as the psychical, though higher than the material, is not as high as Spirit, for it still partakes of matter.” Further:

Matter is illusionary and vain, and so the female element is illusionary and vain, as well as tending to the *established order*. So in the Kaballa it is said that the woman is a wall about the man. A balance is necessary, and that balance is found in women, or the woman element. You can easily see that the general tendency of the women is to keep things as they are and not to have change. Woman—not here and there woman—has never been the pioneer in great reforms. Of course, many single individual women have been, but the tendency of the great mass of women has always been to keep things as they are until the men have brought about the great change. This is why women always support any established religion, no matter what—Christian, Jewish, Buddhist or Brahmin. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Mr. Judge suggests that whether male or female element predominates in a person can be found out from whether the person is given to abstract or concrete thought, and similarly, whether he is given to superficial things or goes into deep fundamental matters.

The United Lodge of Theosophists

DECLARATION

THE 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.