

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### FROM WITHIN, WITHOUT

ALL growth, to be permanent, must be from within, and must be the result of one's own effort. In the process of growth we do not add anything new from the outside. There is only *unfolding* of what is locked up within, as potentiality. Some poets have intuitively sensed this. Robert Browning expresses it beautifully, saying that there is an Inmost Centre in us all, where “Truth” abides in fullness, but wall upon wall of gross flesh hems it in. And “to know,” consists in allowing the divine splendour to escape, and not in trying make the entry of the light supposed to be outside. When science speaks of evolution she takes into consideration only half of the process, and teaches that evolution is physiologically a mode of generation in which the germ that develops the foetus pre-exists already in the parent, and then naturally develops into final form. Occult philosophy teaches that nothing can be evolved, unless it has first been involved, indicating that life is from the spiritual potency, and that the process of unfoldment is guided by intelligent forces under the immutable Law. This is known as the *doctrine of emanations*. Thus, there is first, involution—involvement or descent of spirit into matter—and then evolution, which consists in expression or actualization of what is potential, through perfection of forms.

When one considers various suggestions made by modern researchers, one is led to believe that science proposes to begin at the wrong end, *viz.*, from without, within. For instance, they ask,

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can we take “morality pill” to enhance our morality? If there are drugs (steroids) to enhance physical ability, expand memory and increase cognitive performance, why not moral steroids? In a recent issue of the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, psychiatrist Sean Spence argues that the rapidly advancing field of pharmacology could help people in becoming moral. Should pharmacology be used to improve ethical standards? For instance, is it wrong to have drugs specifically designed to target and increase feelings such as kindness or altruism? Some people argue that drugs might make us only “artificially moral,” and our ability to choose might gradually atrophy. Others argue that we should not object to the use of drugs for better behaviour, as these are only comparable to other semi-religious techniques, such as, anger management, meditation and mindfulness, writes Mukul Sharma (*The Times of India*, September 25, 2008). Let us see what are the implications. When athletes take steroids to boost their energy level and to give their best performance, they are disqualified, because that achievement under the effect of the drugs is not considered “their own.” It is only temporary. Sometimes drugs and alcohol spur creativity. But could we compare creativity achieved under the influence of drugs with that resulting from genuine inspiration from within? When a hypnotizer helps the subject to overcome his habit of stealing or drinking, by suggestion, it prevents the subject from making further bad Karma, but there is no merit in it for the subject. There would have been an addition to the good Karma of the subject, had he made personal effort to reform, of his own free will—which would involve great mental and physical struggle, writes H.P.B. When one chooses the discipline, of one’s own free will, it becomes part of one’s moral fabric. It survives death, and the Ego is reborn with that tendency strengthened.

The seeds of spiritual knowledge, art, science, agriculture and architecture exist in the divine nature of man, burnt into imperishable centre of his consciousness, by the divine Instructors, 18 million years ago. These exist as *innate* ideas. Why do we not show forth this knowledge? We may understand it by the analogy of light

surrounded by a glass covering. For the light to shine forth we need to clean the soot on the glass. The light of wisdom is covered by layers or sheaths or coverings, which need to be purified.

H.P.B. sums up the idea in the article, “Genius.” What is the difference between the ordinary man, an idiot and a genius? The Ego in each of these cases is of the same essence and substance. No Ego differs from another Ego, in its *essential* nature. That, which makes one person a great individual and another a silly person is the capability of the brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the *Inner man* within, writes H.P.B. The physical body is an instrument, while the Ego is the performing artist. She points out that even the great Violinist Paganini cannot bring out the melody if the violin is broken or if the strings are strung too loose or, too tight. The instruments of the Ego are the body and the brain.

Brain is not the cause of mind. In fact, the depth and variety of brain convolutions are caused by the presence of the mind. The Ego, though all-knowing, will not be able to use the brain to its full capacity unless it has experience. For instance, savages have good brain capacity, but the Ego is not mature and experienced to use it to its highest capacity. It is like asking two people to use computers. One who has mere working knowledge can only use it as a typewriter or calculator, while the one who has experience and has knowledge of computers, can utilize it better. It is only when the Ego has passed through various experiences of life and learnt from them that it acquires the power to utilize the brain to its full capacity. Men are wise, not in proportion to their experience, but in proportion to their capacity for experience. Thus, on one hand, we need to increase the capacity of the Ego to use the instrument, through assimilation of the life experiences, and on the other hand work towards achieving the purity and soundness of the instruments or vehicles.

Our brain is the vehicle or instrument of the lower mind, which uses the brain to reason from premises to conclusions, and also it perceives things seen by the senses as “idea,” in the brain. But, the lower mind itself is a vehicle for the Higher Ego. “The human brain

is simply the canal between two planes—the psycho-spiritual and the material—through which every abstract and metaphysical idea filters from the *Manasic* down to the lower human consciousness.” All true impressions are in the divine nature but they must be reflected in our everyday consciousness. At the simplest level, we receive help and communication from our divine nature during Dreamless Sleep State. We are none the wiser when we wake up, either because we are unable to bring the memory of those experiences to waking life, or if we do bring them to the waking state, we are unable to get any higher meaning from these experiences. This happens because our brain is not *receptive* and *porous*, because it is entangled in everyday activities and concerned with only mundane plane. We need to change the quality of our brain. By living according to the dictates of the soul, the brain can be made porous to soul’s recollection. We can change the quality of the brain by taking up or ideating on universal ideas or even metaphysical ideas and living a morally pure life. Using “will” we can transcend ordinary mental processes, *i.e.*, the activities of the lower mind. When that happens, mind thinks from higher plane of being.

In the “Dialogue Between the Two Editors,” H.P.B. says that there are persons who never think with the higher faculties of their mind at all. For instance, it is very difficult for a materialist, the metaphysical portion of whose brain is almost atrophied, to think on higher plane. Similarly, it is difficult for a person who is naturally spiritually minded to come down to matter-of-fact vulgar thought. They are really the creative ones. Such people would see poetry in a pig with her little ones or in a cabbage. The one who has trained himself, sees in the ordinary and the mundane, the reflection of something higher. Teachers like Buddha have conveyed greatest truths by using the metaphors and similies, of flowers, elephants, serpents, etc., whereas an ordinary man sees in them nothing beyond the obvious.

All the great teachers have sought to teach that the strength and beauty of life is within each one of us, if we would but draw it forth.

In our struggle with the draught and desert of our inner life we do not have to depend upon distant supply of water. We can be our own irrigators. If only we will dig deep enough we may find unfailing springs of courage and purpose, which can turn the allotted strip of desert into a green and pleasant land. To find the sweet and refreshing water of inner life, definite training must be gone through. *The Voice of the Silence* tells us: “Look in the Impersonal for the Eternal Man and having sought him out look inward, thou art Buddha.” Seeking the impersonal part of our consciousness is possible for all of us. Just as we are able to remain impersonal while solving a mathematical problem or while responding to a piece of classical music, it is also possible to have impersonal *feelings*. We must try to increase the impersonal moments in our life such as we experience when we are lost in appreciating the sunrise or sunset, or in helping the needy.

“Our finest hours are not in the hustle-bustle of our family, nor the noise and excitement of friends, but in solitude. When we are alone we enter into an intimate union with wisdom, peace and happiness. At times, during the ‘doing nothing’ meditation, we touch divinity, so that we function later, with a heightened sense of perception. If, by daily practice, we ‘learn’ to be meditative while being alone, we can have peace and joy and wisdom within ourselves,” writes Ruby Lilaowala. We have very encouraging words in *Light on the Path*:

Listen to the song of life....Look for it and listen to it first in your own heart. At first you may say, It is not there; when I search I find only discord. Look deeper. If again you are disappointed, pause and look deeper again. There is a natural melody, an obscure fount in every human heart. It may be hidden over and utterly concealed and silenced—but it is there. At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope and love. (pp. 10, 23)

## MAKING STUDY FRUITFUL

STUDENTS of theosophy, and particularly those whose aim is to become reliable promulgators of the philosophy, would do well to analyse objectively their method of study in order to find out if they are really using their energy in a way that will bring about the best results.

The United Lodge of Theosophists, as a true *school* of Theosophy, emphasizes that the initial basic stage is *learning* the fundamental teachings. But what learning implies needs to be analysed.

If we think back to our early school-days, we will remember that learning a lesson often meant memorizing it; being word-perfect was essential. However much we may dislike and condemn this method where children are concerned, it takes on quite another character in the case of adult students. Very often the latter have to realize anew the importance of every single word in a statement. The haste and superficiality of modern life show in the way we read, and how often do we overlook a word, which may alter the whole meaning of a sentence!

An example of this are the words “checked by its Karma” in the Third Fundamental Proposition of the Secret Doctrine. Leave out the little word “its,” and the meaning is altered. Without it, the statement is vague and we are led to assume that the Law of Karma checks us all in a general way. Whereas “checked by *its* Karma” expresses quite clearly that the Ego is checked by the conditions—on all planes—which it has itself brought about, that it is reaping the effects of the causes sown in previous lives.

For earnest students memorizing the exact formulation of important passages can be of great value. Words are the material used to create the form by means of which an idea is conveyed. Hence if, in reading, we mutilate the form by lack of attention to its exact construction, we cannot expect to get a complete picture of the idea expressed. In other words, if we do not first with perfect accuracy *learn* the outer form of an idea, and whenever useful

memorize the actual words, we cannot expect to pass on successfully to the next stage of study, which is *understanding*.

Accuracy in learning implies dedication, devotion, and while striving to learn with accuracy, we will discover that simultaneously criticism of the subject-matter is in abeyance, which means that we are accepting it as a working hypothesis, an attitude which increases our capacity to understand by making our minds receptive. As Krishna says in Chapter IX, verse 1 of the *Bhagavad-Gita*: “Unto thee who findeth no fault I will now make known this most mysterious knowledge, coupled with a realization of it...” So, by “not finding fault” we open not only our minds to knowledge, but also our hearts to its realization, and we transform it into a possession of our inner nature by using it in our daily life, in our thoughts, feelings and actions. We have then let this realized knowledge become a living power in our lives, which depends for its growth on our continued effort. By constant application we will find an ethical norm growing within us, which is the wisdom needed to be able to help and teach others.

So in order to make our study of Theosophy fruitful for ourselves and useful to others, let us remember its inseparable aspects: learning with accuracy, understanding with an open mind, application with a dedicated heart; and then the result will be wise service of our fellowmen.

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It is of course nothing new that you gain. God is already within you, but you had forgotten Him and so temporarily lost Him. When any external matter enters your eye, you feel terrible irritation. When it is removed, your pain is relieved, and you feel as if you have gained something new. In fact, you did not gain anything new. You only got back to the normal state you had lost temporarily.

—SWAMI RAMDAS

## WHERE MAY JUSTICE BE FOUND?

WHERE may justice be found? This is a cry of desperation of human heart. It is a cry from someone who has suffered long—unjustly. It is a sob of helplessness of someone who has been wronged by another, mightier, without any recourse. There are people who sincerely feel that they deserve better, that others around conspire to keep them down. Our innate sense of justice rebels against unjust punishment or withheld reward to which we believe we are entitled.

When all efforts to obtain justice by mutual discussions with concerned individuals fail, then, it may be necessary to appeal to the appropriate authorities or law of the land. It may also involve time, money, effort and much anxiety without absolute certainty of the outcome. It is true that man-made laws are not necessarily perfect, as they are framed and administered by people who are not omniscient and all wise. Law requires proofs and evidences which might not always be available. Corrupt officials or judge might be bought over. At times, the innocent is punished while the guilty goes scot-free. In some cases, we may feel that the degree of punishment meted out by the law is too much or too little for the crime committed. However, as good citizens of a country, we follow the due legal process for obtaining justice. The question here is: What do we do if we fail to get justice from the judicial system of the land? Where do we turn to for justice?

We have to also address the question of obvious cases of (seeming) injustice done to the newborn child who is born without a limb or a sense organ or in a deformed body for no fault of its own. It might be born with a congenital disease or born as an idiot. It might be born to poor parents who struggle to find a square meal on daily basis. We also witness terrible suffering of good and virtuous people. How do we console those unfortunate among us whose world falls apart when one fine day their whole family and precious possessions are wiped out by nature's fury? What pains us most is the helpless suffering of the innocent people, and what angers us is

the blatant injustice done to good and just people for no apparent fault of their own. Why should the innocent suffer?

Human heart finds it more and more difficult to believe that all this is the “Will of the God.” In the heart of our hearts we feel that we had rather not be “God’s favourite” to be singled out from among the billions, for such “gifts” from God. Humanity seeks answers, explanations and above all, Justice. Our sense of “Justice” is not a byproduct of social living, but the very basis of co-existence without which our little earth might long have become simply a lump of matter without life. It is the laws of Karma and Reincarnation which are at the heart of evolutionary processes that ever strive to take the whole of the manifestation to next higher rung, that makes our co-existence possible.

The doctrine of Karma says that we must reap what we sow, and we come back in the company of those with whom we have lived and acted in earlier lives. Good actions bring peace and happiness and evil actions bring pain and sorrow. Karma is the unerring law which brings to us the exact result of the causes sown on physical, mental and spiritual planes of action. It is that unseen law which operates wisely, intelligently and equitably—bringing effects of actions back to its producer. But we do not live in isolation. We live and act in company with other beings. Therefore, we affect and are affected in turn, by other people, for good or evil. We are interdependent. We receive our share in the good or bad results of the collective actions of all the members that belong to that body of which we are a part—be it a family, office, community, state, nation or the world in general.

If we can believe in the working of Newton’s Third Law that action and reaction are equal and opposite in the physical world, why can’t we accept its operation as the Law of Karma in mental, moral and spiritual world, at least as a working hypothesis? Only, its operations are of far more complex nature, as it takes into account all the factors imaginable. The state of mind of the person, motive, circumstances, moral stamina, knowledge and the weight of past

tendencies are all taken into account by the law of Karma which is merciful because impartial, unerring and just. All pain and suffering are results of disturbance of harmony due to selfishness in one form or another. Hence Karma gives back to every man the actual consequences of his own actions.

It is illogical and unjust to think that repentance can suspend karmic operation. Karma not only takes into consideration the guilty person, but also his victim. Repentance, if sincere, will prevent a person from repeating the same mistake, but it cannot prevent the consequences of the past action. “Not in the sky, nor in the depths of the sea, nor in mountain clefts is there a place on earth where a man can be to escape the consequences of his evil deed,” says the Buddha. Time lag does not reduce the intensity or the nature of results.

Thus, we reap the effects—reward or punishment—for our actions on various planes. The fact that we belong to this family, nation, race is strictly in accordance with individual and collective karma. We incarnate in those surroundings which are most in harmony with our Karmic tendencies. Our body, mind, emotional nature and special capacities or lack of it is of our own making. We have created and create our friends and enemies. Our station in life, our environment is not arbitrary but just the kind in which we can experience the results of past actions. Our disadvantages in life such as poverty, sickness, strife and struggle leave their indelible mark on our soul, which should never again allow us to be unsympathetic to others. Such adversities are not always punishments but the environment in which the qualities of fortitude, strength, kindness and sympathy can unfold and hence are, at times, voluntarily chosen by the soul. Knowledge of this law helps us to meet life’s adverse circumstances with a sense of purpose and responsibility. It helps us to stop acting from a narrow perspective of a single life.

We can now understand how a person who has hurt or killed the innocent creatures—plants and insects—may find himself failing in everything he undertakes in next life through the agencies of these

“lives” which now hinder him until Karmic causes are exhausted. How indifference to the misery of others in this life may plunge a person into the slums of our cities upon rebirth, to experience the misery of such a situation leading to arousal of his compassion and care for others later. How an evil child may come to a good family because the parents and child are indissolubly connected by past actions. It is a chance for redemption to the child and the occasion of punishment to the parents. In this case, the depraved Ego has brought its own evil environment, and heredity is unable to make him a good human being. However, we must not make the mistake of thinking that the Law of Karma operates mechanically. An offence may lead to one of the several consequences depending on what is most likely to help the person in learning the necessary lesson. The Buddha says:

He who offends the harmless and the innocent soon reaches one of these ten states: He will suffer (1) sharp pain, or (2) disease or (3) bodily decay or (4) grievous disaster or (5) loss of mind or (6) displeasure of the king or (7) calumny or (8) loss of relations or (9) loss of all his wealth or (10) destruction of his house by lightning or fire. At death, poor fool, he finds rebirth in woe. (*The Dhammapada*, Verses 137-140)

The knowledge of the working of this compassionate but stern doctrine of Karma brings solace to the suffering soul which otherwise sees no hope in the world where the strong seem to rule. Extreme despondency, hopelessness of the situation and outburst of long suppressed emotion may even impel and incite the person to take the law into his own hands and deliver punishment to the guilty. But this would be a mistake, because he knows that Karma is sure to punish the man who has wronged him. By inflicting additional punishment, he sows causes, which must bring future reward or compensation for his enemy and punishment for himself. Perhaps, it is the knowledge of terrible consequences that must come to those who committed heinous acts that made Jesus say: “Father forgive

them, for they know not what they do.” He said: “Do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you.”

Our actions come to fruition and bring us results at the appropriate time, in this or future life. We may complain that the law is unjust because we are unable to see the causes generated by us in the past, the results of which now punish us. We may even say that the law is unjust because we seem to be reaping effects in this life, of the action of another person. But it is not so. We are the same being who lived the previous life as a different personality, like an actor who played the role of Hamlet yesterday, and is today wearing the mask of King Lear. The actor, the higher Ego that takes up different roles or personalities to garner experience, knows. The new personality, working through new brain has no memory of the past and hence feels the injustice. Theosophy assures us that nothing is lost. Memory of past lives is retained by the inner man, and it will come to us when we are ready.

To the person who rejects the hypothesis without due consideration, the law appears to be a substitute for despot. But calm consideration would convince us of its majesty and justice. Our own inner nature knows it as a result of its innumerable first hand experiences of the past. How? Before birth and at the time of death, freed temporarily from the illusion of personality, the soul is one with all-knowing Spirit within. Thus, it has the benefit of the “preview” of life to come in the light of all the lives lived so far, before new birth. Similarly, at death, there is a panoramic “review” of life just ended, together with the knowledge of causes for its sufferings, and the soul sees the justice of it all, complains not, and accepts the responsibility for all its actions. When we have advanced sufficiently in spiritual living, we would acquire the power of discernment of the results of actions of all beings. Until then we can take Karma as the most logical, comforting and convincing hypothesis.

## STOP THINKING, START BEING

MOST of the time, we *think, plan* and *talk* about being brotherly, kind, charitable, and so on, but we soon discover that all that is in the air, a mere abstraction. We do not seem to realize what we mean by it, nor of the difficulties involved in actually practising it. We are a bit like Mr. Henry, the person who was very gentle and kind and who genuinely believed that he loved children. However, one day he saw a child, happily skipping on the pathway in his house, where fresh concrete had been spread, and making everything mushy. Mr. Henry lost his temper. A neighbour who was watching him, asked, “Why Henry, I thought you loved children”? And Mr. Henry replied, “I do love them in the *abstract*, not in the *concrete*.” How easy it is to deal with people and things in the *abstract* than in the *concrete*!

We think and probably talk a ton, but practice only a millionth of what we have heard and inwardly found to be true. It is very easy to advise others without practicing it ourselves. We are advising all the time, as superiors in the office, as parents and elders at home or as well-meaning friends. But if we were careful, we would notice that the impact on the listener is almost magical when we speak from our own first-hand experience. Like Gandhiji, perhaps, each one of us should make it a practice to check out if we have been practising ourselves what we advise others to do. Once a mother brought her seven year old son to Gandhiji and requested him to advise her son not to eat too many sweets. Gandhiji told the woman to bring her son back after two weeks. She went away perplexed but returned after two weeks. Gandhiji then advised the boy not to eat too many sweets as it was bad for his health. When the woman asked him why he had not given this advice in the first instance rather than to ask her to come after two weeks, Gandhiji replied: “I also eat a lot of sweets and needed these two weeks to give up sweets before I could advise your son.”

We all know that we must be charitable, overcome anger and jealousy, etc. But when asked: How to control anger; How to

overcome envy; How to overcome fault-finding and see the good and beautiful in others; more often than not we are unable to give satisfactory answers, or find ourselves rattling out steps we may have read in some self-help book! That is because we have found these truths too simple, too elementary, to expend our thoughts on or to practice. There is the story of a king who was going to be visited by a Buddhist monk. The king was expecting a great sermon from the monk, whereas the monk only said, “Be good, do good.” The king was disappointed.

It is true that at times we must know the rationale before we can practice. At times there are doubts whether the course of action suggested is practicable. But such cases are very few. We are required to apply the teachings, especially the ethics, that we have grasped and understood instead of waiting to figure it all out completely. Mr. Crosbie seems to suggest this when he writes:

We can apply what is possible and all that is possible to us, and in that application greater understanding and facility arise. Each one has to find *his* way. Words cannot give it, yet there *is* a way for each. Most of the trouble lies in trying to see, trying to hear, trying to “think” it all out, instead of applying what we *do* see. All ability comes very gradually, imperceptibly—felt, grasped, realized, rather than perceived in the ordinary sense. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 396)

For instance, as regards the injunction that debar us from speaking evil of fellow members or other people, many student-aspirants were very concerned about its pactical application because they felt that in case of treachery, falsehood of another, denunciation is actually “their duty to the truth.” To which H.P.B., in her article, “Is Denunciation a duty?” says that severe denunciation is a duty to the truth on a condition that one would denounce and fight against the *root* of evil and not denounce the *person*. We may at least begin to practise what we *do see*, *i.e.*, simple ethics, such as, speaking the truth, being honest and humble, which require no discussion, thinking, convincing or arguments. These are self-evident and plain

injunctions, what Immanuel Kant calls, “Categorical Imperatives,” so that there is no “if,” or “but” about them. The technique for practice suggests itself as we begin to practise. A Bishop was once asked, how does one learn to “love” others? His answer was, one learns to dance by dancing and to sing by singing. So also, one learns to love by loving. One starts as an apprentice, to finally become the master of the art. Similarly, Buddha’s reply to Malunkyaputra, who wondered why Buddha dwelt very little or not at all, on metaphysics, is very suggestive. Buddha asked: “Have you ever thought why I never discuss metaphysics?” “No,” replied Malunkyaputra. Buddha said, suppose a man has been wounded by a poisoned arrow and his friends are about to call a doctor, but he says, “I will not allow you to remove the arrow until I have learned about the caste of the man who shot the arrow; until I have known what wood the bow is made from, who made the arrow,” and so on, what would you think of such a man? Malunkyaputra said that he must be a fool, as his questions have nothing to do with getting the arrow out. He would die if he waited to hear the answer. “Well, then, similarly, I do not explain the metaphysical questions, but I teach how to remove the arrow, *i.e.*, the truth of suffering, its origin and its end,” said the Buddha. Many of us are like that man, who was dying of poisoned arrow. We intellectually theorize and want to have complete explanation by “trying to see, trying to hear, trying to ‘think’ it all out, instead of applying what we *do* see.” If we have understood fundamental ideas and their ethical implications, even a little, we must get ourselves to practice it at once. “The end of man is an *action* and not *thought*, though it were the noblest,” says Carlyle. Unless we model our daily life upon this truth we have no right to call ourselves, “Theosophists.”

Often, we hesitate because we are doubtful whether it will be worthwhile being kind, gentle and mild in this world, where might is right. Would not others take advantage of us? Is it practical? But if everyone hesitates, who is going to set an example? Is it not by example that we can bring about the inner conversion? In Victor

Hugo's novel, "*Les Miserable*," Jean Valjean, after spending 19 years in the jail for stealing a loaf of bread, comes out of the prison almost a hardened criminal and not allowed any place in any of the inns, is finally given food and shelter by a kind bishop. That night Valjean runs away with Bishop's silver plates and gets caught by the police. When he is brought before the Bishop, the Bishop says that the silver plates were given as a gift to Valjean and offers him silver candlesticks as well, saying that those too were gifted to him, which he forgot to carry with him. The police had to release Valjean, whose life was transformed after that episode, and he kept the candlesticks as a token to remind him of Bishop's forgiveness, deciding to live the life of altruism.

The discipline of "becoming" is at first, transition from thinking to action. At first, perhaps, it might involve effort and great inner conflict. It might even be at a superficial level, without much feelings being added to it. It is necessarily a gradual transformation, as Prof. C. S. Lewis points out in his essay, "Three Kinds of Men." There are three kinds of people in the world. The first class is of those who live simply for their own sake and pleasure, regarding Man and Nature as so much "raw material" to be used to their advantage. The second class of people acknowledges that there is some higher claim upon them. They will be willing to give up their pleasures if those are found to be in conflict with other people's pleasures. They recognize that they owe something to God and to the society. They are like the honest taxpayers, that pay tax, but hope that what is left will be enough for them to live on. At this stage, there is still conflict between our personal will and the divine will, as we endeavour to do that which is right. But then come, the third and the highest class of people, who can say, like St. Paul, that for them, "to live is Christ." The personal will has been surrendered to the divine will and the conflict between what they desire to do and what ought to be done, has ceased. The acts of charity, justice and generosity will then be done *spontaneously*.

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

### THE TWIN VERSES—II

5. *In this world never is enmity appeased by hatred: enmity is ever appeased by Love. This is the Law Eternal. (5)*

6. *The many who know not this also forget that in this world we shall one day die. They do not restrain themselves. But those who recognize the Law end their quarrels soon. (6)*

But what should one do if there is already a feeling of hatred and enmity for another person? How does one overcome this hatred? It must be overcome by love—by the force of exactly the opposite feeling. Not easy, but that is the true teaching of the Eternal Law—the *Sanatana Dharma*. This is the basic principle of a Good Life. It is the fount and basis of all Dharma. An Aphorism on Karma says:

The sway of Karmic tendency will influence the incarnation of an Ego, or any family of Egos, for three lives at least, when measures of repression, elimination, or counteraction are not adopted. (Aphorism 26)

"No man becomes your friend in a present life by reason of present acts alone. He was your friend, or you his, before in a previous life. Your present acts but revive the old friendship, renew the ancient obligation. Was he your enemy before, he will be now even though you do him service now, for these tendencies last always for more than three lives. They will be more and still more our aids if we strengthen the bond of friendship of today by charity. Their tendency to enmity will be one-third lessened in every life if we persist in kindness, in love, in charity now. And that charity is not a gift of money, but charitable thought for every weakness, to every failure," says Mr. Judge.

What an awful lot of time we spend over trivialities! Our fights, our hatred is over things that are transitory. Money, name, power, position and many such things that are considered most important by the world are all discarded at the threshold of death. They do not

accompany the real man. That is why Lord Krishna recommends meditation on death and decay, among other things. We live as though we are going to last forever as Mr. X or Mrs. Y. Death seizes the man at the most unexpected moment. If we keep this fact at the back of our mind; if we live every day as though it were our last, but work as though it were our first, then we would give our best, and would want to make peace with our enemies. Reflection on death is a profound meditation.

According to the theosophical tenets, every man or woman is endowed, more or less, with a magnetic potentiality, which when helped by a sincere, and especially by an intense and indomitable *will*—is the most effective of magic levers placed by Nature in human hands—for woe as for weal. Hence we are advised to try and feel especially kindly and forgiving to our foes and persecutors. The Message of Jesus was that of love and not retaliation. Christ is alleged to have said: “Love each other” and “Love your enemies”; for “if ye love (only) them which love you, what reward (or merit) have ye? Do not even the *publicans* the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even publicans so”?

7. *Whoso lives pursuing pleasures, his senses unrestrained, immoderate in eating, indolent, devitalized—him verily doth Mara uproot as a gale a weak tree. (7)*

8. *Whoso lives disciplining himself, unmindful of pleasures, his senses restrained, moderate in eating, full of faith and dauntless energy (Virya)—him verily Mara doth not overturn as a gale doth not overturn a rocky mountain. (8)*

In Buddhism, Mara is personified temptations through men’s vices. Mara is said to tempt men through his vices. He wears a crown with dazzling jewels to fascinate us. As the jewels exercise fascination, so do our desires. Mara is said to arouse in us a feeling that lusts can be killed out if they are satisfied. It is delusion produced by Mara to tempt us. His arrows smite the man who has not reached

*Vairagya* or detachment. It is a mocking demon of illusion, which tempts us to give in to indulgences. Initially we experience pleasure, which lessens with repetition, and yet we go on until it becomes an addiction. It then mocks us saying, “Leave me, if you can.” You become helpless. You neither derive pleasure nor are you able to give up your vices. Thus, you have become a victim of Mara. Sex, drugs, drink, gluttony, etc., start as innocent pleasures and then have you completely under their sway if you fall prey to their temptations.

He who attendeth to the inclinations of the senses, in them hath a concern; from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of the memory, from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination loss of all! (*Gita*, II)

Mara does not give up till the end. It presents all sorts of temptations even to a man on threshold of enlightenment. It tried to tempt the Buddha and Jesus. The spiritually advanced person identifies himself with humanity as a whole and hence he has to deal with the force of vices of entire humanity—the “Dweller on the threshold.” But the sovereign spirit within gives him power to overcome Mara, if he asserts his indomitable divine will.

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,” says the Bible. In the early years of spiritual journey, to manage to stand your ground is in itself an achievement. It requires self-discipline and control of the senses and mind. Right knowledge as to what is essential and what is non-essential to spiritual life is needed to cultivate detachment. There is also a risk of overdoing things under initial enthusiasm. Hence, the emphasis is on moderation—neither too much nor too little. The temptations are the trials of disciple whose Karma gets quickened under spiritual resolve and tests him. Unless he has built up Karmic stamina with slow, steady and relentless discipline, he is likely to succumb. The spiritual path is not for the lukewarm, it requires determination to hold on to that which one

has found to be true, and not waver. “Look inward, thou art Buddha,” says *The Voice of Silence*. Would the Buddha mock us by asking us to undertake that which is unachievable? It requires faith in the Buddha and in oneself to hold on firmly in the face of difficulties, which are bound to come.

9. *He may display it on himself but he has not merited the yellow robe who is not free from depravities, who disregards temperance and truth. (9)*

10. *He indeed has merited the yellow robe who has purged away depravities and is well grounded in virtues, who is regardful of temperance and truth. (10)*

Those who heard the Buddha were instantly influenced. Their aspirations were fired up. They urged the Buddha to take them as his disciples without even inquiring whether they were truly ready. However, as the spiritual tradition cannot turn down the request of an earnest aspirant, these men were allowed to join the *Sangha*. Buddha knew well that mere external observances will not make them true disciples. For the Buddha, wearing of a yellow robe had much deeper significance. It was a sign of inner relinquishment. Every spiritual tradition speaks of certain preparatory steps which the disciple has to undertake before he can ask for assistance of his teacher. He has to overcome the negative tendencies in himself by his own efforts. He has to get grounded in the practice of virtues and truth. It is the most serious undertaking that demands inner transformation and purification. Disregard for this advice is one of the main causes of corruption and immorality in religions. “He who remains inert, restraining the senses and organs, yet pondering with his heart upon objects of sense, is called a false pietist of bewildered soul,” says the *Gita*. This is also a warning to laity to discriminate and not go blindly after *Swamis*, *Sadhus* or *Babas*.

The disciples of the Buddha who became monks wore yellow robe. But why did Buddha choose “yellow robe”? Why not any other colour? Colour and sound are both vibrations. There is a

correspondence between colour and sound. Some people are able to hear colour and see sounds. Colours have occult significance. Certain colours are considered inauspicious. For example, black is considered to be an inauspicious colour and stands for *Tamas*. Whereas, white signifies purity and stands for *Sattva*. Red signifies energy and *Rajasic* nature. Various shades of yellow are associated with peacefulness and are considered auspicious. Wearing of a yellow robe enabled easy recognition of co-disciples. In fact, the colour yellow or orange is associated with someone who has renounced the world or taken *sannyas*.

*(To be continued)*

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THE disciples then inquired if they could engage in worldly duties, in a small way, for the benefit of others, and Jetsun said, “If there be not the least self-interest attached to such duties, it is permissible. But such (detachment) is indeed rare; and works performed for the good of others seldom succeed if not wholly freed from self-interest. Even without seeking to benefit others, it is with difficulty that works done even in one’s own interest (or selfishly) are successful. It is as if a man helplessly drowning were to try to save another man in the same predicament. One should not be over-anxious and hasty in setting out to serve others before one hath oneself realized Truth in its fullness; to be so, would be like the blind leading the blind.

—MILAREPA

## HAMLET

### A STORY OF PSYCHIC UNBALANCE

#### II

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THIS leads Polonius and the King to test Hamlet as to that possibility. With characteristic double-dealing, of which Ophelia is fully aware, they place her where they can watch Hamlet unexpectedly come upon her. But he soon suspects and assures himself that he is being overheard and tested. In a flash he determines to turn the test on her for at least truth-telling. Bluntly he asks, "Where's your father?" "At home, my lord," she sweetly answers. Stung to fury by her lie, and by the contemptible behaviour of the two men, feeling his own folly, and hers, and all the world's, he rails at her in terms that bow her down like a reed before a storm. His private hurt is so great that he would ease it by thrusting the injustice of it partly on her.

For some time thereafter Hamlet feels chiefly rage and disgust for Ophelia and her father; while the poor little weakling girl shudders off into the melancholy caused by blighted affections. Then soon comes the startling death of her father through her one-time lover. After this her melancholy rapidly passes into actual insanity. There can be no question that her reaction to these blows is intensely personal. "Blighted affections" means just that—single-eyed concentration on one's self, one's dreams of marriage and one's beloved. The mind has no other object, the soul no broader outlook. There is no capacity to resist disappointment.

Thus with Ophelia is proved the Adept teaching that insanity springs from some form of concentrated selfism. From this point of view, Ophelia's manner of death may seem to have symbolical colourings. As she falls into the water (matter), her wide feminine garments puff out with air and support her for a time, she scattering her flowers and songs and dainty graces till the clothing is water-soaked and drags her down—the sense attractions in her and for

her pulling her finally into the sense-element (matter) from which they first came. Her death is pitiful, but the contracted little soul-life she has led is more so. The perception of this weak extreme passivity makes admiration of such a woman impossible. To describe her as worthy of great praise and to be much stirred by her death are philosophical errors into which many critics have fallen.

Hamlet's behaviour in the grave scene is just such an unreasoning outburst as an unbalanced, psychic nature may be guilty of when it is surprised, grieved and personally offended. Previous to this for some time Ophelia and the feeling she had stirred in him have been partially put aside, his mind preoccupied by that command "Revenge!" still not obeyed, and by the complications caused by the delay. Due to his absence he has had no recent news of the girl he had loved. Just after his return he is idly philosophizing beside a newly dug grave, when he is wildly startled by learning that the approaching mourners and the grave are for Ophelia. He sees her brother leap into the grave in excessive lament. Then the old half-forgotten love sweeps violently over him. Disgusted by that artificial sorrowing, he flies into a passion and even jumps into the grave to fight with the brother in a mad contest as to whose grief is greater and worthier. This is the least sane act of the unbalanced Hamlet.

Yet all these mental agonies of disappointment and grief connected with Ophelia pass with little lasting effect. Such experiences come in the course of nature to every man; but for Hamlet they are rather obstacles and byways in his path. They do not constitute the chief line of his mental action. They leave him still facing his permanent problem: The Ghost laid upon him a command as a duty; he accepted it as such; he has not fulfilled it. Why?

It is very important to perceive that The Ghost is not a mere shadowy wraith, or a mere picture in the minds of several persons. The Elder Hamlet was murdered, thrust out of life before his time. In Theosophical teaching the physical aspects of men in the first stages after death are in general called Kamarupas; but the Kamarupas of those murdered, either by accident, by law or

otherwise, differ from the rest. Such beings are not dead to the same extent. The Force in Nature named Cohesion which held their principles together in physical life still holds them together in their Kamarupas, and must do so till their particular portions of that Force are ended by natural exhaustion. Hence the Kamarupa of King Hamlet is strongly cohesive and can materialize to living men, as he does to the Watch and to the son, in the form of the armed King—a form indicative of the feelings with which he materializes.

There is of course some dramatic embroidery attached to the story by traditional superstition; yet the statement may be unhesitatingly made that The Ghost of King Hamlet is a genuine materialization of that Kamarupa to living eyes. All that this being lacks is his physical body, the instrument through which his principles could still function; but a Kamarupa is not able to function or to affect physical earth-life except through some living physical man. Since his physical instrument is all that the ex-King has lost, his character is just what it was before his body died. His mind remains the same collection of theological, feudal and other race beliefs prevalent in his day. As a living man and as a king, he seems to have been the usual proud, aristocratic, commanding type, unquestioningly accepting his rank, its emoluments and his own deservings. His codes of honour are those customary. Hamlet, the son, from childhood has been imbued with all these beliefs and has never much questioned them, but his egoic nature is more given to philosophy and learned pursuits. King Hamlet when alive had thought punishment the only proper return for any dishonour shown him. Lately, as a Kamarupa, he has been brooding over the wrongs he thinks he has suffered by being unjustly deprived of continuing life on earth and of his possessions. The rankling sense of injustice and the knowledge of his brother's treachery and his wife's falsity rouse all his lower-desire principles into full activity. He sees only two things—the revenge he wishes and the son as the one in physical life who should execute the revenge.

This all-potent desire is what enables him to materialize to those

alive, and his demand on the son for vengeance, though not ranting, is imperious and compulsive. Revenge means, of course, killing the brother-uncle-king and seizing the throne.

But such a demand for vengeance is in itself wrong. It is almost wholly selfish and therefore against Nature's law. When one remembers, as a student of Theosophy must, that each man is not only his father's son, or a member of a family, but is an independent Ego and a sevenfold being with his own virtues and vices and his own Karma manifesting on each of seven planes, one sees that such an act of revenge cannot affect a man only externally, as is commonly assumed. The thought and act of murder must reverberate through the whole and therefore affect the entire life and nature of the one who kills. The knowledge and vision of Atma, or the Higher Self in every man, is the true ethical standard. According to that knowledge and vision, revenge and murder are never right; and the Voice of that Self is heard as "qualms of conscience" in any man not quite deafened by wrong-doing.

What, then, from the higher-soul point of view, is Hamlet's relation to that Kamarupa and its demand? During the actual interview, though he is in shivering fear, he is convinced that the Apparition is the living remainder of his father, able to move, speak and declare the truth. He fully accepts at that time The Ghost's word. His quick agreement in the first excited moments is a natural outcome of his filial affection and of his beliefs by education, such as the false sense of honour which requires murder for murder. But also his own mind has long been full of suspicious resentment toward his uncle. Hence while The Ghost is speaking Hamlet has little or no power to feel that the demand for vengeance may be questioned, or to see what the Kamarupa embodies and would instil into him. His resentment throws him wide open. He is not then or later exactly obsessed by the Kamarupa, but he remains throughout the play constantly under its influence.

Previously, though possessing native goodness, Hamlet had grown selfish through indulgence of the intellect. Prevailingly mental,

he had gratified himself by years of continued university study and life, absorbed himself in that, instead of becoming at home the chief companion and the counsellor, hence the guard, of his beloved father against the designing uncle and the crafty time-serving Polonius. He has thus become passive toward actual life, remote from it. Though he admits much sin in his past, he is not striving to grow better. The prime mover in him is not Spirit but the lower intellectual mind. Well trained in logical analysis, he is yet slow to discriminate between his wrong and right motives or to analyse the subtleties of his thought ethically. Also, he is incapable of taking a practical masterful position in the court (probably the uncle counted on this weakness); and just as incapable of perceiving the real cause of his dilatoriness and hesitation. Thus the days pass; though he proves that the Kamarupa is genuine and gives true information, yet he does not progress far enough morally to perceive that its demand for vengeance is unrighteous, is merely conventional, and that his promise to take vengeance by the conventional means of murder has put his whole life on a false basis through a mistaken concept of duty.

Instead of seeing this, Hamlet shares and cherishes the resentment expressed by the Kamarupa, and thus fails to detect the danger in such “commercing with the dead.” He does not comprehend that, in the general ignorance concerning the dead, a man’s confidence and obedience in such an experience may prevent due attention to practical duties in the world of the living. Though he has a sense of being part of a nation, his thought, like the Kamarupa’s, is much more to get revenge than to clear away the court wickedness and serve the Danish people. Nowhere in his talks or the Kamarupa’s, is there definite recognition of obligation to them. King Hamlet, like other kings of his time, had lived for his own satisfaction and glory. His son’s patriotism is no higher.

(To be concluded)

## 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:** Is it true that only those who are spiritually advanced are *conscious* in after-death states?

**Answer:** People often have very materialistic view of life after death. Be it “Heaven or Hell,” “*Swarga* or *Naraka*.” *Swarga* or Paradise is believed to be the place where good and virtuous enjoy highest sense pleasures. Hell or *Naraka* is considered to be the place for torture and punishment of the sinful and wicked souls. Purgatory is often considered to be an intermediate and temporary hell-like state for the punishment and purification of the soul before the Final Judgment leading the soul or the Ego to *eternal* Heaven or *eternal* Hell, based on the actions of a single lifetime.

Theosophy points out that after the death of the body the Ego finds itself in a state called *Kama-loka* (purgatory) clothed in another type of body called *kamarupa*. *Kamarupa* is an ethereal body impregnated with earthly or wicked desires and passions of the dead person. But the real man, the immortal Ego, impregnated with noble deeds of life and high aspirations, frees itself from *Kamarupa*.

Are those in *Kama-loka* *conscious* that they are dead? Mr. Judge says that states after death are determined by the kind of life lived by the person on earth. Hence, it must vary from person to person depending on what kind of life they have lived. There are many different kinds of states in *Kama-loka*. Some people are aware that they have died, while others are unaware of it; some are able to see those they have left behind, other are not; but each one is able to see all that pertains to their particular plane of *Kama-loka*.

The real man, the immortal Ego, after shedding the *Kamarupic* body, goes to another state called *swarga*, *devachan* or paradise. It is the state where the Ego takes much needed rest. It is also a state in which the Ego, being free from the limiting circumstances of life in a physical body, is able to give full expression to its unfulfilled aspirations, and assimilates noble qualities so as to make them part of its nature. If the person has lived a morally pure life and loved arts, music, painting, mathematics, etc., for their own sake, then there is assimilation and development of these qualities, so that the Ego comes back to the earth, enriched.

But the stay in *devachan* may be conscious or unconscious. It depends on the *belief* of the person in existence of the soul or surviving consciousness beyond death. It is stated that a person who lived a morally pure life and believed in the existence of soul or surviving consciousness—for him there will be *conscious devachan*. For such a person *devachan* is an idealized and subjective continuation of his earth life, where he feels himself to be the same person, Mr. X or Miss Y—but as an *ideal reflection* of the human being he was when last on earth, devoid of all the evil. It is a state of complete and unalloyed happiness where the person in *devachan* surrounds himself with everyone he loved on earth. Thus, the process of *conscious* expansion, development and assimilation is possible only for the person who has believed in survival of immortal soul after the death of the body. The rule is that in order to live a *conscious life* in the world to come, one has to believe first of all in that life during the terrestrial existence.

If we compare death to sleep, then one who believes in survival of the soul after death will be in the state of full consciousness—like sleep full of vivid dreams. On the other hand, a materialist who may be good, but has denied existence of soul or surviving consciousness, will not have *conscious devachan*. He will be plunged into a deep sleep without dreams, without consciousness, till he is born again. He is like a person who falls asleep during a long railway journey, missing many stations and then awakening without slightest

recollection of the stations he missed, and continuing his onward journey.

Since the good materialist does not believe in immortal soul and immortal life, only good Karmic record would impress on the Sutratma, without the personal consciousness of Mr. X or Ms. Y. leaving any impression. He is enriched, but is not conscious of it. He has missed the *conscious* joys of stay in *devachan*. It is similar to a person trying to recall incidents of his life in old age. He may not remember all of them, and yet feels that he is the same person. Also, those experiences, of which he has no memory, have actually formed his character. So also, it may be true of the Ego. While in Eternity, the Ego may feel the gap for those incarnations where no *conscious* remains of the personality have survived.

As for the spiritually advanced persons, they are *conscious* after the death of the body, but in their case the Ego does not enter the states of *kamaloka* or *devachan*. In their case there are no impure desires which can form *Kamarupa*. Their Ego does not need rest. In their case, the process of assimilation takes place while on earth. *Devachan* is an illusion, and since adepts and initiates have risen above illusions, they have no need for *devachan*.

**Question:** Does the precipitation of karma follow the law of cycles, so that precipitation of bad karma may be followed by precipitation of good karma, and so on?

**Answer:** When we look at our own life, or lives of others around us, we do not observe karma precipitating in cycles. Some people seem to be consistently living the life of disadvantage (from the personality's point of view) with hardly any good patches. On the other hand some have a comfortable life from the cradle to the grave with hardly any disadvantages. What has been said about precipitation of Karma is that the ego is born with certain amount of karma or mental deposits, which can come to fruition in the given environment. In physics we are taught that the stronger force temporarily prevents the operation of weaker force. Likewise, the

force of certain set of karma of bodily, mental and psychic planes may prevent the precipitation of opposite sort of karma. For instance, a person who is born, under karma, with healthy body, acute intelligence and in a rich family, will not be able to have the experience of weak constitution, dull intellect and poverty, till the force of the previous karma has been exhausted. A person who has wide and deep-reaching character and much force will invite precipitation of greater quantity of karma than the weak person. *Light on the Path* points out that masses of people go waveringly through life, not making a definite choice in either good or evil direction and are not certain of the goal. In their case, karma operates in a confused manner. However, when one decides to live the spiritual life in all sincerity, and makes a definite choice between good and evil, he provides a clear channel or direction for the karma to precipitate. Every choice brings about great karmic results and also larger quantity of karma precipitates. An aphorism on karma states that through intensity of thought and the power of a vow, changes may occur in the instruments, *i.e.*, physical, mental, psychic or moral nature of the person, so as to make it ready for the new class of karma to precipitate. It is also said that no one is given more than he can bear, and yet a weak and mediocre person may feel it to be all too heavy.

What we call karmic stamina is the effect or fruit of past unselfish good Karma that has ripened. The ripening of the past good Karma depends upon stock of unselfish good thoughts in the present life. Thus, a spiritually advanced person might have an immense quantity of past unselfish good Karma stored up. Yet, if during the crisis there is not sufficient number of present unselfish good thoughts, to ripen the past good karma, then he may find himself destitute of necessary stamina. "Few are they who have already laid up a good quantity of unselfish good Karma; and fewer still are they who have the requisite degree of unselfish and spiritual nature during the period of trial." (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*, p. 13)

Though we may not find a cyclic pattern, at times, we are able to

discern an element of grace in the way karma precipitates. Thus, some of us are able to appreciate that though the events that befall us are determined by karma, their timing and the circumstances may be termed as pure grace. Writes Suma Varughese:

If I look back, things have happened to me only when I was in a position to bear them, and even put them to good use. For a long time, soon after I entered the path, I was extremely low on energy for all of it went in becoming aware and coming to terms with the inner world. At that time I was cosseted like a baby and spared of almost any challenges in the outside world....Gradually, as I became more able and capable of standing on my own two feet, the scaffolding began to be lifted and I was exposed to some hard challenges....I do not know how much more karmic retribution lies ahead of me, but I do know that it will come to me only when I am ready. (*Life Positive*, September 2008)

MOSES entered into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of the mortal nature, and, in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us, like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it. Happy are they who imprint that image in their souls.

—PHILO

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

By analyzing flints at an archeological site on the bank of river Jordan, researchers at Israel's Hebrew University discovered that early civilization had learned to light fire, rather than relying on natural phenomena such as lightning and that allowed them to venture into unknown lands. The study, published in a recent edition of *Quaternary Science Reviews*, shows that humans had the ability to light fire nearly 790,000 years ago and that helped them to migrate from Africa to Europe. "The new data shows that there was a continued, controlled use of fire through many civilizations and that they were not dependent on natural fires," says the archeologist Nira Alperson-Afil. Since they did not find remnants of ancient matches or lighters, they have no clue to the methods used for lighting fire. (*The Times of India*, October 28, 2008, courtesy *Reuters*)

The myth of Prometheus, who is said to have stolen "fire" from heaven and brought it to earth, has been interpreted by some scholars to imply man's first *seeing* or *discovering* fire. H.P.B. points out that "fire was never 'discovered,' but existed on earth since its beginning. It existed in the seismic activity of the early ages, volcanic eruptions being as frequent and constant in those periods as fog is in England now." She points out that the assumption that primitive man lived for ages on earth before he was made acquainted with fire, is illogical. She argues that even if a new race of men were to appear on some uninhibited place (with the exception of Sahara, perhaps), then within a year or two they would discover fire, through the fall of lightning setting in flames grass or something else. (*S.D.*, II, 523-24)

It appears that the knowledge of lighting the fire has been with man ever since his mind was "lit-up" (activated), some 18 million years ago. At that point, certain inherent ideas, common to the whole race, were implanted in the human mind by divine beings, who perfected themselves in former ages. Knowledge of arts, science, agriculture, astronomy, as also the lighting of the fire seems to be part of these inherent or *innate* ideas. Thus:

And mankind was right, as fire by friction was the first mystery of nature, the first and chief property of matter that was revealed to man...The earliest inventions of mankind are the most wonderful that the race has ever made....The *first use of fire*, and the discovery of the methods by which it can be kindled; the domestication of animals; and, above all, the *processes by which the various cereals were first developed* out of some wild grasses—these are all *discoveries with which, in ingenuity and in importance, no subsequent discoveries may compare*. They are all unknown to history—all lost in the light of an EFFULGENT DAWN. (*S.D.*, II, 373)

Is it true that man will not evolve any further because he no longer has to struggle to survive? Steve Jones, head of the department of genetics, evolution and environment, at the University College London, says the forces driving evolution—such as natural selection and genetic mutation—no longer play an important role in our lives. People living one million years from now will resemble modern-day humans. With technological advancement making available plenty of food and basic necessities, a baby born today can live a long and healthy life, and that (no struggle for survival) works against the evolutionary tool of natural selection. Secondly, older men's sperms deteriorate and contain more genetic mistakes, leading to mutations in their children. But in modern times, there is less likelihood of genetic mutation as there are fewer older fathers. Thirdly, "randomness" is an important ingredient in evolution. As the breeding between the races is becoming more common, the population gets more and more homogenous, and the opportunity for random change is dwindling. However, not all scientists share this view. Chris Stringer, research leader in human origins at the Natural History Museum, London, says that the idea that evolutionary pressures may not take toll on humanity was true only of Western civilization.

Another genetics expert, John Wilkins, of the University of Melbourne in Australia, says that genes do not stay in one place for very long in evolutionary terms and believes that evolution has not stopped nor even slowed appreciably. (*Mumbai Mirror*, October 8, 2008)

Theosophy posits triple lines of evolution, which are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. These are the Monadic (or spiritual), the intellectual and the physical evolutions. The Monadic or spiritual evolution is concerned with the growth and development into still higher phases of activity of the Monad. Monad is defined as *Atma*, the One Life, mirrored in *Buddhi*, its vehicle. This Monad cannot either progress or develop. It is the Great Spectator that has been observing the drama of evolution, unfolding from elemental, mineral, vegetable, animal to finally the human stage. The impulse to evolution comes from the Monad. However, it is the Eternal Pilgrim, *Atma-Buddhi-Manasic* triad, which is the experiencer, the sufferer, the enjoyer that has been learning and gaining experience in various kingdoms. A Kabbalistic aphorism speaks of the evolutionary journey, which is not likely to stop at human stage, as man has to become an angel (god), and of there being an ever-growing perfectibility. Thus: “A stone becomes a plant; a plant a beast; the beast, a man; a man, a spirit; and the spirit a god.” Theosophy agrees with Prof. Huxley, who wrote in 1891 that there must be beings in the universe whose intelligence is as much beyond ours as ours exceeds that of the black beetle. These intelligences which take an active part in the government of the natural order of things, were once human.

H.P.B. explains that the Darwinian theory of natural selection is a pure myth when resorted to as an explanation of the origin of species. Natural selection is the phrase for describing the mode in which the survival of the fit and elimination of the unfit is brought about in the struggle for existence. All “useful variations” are perpetuated and progressively improved. However, natural selection cannot explain “What CAUSE—combined with other secondary

causes—produces the ‘variations’ in the organisms themselves.” (*S.D.*, II, 648). “The true solution of the mystery is to be found in the impersonal Divine Wisdom, in its IDEATION—reflected through matter.” (*S.D.*, II, 299 fn.)

Even at a simple level, it is easy to see that even today, the world faces physical challenges just as great as any posed in the past. Viruses such as HIV were not known earlier, but today there are 33 million people suffering from that disease. Pollution and nuclear wastes pose new environmental risks. There is rising rate of depression and mental illnesses. It appears that those with the capacity to be at peace with themselves and work creatively with others might be the survivors of this technical age. (*The Times of India*, October 9, 2008)

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The terror attacks in India and abroad have created an impression that *jihad* is central to Quranic teachings. Firstly, in the Quran “*jihad*” has been used in its root meaning, *i.e.*, to strive and to strive for betterment of society, to spread goodness (*maruf*) and contain evil (*munkar*). Though the word “*jihad*” occurs in the Quran 41 times, not a single verse uses it in the sense of war. There are four most fundamental values in the Quran: justice (*’adl*), benevolence (*ihsan*), compassion (*rahmah*) and wisdom (*hikmah*). One who fails to practise these values can hardly claim to be a true Muslim. We may say that compassion is most central to Quranic teachings, and that the word appears in Quran 335 times. There is great emphasis in the Quran on *justice*, in all social and political matters. Those who are waging *jihad* in the form of terror attacks are bent upon seeking revenge whereas a good Muslim should learn to forgive, just as Allah does. Even in Shariah law, *jihad* can be declared only by the state or those empowered by it. Thus, terror attacks amount to committing murder of innocent people. Revenge only satisfies our ego and injures the ego of the enemy, and thus the war of attrition

continues. Our world today is very different from the Seventh century Arabia, hence we should go more by the Quranic ethics than injunctions of war. We may arouse the public opinion through democratic means and expose communal forces. Did not the Prophet say that the “ink of a scholar is superior to the blood of the martyr”? writes Asghar Ali Engineer, who is associated with the Centre for study of Society and Secularism, in Mumbai. (*The Times of India*, October 7, 2008)

True knowledge of one’s own scriptures is essential for socio-communal harmony. Both Hindu and Islamic scriptures have outlined their concepts of *Dharma Yuddha* (righteous war) or *Jihad*. Both these are noble concepts, and in essence, imply man’s utmost effort, including war, to establish justice, and end oppression, writes Ishtiyaque Danish, an Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Hamdard University, at Delhi.

Very few of us have taken the trouble to understand his/her own religion by studying the original scriptures. Most of us are satisfied reading the translation of these scriptures by some Orientalists or with the interpretation given by some religious authority. Often, religious authorities interpret scriptures so as to serve their own purpose. Many people believe that *Gita* advocates war, failing to grasp the symbology. Most scriptures need to be understood allegorically, by applying seven different keys. Most of the time “righteous war,” mentioned in the scriptures, refers to the inner war between man’s lower and higher self. Man’s greatest enemy is his own base nature within, which needs to be conquered.

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A Man does not seek to see himself in running water, but in still water. For only what is itself still can impart stillness into others.

—CHUANG-TSE