

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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DIVINE VIRTUES

VIRYA—SPIRITUAL ENERGY

THE FIFTH Paramita is *Virya*, described as, “the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH, out of the mire of lies terrestrial.” *Virya* is the dauntless energy which will fight its way to the end against all foes. The *Virya* Paramita follows the Divine Virtue of *Viraga*, and is followed by *Dhyana*. Having conquered illusion and become indifferent to the pairs of opposites, with our gaze fixed on the Truth we perceive, it would seem that all we need is energy to go on and on. But the greatest obstacle on the path is pride—pride of achievement. Before we can enter the gate of *Dhyana*, we must be incapable of mirroring back anything of the earth. Earthly thoughts must find no place in our consciousness. We can visualize the energy we shall need, the strength of mind and heart, to reach the goal ahead.

Virya ordinarily means “driving force,” “energy” and “vigour.” As a Divine Virtue, it means spiritual energy or energy needed in the pursuit of spiritual goal of enlightenment. The practice of all other paramitas depends upon *Virya*, because you need energy if you want to practise charity or patience or meditation. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, points out that most spiritual aspirants experience that there is a clear spiritual ideal before them—of self-realization or enlightenment—which they have understood intellectually and genuinely accepted, but which they

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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have not managed to attain. Even after months, years and decades they realize that they still have the ideal but they have not made any perceptible progress towards it. It is as though we stand at the foot of Mount Everest, look up at the snow peak, and realize twenty years later that we are still standing at the same spot. The reason why no progress could be made is that we could not put energy into it. There is no drive for living the spiritual life. The fact is that there is no shortage of energy, but it is dissipated in innumerable directions, so that only a small part of our energy goes into spiritual life. If a part of our energy goes towards the Ideal, another part is going away from the Ideal, and hence we feel that we are pulled apart, and as a result exhausted.

The central problem of the spiritual life is that of conservation and unification of our energies. Our emotional energies are *blocked* for various reasons, such as, emotional frustrations, emotional disappointments, fear of being hurt, absence of real communication with other people, and very often because we have been brought up to repress our emotions. Our emotional energies are *wasted* or drained away when we indulge in negative emotions, such as, fear, anger, hatred, guilt, anxiety, or self-pity. We seem to be wasting divine energy through useless talk. Moreover, ordinary human emotional energy is too coarse or gross and it has to be refined so that it can be used for spiritual life. We can stop blockage and wastage of emotional energy through awareness, suggests Sangharakshita. We can stop this waste of energy by cultivating opposite emotion—love instead of hatred, confidence and faith in place of fear. Sexual indulgence and useless talk are the two main avenues through which we waste this spiritual energy. Silence is needed to conserve spiritual energy.

We need spiritual energy in effecting the transition from being good people to spiritual people. Sangharakshita points out that the Spiritual life is an active life. It is being active mentally and spiritually. This life is for those who are prepared to make an effort, prepared to try. It is not sitting cozily near fire with a cup of coffee

and plate of muffins and reading all about austerities of Milarepa and saying how nice! How wonderful! In the Transition State, one needs courage, to leave behind familiar viewpoint and accept a more universal one. For someone who has been thinking things from the personal point of view and living a self-centred life, it is not easy to give up comfort, luxury, fond habits, and think about needs of others. He is required to take courage in both his hands and leap. It is like a person going over to the other side of the abyss. He does not know what is on the other side, but once he has crossed over, he is sure to find beauty, peace and happiness.

Energy is needed not only to *start* new things, but also to *sustain* what we have started. In spiritual discipline we have to be prepared to try again even if we fail because otherwise advance cannot be made. “Mistakes will occur, perhaps many of them, but, as is said, ‘twenty failures are not irremediable if followed by as many undaunted struggles upwards,’” writes Mr. Crosbie. In *The Voice of the Silence* we find graphic description of a spiritual aspirant fighting the inner foes, till his last breath. Thus:

The fearless warrior, his precious life-blood oozing from his wide and gaping wounds, will still attack the foe, drive him from out his stronghold, vanquish him, ere he himself expires. Act then, all ye who fail and suffer, act like him; and from the stronghold of your Soul chase all your foes away—ambition, anger, hatred, e’en to the shadow of desire—when even you have failed. Remember, thou that fightest for man’s liberation, each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time. (p. 68)

Much vigour is needed to fight those unseen enemies, those cruel crafty powers, which reside in us in the form of unwholesome thoughts, anxiety, desires and emotions. It is indeed difficult to conquer one’s lower nature and hence, Buddha says, “Far hath he gone, whose foot treads down one fond offence.” In order to fight the impurities of our nature, we must first have the courage to acknowledge their presence. When there is deceit or moral lapse,

it is required that we own it up during self-examination or confess it to the person whom we have wronged. It requires moral courage.

Virya means *Spiritual* courage. *Kshanti* and *Virya* go hand in hand. When daring (*Virya*) rests on patience (*Kshanti*), it is *sattvic* in nature. The patience that cultivates *Virya*, is the higher patience. Patience has three aspects—fearlessness, tolerance and spiritual receptivity. Enduring patience is the highest *tapas*. Buddha said to his disciples that while going through the forest, if any of them were caught by robbers and if they should take a sharp, two-handed saw, and saw him from limb to limb, and if in his mind arose the least thought of ill-will, he would cease to be Buddha's disciple. It is an extreme example of true endurance—free from anger or resentment. Fearlessness is positive mental attitude, an attitude of love. Spiritual Courage stems from such patience. Also, both *Kshanti* and *Virya* are progeny (daughter and son) of dispassion. We become fearless when we develop desirelessness. Lord Buddha says: "From desire arises grief; from desire arises fear. There is no grief for one who is free from desire. Whence, then, can there come fear?"

Virya is Divine will. We do not have to manufacture this energy. Spiritual Courage is not really so much muscle power, rather, it is the surrender of personal will to the Divine Will. Mortal man can gain courage only from his Immortal Spirit so that for the Divine Will to manifest one needs to surrender the personal self. Only he can hope to possess Spiritual Courage who is willing to be guided and assisted by Higher Self.

Will is the colourless force—the force of spirit in action. Will is the spiritual power present in every portion of the Universe. Man alone can give conscious impulse to the force of will. We say, "Behind Will stands Desire." Desire is the mover of the Will. What we consider a strong-willed person is the one with strong and intense desires, which move the will into action for bringing about the wished-for ends. Will is the divine power of the Spirit within—illimitable and exhaustless. We have limited that power by

entertaining small, mean and selfish desires.

Divine Will or Spiritual Will comes into play, when we stop asserting our personal will. We can begin by denying ourselves small whims and fancies during the day. Some people develop will power through various Yoga practices. But development of *Spiritual Will* or *spiritual energy* requires cultivation of unselfishness and readiness to be assisted, guided and instructed by our divine nature. In other words, spiritual will could be developed only when we have learnt to drink, to the last bitter dregs, what the cup of life holds for us, without a murmur, and realize that the adverse and painful circumstances are for our experience and discipline. When we are ready to sacrifice the personal nature then all the power and force of the divine nature becomes available. The more we pay heed to the "Voice of Conscience" within, the greater will be the development of our will.

At Cosmic level there is no difference between desire and will. That is what happens for the spiritually advanced person, who no longer has to control his desire, but his desire flows harmoniously in the direction of his will. For this to happen, Mr. Judge suggests that we must gradually purify our desires and at the same time make our "will" absolute ruler. A time must come when our whole nature must be intent on achieving union with the divine in us. Then "will" begins to work in a different direction independent of desire, becoming free from the domination of desire.

At the higher stage, *Virya* is needed by the disciple to fight the dark forces, the accumulated evil of the whole humanity—the "Dweller of the Threshold." It is the courage that will fight the foe to the end. It is a fight in which no quarter is given or taken. This fearless energy together with compassion of the Adepts forms the Guardian Wall, protecting humanity from further and far greater misery and sorrow.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“PATIENCE SWEET, THAT NOUGHT CAN RUFFLE”

IT WAS several months after little Muriel Carter was born before her parents realized sadly that their little first-born daughter was not quite like other children. Training her in good bodily habits was very difficult but finally successful. Learning to walk was a long, slow process, but she mastered it at last, though she could never run fast without a tumble. Slowly, oh, how slowly, her vocabulary grew until she could express herself in simple words, though it seemed very doubtful whether she could ever learn to read.

By the time her little sister was born Muriel was able to sit at the table and, awkwardly, to use a spoon and fork, though not always without mishaps. She could help her mother dust the furniture and even could set the table, though it took many weeks of trying before she could do it quite properly.

They named the second little daughter “Patience” (“Patty” for short), perhaps in the recognition of the need the little one would have for patience with poor, slow, well-meaning Muriel. Patty’s development was as rapid as Muriel had been slow. Muriel was devoted to her little sister and would hang over her cradle, touching her gently, laying her favourite doll beside her. Little Patience learned to walk early, and with a child’s ready impressibility, the little one quickly acquired her parents’ protective attitude of gentleness and loyalty towards her clumsy, but so well-intentioned and affectionate elder sister.

The children in the neighbourhood were always eager to have Patty share their games. She would not do so, however, unless Muriel went too. Muriel loved to go and would sit quietly watching the children playing and smiling happily at her sister when she looked her way, as she very often did. One day a small boy had thrown his coat on the log where Muriel usually sat and she seated herself upon it without noticing. There were so many things she did not notice! But Johnny saw it and blustered up, telling her

rudely to get up and scolding her for sitting on his coat. In a flash Patty ran to her. No one had ever spoken so to Muriel and she had stood up obediently, her eyes full of tears. Patty slipped her hand comfortingly into Muriel’s and told Johnny firmly, “Don’t you speak like that to my sister! Say ‘Sorry’ or we’ll both go home!”

Johnny mumbled “Sorry,” looking shamefaced as he moved his coat up the log. The Eckhart children who lived at the next bend in the road, were to have a party on Christmas day. The whole neighbourhood knew about it, but when the day came Patty told her mother when they were alone that she didn’t want to go.

“But why not darling? I am sure that you would enjoy the party. Is it that you were not invited?”

“Ye-es, *I* was, Mother, but *we* weren’t.” Her blue eyes blazed. “I told them if Muriel wasn’t wanted I wouldn’t come. Think how hurt she would feel, Mother, if I went and she was left out! And I would have a miserable time thinking about her left at home.”

Just then a knock came at the door. A small boy stood on the doorstep. It was Johnny Eckhart, cap held politely in his hand. “Please Mrs. Carter, we are having a party at our house at three o’clock and we would like to have Patty and Muriel come. We are going to have games and ice-cream and frosted cakes,” he added.

“That will be very nice, Johnny! I am sure the girls will be very happy to come.” What a pleasant flurry it was to get ready and get off, dressed in their best, Muriel happily smiling, Patty flashing at her mother a little smile of triumph!

An unavoidable difficulty had to be faced when Patty was seven and it was time for her to start school.

“No, Muriel dear, Mother needs to have you at home to help her. Patty will have to go alone. You know she is getting to be a big girl. Mother will teach you all she can while Patty is in school, and what fun it will be when she comes home in the afternoon and tells us all that happened and what she has learned; and then next day we will try to learn it too!”

Muriel took her mother’s explanation very quietly, but Muriel

was not the chief problem. Patience was still to be reconciled to the plan. Neither Patience nor her mother was ever to forget the talk they had together that day.

“Why can’t Muriel go to school too, Mother? If I am seven she is even older, lots older! Why shouldn’t she go and learn to read and write and everything, like me?”

“You know, Patty darling, Muriel’s mind is very slow in one way, slow in taking things in; but very restless in another. She can’t keep it on anything long. It flits from one thing to another like a little humming bird. So if she went she could not learn as the other children will, and how unhappy she would feel at the end of the year when she was kept back and you and so many others were promoted! Even if she repeated the year over and over, she could not take the lessons in well enough to go on. She would certainly be kept back, dear. We have to face things as they are.”

Patience was crying. “Why should her mind be like that, Mother,” she quavered, “when she is so dear and sweet?” Her mother shook her head sadly. “It is a sorrow for us all, little daughter! Only very wise people, ‘Those who *know*,’ we are told, can really know in detail how the great Law works, but we can know that always, always, it is just and we all reap what we have sown the seeds of. But Muriel is so dear to all of us, it seems to us that very likely we have all been with her in some other life on earth before this one.”

“Oh yes, Mother!” Patty said earnestly. “We can be happy that she came to us who love her so dearly and we can try to make her life as sunny and pleasant as we can and help her learn all she can take in,” said Mrs. Carter.

Patty nodded her agreement. “I am glad you told me, Mother dear! Maybe,” she said thoughtfully, “if we all keep on loving Muriel and doing all we can to help her, our love might be like a cocoon around her, keeping her all safe and warm. And then some day a butterfly might come out, like the pretty one that came out of the cocoon that we kept and looked at every day!”

Mrs. Carter put her arms around the little girl and held her close. “If we always love her and shield her as much as we possibly can from hurts and unhappiness, who knows what a lovely person may come back with us in some other life, to be happy in sunshine like a butterfly, perhaps, and to make other people happy too! Remember that Patty! It might be that some day, when your father and I get old and have to go away to rest, only after years and years, we hope, you would be left alone to take care of Muriel. I hope you will never feel that Muriel is a burden to you, keeping you from doing what you like and being with whom you like.”

The child’s face was sober at the thought that some day her parents might have left them, but she sat up very straight, exclaiming, “Why, Mother, how could she ever be a burden to me! I love Muriel! I would never want to be with anybody who did not want her too. You need not be afraid, Mother dear. I will be a mother to Muriel if you ever have to leave us!” Her mother put her arms around her and held her silently.

It is under Karma that Ego is drawn to particular parents, family, race and nation. An Ego seeking birth is drawn to a family for one or more of the following reasons:

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

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

LIVING THE HIGHER LIFE—II

LET US consider what eclecticism means, and what the eclecticism of the *Gita* is. As we know, in the universe all things have different aspects. We have six directions or six points of view even in our material world, viz., East, West, North, South, Zenith and Nadir, in connection with an object. The same truth applies to subjective or metaphysical things. We can present six aspects of one truth, and have seventh point of view which is always the synthetic point of view, combining the six aspects or points of view. Great messages present one or the other of the six points of view, as seen in six Schools of Indian Philosophy. However, there are also great cycles in the history of mankind when it becomes possible for the teacher to give the synthesis of these six aspects of truth. Such was the time of Krishna, or of Ammonius Saccas*, and in our own time and world, of Madame Blavatsky. The work and task of Madame Blavatsky was the task of pointing out the synthesis of six different aspects of truth. The *Gita*, Madame Blavatsky says, is pre-eminently an inner and esoteric book, because it points to the esoteric point of view in philosophy and religion. In fact, with the exception of one of the Upanishads, the *Gita* is the only available book in the public world pointing out the existence of this esoteric system of

*Editor's Note: Ammonius Saccas and his disciples were Alexandrian philosophers who started the Eclectic Theosophical system. Eclectic literally means selecting one's belief from various sources, not being attached to any particular school of philosophy. The chief aim of the Founders of the Eclectic Theosophical School was to reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities. They interpreted "all sacred legends and narratives, myths and mysteries, by a rule or principle of analogy and correspondence: so that events which were related as having occurred in the external world were regarded as expressing operations and experiences of the human soul." (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 1-3)

thought which combines all the various aspects of truth. The message of the *Gita* is universal. Any one belonging to any time, race or creed, can derive help for the living of the practical daily existence from this great book.

The Eclecticism of this book is of course dealt in a symbolical and allegorical form; always the esoteric aspect is given in symbols to the world. Mr. Judge in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* and in his preface to his own translation of the *Gita*, points out to the fact that we can read the *Gita* and find several different applications, for symbols have the six aspects of the truth and can also be applied to the seventh or the synthetic one. Now when we read the *Gita* and try to understand the symbolical language in which it is written, we find the most useful application in the meaning of the Sanskrit words themselves. Take, for instance, the very names given to Arjuna, the chela of Krishna, the disciple who is listening to this wonderful dissertation of philosophy. He has eleven names, all conveying deep significance to those who understand the Sanskrit language, but one of them is the very word "Nara," meaning "Man," which clearly points to the fact that the *Gita* can be applied to Man, that the story of the *Mahabharata* is the story of the evolution of mankind, and this one episode marks a definite stage in the evolution of Man, the stage when he wakes up to the fact that there is a Divine Spark, a Divine Self in himself, and consciously strives to discover that, and unite himself to the Divine Self, and thus unite with the Universal Self, because the Spiritual Self is the same One Indivisible Principle. If this story of Man can be applied to the life of the man who has awakened to spiritual perceptions, its value is as applicable today as 5000 years ago.

It can be used today as then. The greatest mistake perhaps that has been made with regard to the teachings of the *Gita* by Western Orientalists is that of thinking that the teaching demands of any man who desires to practise it, absolute outward renunciation and isolation from the rest of the world; and it is claimed that if people of the West were to take it up as the people in the East have done in

past ages, then the duties that we have in the West would be abandoned, and we would become ascetic wanderers in the forest in complete isolation from our fellowmen. Such an interpretation arises out of the fact that only the words have been read and misunderstood and the soul side has been forgotten. The *Gita* emphasizes exactly the opposite idea.

The *Gita* teaches the religion of duty, the performance of every duty with the right spiritual attitude. To live the higher life is not the question of outward renunciation and separation from the rest of the world, but that the Higher Life simply means performance of everyday duties in our own daily life. In the philosophy of Theosophy we know that mere outward observance is not half as powerful as the motive behind the action, and the inner attitude in the performance of duties. It is a question of mental abnegation that is required for the living of the Higher Life, a question of isolation in the sense that you see yourself as separate from your personality, and are able to face the problems of life as a Spiritual Spectator, and you do not get involved in the likes and dislikes, sense perceptions and the sensations that arise out of the personal deeds you have to perform. On the other hand, you can be separated from the world in the real physical sense, and yet be absolutely bound by passion and desire, longing for what you are not able to perform, for you have resolved to live the Spiritual Life. A man may have innumerable duties as a householder, businessman, citizen, but if he has the right inner attitude, the real detachment from the personal side of life, he can be living the spiritual life. It can be lived by any man in any station of life at any time and does not require any outward change in circumstances or environment, and this is important to emphasize, since that great mistake has been made in reference to the *Gita*. People think that to live the Higher Life they must come to a certain stage where they will possess powers of a psychic or spiritual nature where they will know laws in Nature and be able to do things that other people are not able to do; but this is not so, when the true spiritual life is taken

into account.

Another very important point is that we must first try to understand what is the Universal Principle expounded in the *Gita*, and then only make our application. We have to practise and apply the universal principles that we have already grasped and understood. If we begin to live the Higher Life, and begin to try and find out ways and means of solving our own personal problems without keeping in mind the universal aspect of the teaching, we are bound to fail in finding the solution and forget the universal aspect which is our spiritual essence. To live the Higher Life then requires knowledge. The spiritual life that the *Gita* helps us to live is that life which begins with the man, conscious of the fact that there is in him a source of knowledge, of immutable and eternal knowledge, which he can apply to his own life. When we want to be good and merely feel the best in us, we are not necessarily being spiritual beings. We become spiritual when we realize that our senses alone, that our intellect alone, are not sufficient to guide us. In other words, when we realize fully that our personality is an illusion as compared to the higher aspects of our nature, and when we decide for ourselves that we are going to abide by the higher spiritual rules and try to control, subdue, and restrain this personality in us, and intellectually recognize the fact that there is the spiritual Self, and therefore the philosophy of the Spirit, the highest possible philosophy, and act on it, this is the first step to begin to live the spiritual life.

We may for years, for lives, study the *Gita*, grasp all its intellectual concepts, know by heart even the construction of the book, be able to recite the eighteen chapters or discourses of the book, and yet not grasp *in spirit* the conception of what is meant by the spiritual life. To approach the Soul of this book it is necessary to understand at what stage in our evolution this message is given to us. We shall see as we study, discourse after discourse, what the position of Arjuna is. He is not an ordinary man in the sense of a man who has not yet realized the Spirit in himself. Arjuna is that

man who has already found out that there is something beyond the senses, emotions, feelings and mind or intellect. In the world today there are innumerable men and women who have not seen that there is something beyond the intellect so much prized in the West. Arjuna has recognized his Spiritual Self, the unity of his Spiritual Self with the Universal Self, and has decided to enter upon the Spiritual Path and fight his own personality, and this is the story of the great fight that is recorded in the *Gita*. Vyasa may use a war that had taken place between the two houses of Bharata—Pandavas and Kauravas—and around this build his teaching. This war took place in India, but Vyasa only uses the historical basis as a means to convey and revive the great teaching of the Teacher, Krishna, and when we study the first discourse, we shall see that there is no better position than the position Vyasa gave to it in the *Mahabharata*. We shall also appreciate the fact that a great war is taking place when the philosophical discussion commences, but it does not interfere with the beauty and purity of the poem, but in fact it helps us to understand more deeply and better its spiritual significance.

Editor's Note: Some of the names by which Arjuna is addressed by Shri Krishna in the *Gita* are highly significant.

(1) *Arjuna* means "white." White is colour of inward and outward purity, devoid of stain. Arjuna is said to be of fair complexion and his actions were always without blemish.

(2) *Son of Pandu*: Though Arjuna was son of Indra, he is also addressed in the *Gita* as "Son of Pandu" and Pandu means white, because Pandu is the son of princess Ambalika and rishi Ved Vyasa. The princess turned pale at the touch of the rishi, giving birth to pale-skinned child, Pandu. Pandu is called earthly father of the Pandavas, including Arjuna. But Arjuna is said to be born to Kunti by Lord Indra, using magic formula, given to her by sage Durvasa. Indra represents Cosmic principle Mahat, and the fifth human principle *Manas* (mind) in its dual aspect, says H.P.B. Hence Arjuna represents human soul which can rise up to divine nature

(*Buddhi*) or allow itself to be dragged down by *Kama* principle, passions and desires. Probably that might explain Arjuna's being son of Indra and Pandu.

(3) *Partha* or *Son of Pritha*: Arjuna is most frequently addressed in the *Gita* as Partha or "Son of Pritha." Pritha's father was Surasena, but she was given in adoption to the childless King Kuntibhoja, and after him she came to be known as Kunti. Pritha literally means "palm of the hand." But she is also called *Pritha-rani* or *Pandavarani*, i.e., *Pandavarani*. "As Aditi is called *Surarani* (the matrix or "mother" of the *sura* gods), so Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, is called in *Mahabharata Pandavarani*—which term is already *physiologized*" (*S.D.*, II, 527). *Arani* means mother and it also means the piece of wood taken from the sacred tree, used for kindling fire by friction. She represents the mystical wood from which three Pandava (fires) are struck out or generated. Perhaps it would be useful to remember that the vedic sutras mention that by rapidly turning the stick in the socket, first heat and then fire was produced. The stick was called *Pramantha*, the disc was called *Arani*, and they represent spirit and matter (or *Prakriti*) which contains the essence of all created things. H.P.B. mentions an allegory in the *Vayu Purâna* and others, which tell us that Nemi, the son of Ikshwaku, had left no successor, and that the Rishis, fearing to leave the earth without a ruler, introduced the king's body into the socket of an *aranî* and produced from it a prince named Janaka. (*S.D.*, II, 524 fn.)

We are told that our earth and man are products of three Fires, electric fire (*Pavaka*), the Solar fire (*Suchi*) and the fire produced by friction (*Pavamana*), and these correspond on cosmic and human plane to Spirit, Soul and Body. In the physical sense, "fire produced by friction" relates to the *creative spark*, or *germ*, which fructifies and generates the human being. (*S.D.*, II, 247)

(4) *Son of Bharata* (5) *Best of Kurus* (6) *Son of Kunti*: *Surya* and *Chandra* or Solar and Lunar are two distinct races into which the ancient Hindus were divided—the *Brahmanas* and the *Kshatriyas* are generally traced to them. A *Suryavanshee* is one who claims descent from the lineage headed by Ikshvaku. While Rama belonged to the Ayodhya Dynasty of the *Suryavansa*, Krishna belonged to the line of Yadu of the lunar race, or the *Chandravansa*, and so did emperor Bharat, and Kuru—the

ancestors of Pandavas and Kauravas. Bharat was an early ancestor of both the Pandavas and Kauravas who fought each other in a great war, and after his name India was called *Bharata-varsha*, and the *Mahabharata* sometimes is referred to as “the great story of India.” Prince Kuntibhoja was a Yadava prince, belonging to lunar race, who adopted Kunti. Thus, Arjuna is *Chandravamsi*, belonging to Lunar Race.

In Occultism, man is called a *solar-lunar* being, solar in his higher triad, and lunar in his quaternary. Moreover, it is the Sun who imparts his light to the Moon, in the same way as the human *triad* sheds its divine light on the mortal shell of sinful man. Life celestial quickens life terrestrial. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

(7) *Mahabaho* or *great-armed* or *mighty-armed*: It probably indicates that physical strength and effort can bring success only when we channel our energy with the utmost attention and awareness, guided by knowledge. “Strength when destitute of the ruling aid of wisdom is overcome by stupid astonishment confusing all things together,” writes Mr. Judge. A true warrior is one who can fight the battle in the inner world, gaining victory over his passions and desires, without yielding to the arrows of attachments which fly from all directions.

(8) *Parantapa* or “*harasser of foes*”: In the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita* Krishna says that the imperishable “yoga” was taught from one unto another, and being passed on by a line of Divine Kings, in the course of time, the mighty art was lost, “O harasser of thy foes.” Why? In Arjuna’s name, *Parantapa*, we have the answer. Arjuna is the human soul, whose foes are of his own household, *viz.*, the senses and all that emanates from them. When the human Ego begins to harass his foes then only he begins to tread the Inner Path, and subduing the outer, he opens the inner eye to see what is Revealed, the inner ear to hear the Word spoken, the Vedas chanted, explains Shri B. P. Wadia.

(9) *Gudakesha*, or “one who has conquered sleep,”—the sleep of ignorance. In the Eleventh Chapter of the *Gita*, Arjuna is addressed as *Gudakesha*. He is given the divine eye to see the *Viswaroopa*, or the Vision of Cosmic Divine Form containing all forms. It is easy to see mud in every pot, but a special eye (subtle insight) is needed to see all pots in the mud, and only then it is proved that “mud is the essence of all pots.” Arjuna, who was ignorant of Krishna’s majesty, was made aware

of grandeur and glory of the Lord when he saw resting in the Divine Form of Krishna (primordial substance) all the forms and the whole universe—to see the Self in all things, and all things in Self.

(10) *Dhananjaya* or “Conqueror of wealth”: He is conqueror and despiser of wealth—worldly and other-worldly, which implies cultivation of detachment and resignation. “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven,” said Jesus. Arjuna is addressed as *Dhananjaya* in the Second Chapter, as he is told to practise the yoga of equal-mindedness, being able to maintain tranquillity of mind in facing the pairs of opposites—pain and pleasure, victory and defeat, gain and loss, which calls for detachment. “All that can be gotten out of wealth, or beauty, or art, or pleasure, are merely pools of water found along the path as it wanders through desert of life.... We are... able to use them for our good and that of others just so long as the Law leaves them to us; but when that superior power removes them, we must say: ‘It is just what I in fact desired.’... All the passing shows of life, whether fraught with disaster or full of fame and glory, are teachers.... And the only way to learn from them is through heart’s resignation; for when we become in heart completely poor, we at once are the treasurers and disbursers of enormous riches,” writes Mr. Judge.

(11) *Savyasachi* or *Both-armed-one* or *Ambidextrous*: Arjuna was a wonderful and skillful archer, who could use his bow Gandiva, with either hand equally well. Archery may be regarded as a powerful symbol of attaining the goal of self-realization through perfect concentration. Gandiva was the special bow of Arjuna given to him by God Varuna. In a sense, every person is his own bow and in order to reach the goal, his personal nature must meet the spiritual requirements. Since left and right hand are governed by right and left brain respectively, probably ambidextrous hints at equal development of right and left brain or blending of Head and Heart. The left brain is the seat of order, logic, analysis, while the right brain is the seat of creativity, spirituality, aesthetics, and intuition.

(Concluded)

SANKARACHARYA'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

I

SANKARACHARYA—Sankara the Teacher—was a grand successor of Gautama the Buddha, and has been described by H.P.B. as “an Adept of Adepts.” In his article, *Sankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic*, (*The Theosophist*, December 1879), Shri K. T. Telang, the great Hindu reformer and scholar from Bombay, writes that Sankaracharya was considered an incarnation of the Deity because our human nature being conscious of its weakness and imperfection, is prone to deify the person who exemplifies its higher aspirations; “as though the keeping of him on the human plane made other men seem meaner and more little by contrast.” As a result we find that Sankara’s biographers have apotheosised their hero, showing that his birth was presaged by the heavenly vision of Mahadeva to his father Sivaguru, and the account of his life is full of unexplainable miraculous happenings.

In his article “Sankaracharya’s Date and Doctrine,” T. Subba Row mentions that modern scholars vary widely from each other in fixing the date when Sankaracharya flourished, and these dates vary between second century B.C. and eighth century A.D. The exact date is assigned to Sankaracharya by Tibetan and Indian Initiates. According to the historical information in their possession he was born in the year 510 B.C. (51 years and 2 months after the date of Buddha’s *nirvana*). Subba Row believes that satisfactory evidence in support of this date can be obtained in India if the inscriptions at Kanchipuram, Sringeri, Jagannatha, Benares, Kashmir and various other places visited by Sankara are properly deciphered. Sankara built Kanchipuram which is considered as one of the most ancient towns in Southern India, and it may be possible to ascertain the time of its construction. There are several biographies of Sankaracharya known as *Sankara Vijayas*, and Subba Row cautions, thus: “It is our humble opinion that the *Sankara Vijayas* hitherto published can be relied upon as far as

they are consistent with each other regarding the general outlines of Sankara’s life. We cannot, however, place any reliance whatever upon Anandagiri’s *Sankara Vijaya* published at Calcutta. The Calcutta edition not only differs in some very material points from the manuscript copies of the same work found in Southern India but is opposed to every other *Sankara Vijaya* hitherto examined. It is quite clear from its style and some of the statements contained therein that it was not the production of Anandagiri, one of the four chief disciples of Sankara and the commentator on his *Upanishad Bhashyam*.... Vidyaranya’s *Sankara Vijaya* is decidedly the most reliable source of information as regards the main features of Sankara’s biography.”

Seven cities competed for the honour of having produced Homer, so also five different localities are mentioned as Sankara’s birthplace, by five different biographers, though Sringeri is commonly believed to be his birthplace. It is said that Sankara displayed a most wonderful precocity, as in the first year of life he learnt Sanskrit language, in the second year he learned to read, at the age of three he studied the *Kavyas* and *Puranas*, and understood many portions of them by intuition. We would not consider this fanciful or far-fetched, once we know the real nature of the being called Sankaracharya. In the article, “The Meaning of Jivanmukta,” H.P.B. writes that Sankaracharya along with Krishna was an *Avatara* while Buddha was an *incarnation*. An *avatara* is not born of flesh, *i.e.*, of mother’s womb, but uses borrowed body. In case of *incarnation* there is birth through mother’s womb and in the womb there is passing through all the *Vikaras* or changes (from mineral to vegetable to animal to man), and then as a child he has to go through school training, learn language, philosophy and then later pass through chelaship and various initiations as was the case with Jesus. An *avatara purusha* does not have to go through this training and initiations.

After learning *Itihasa*, *Puranas*, *Mahabharata* and *Smriti*, he returned home in his seventh year. It is said that one day his mother

fainted on account of overpowering debility produced due to severe austerities performed by her for obtaining a son, and also on account of heat. Sankara brought her back to consciousness, and he is said to have re-routed the course of the river, so that his old mother would not have to walk a long distance to the river for her daily ablutions.

At the age of eight he decided to live the life of a *Sannyasi*. Normally, every individual has to pass through four *ashrams* or stages of life, wherein he arrives at the stage of detached living or *Vanaprastha Ashram* after having passed through the stages of student and householder. Renunciation and Asceticism (*Sannyasa*) is only the last stage. When a person wishes to retire from the life of a householder to pursue the higher goal, he invariably has to take consent of his parents and promise to assist the parents and family members. The language generally used in making such promises is: "Whenever mother, father, sister and brothers, any of you think of me in your hour of need, wherever or whatever I may be, I solemnly promise to lend you a helping hand." In keeping with this tradition Sankaracharya sought consent of his mother to live the life of a *Sannyasi*. His mother, however, was not ready to give permission. One day, while bathing in a river Sankara's foot was caught by an alligator, and he cried so loudly that his mother came running to the spot. Sankaracharya told her that the alligator would not let go of his foot till she gave her consent to her son to become an ascetic. The mother was forced to agree. Sankaracharya came out of the river and then entrusted his mother to the cares of his relatives, promising her that he would come back to her whenever she needed him.

It is believed that a person named Govinda Yogi was Sankara's guru, but it is not generally known that this Yogi was in fact Patanjali—the great author of the *Mahabhashya* and the *Yoga Sutras*—under a new name. T. Subba Row draws our attention to certain verses of the fifth chapter of Vidyananya's biography of Sankara, which show that Govinda Yogi and Patanjali were

identical. According to the immemorial custom observed amongst initiates Patanjali assumed the name of Govinda Yogi at the time of his initiation by Gaudapada. Thus, Gaudapada was Sankara's *Paraguru*, i.e., his *guru's guru*.

Sankaracharya is said to have written commentaries or *bhasyas* on the *Brahma Sutras*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Sanatsujatiya*. While teaching his pupils, Sankaracharya met many adversaries, but always in debate with them on abstruse metaphysics, Sankara came off victorious. In the *Sankaradigvijaya* by Madhava (VIII, 34) there is a story about how Sankara outwitted Saraswati, the goddess of secret sciences and wisdom. It appears that Sankara was looking for someone who would undertake the work of writing *vartikas* (sub-commentaries) on his *bhasyas*. Kumarila Bhatt, the expounder of Purva Mimamsa system of Indian philosophy suggested the name of Mandan Misra for that purpose. There was an animated and acrimonious discussion between Sankara and Mandan Misra, and they decided to make the wife of Mandan Misra the judge. Sankara won the debate and as was agreed, the loser had to abandon the domestic life and become an ascetic. The wife of Mandan Misra, who was considered to be an incarnation of Saraswati, the goddess of Wisdom, decided to depart to other world, but Sankara wished to hold a debate with her. Again, Sankara was able to answer all the questions, so finally, Saraswati asked him a question on the *science of love*. Sankara was unable to answer it at once, being a *Sannyasi* and a celibate all his life. He asked for one month's time to find the answer.

(To be continued)

RESOLUTIONS will never do us any good if we do not sustain them. A mere desire will never get us anywhere. We have to maintain the desire; we have to stick to the resolution. We have to exact our will, and cleave to the object of that will throughout.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

THE SCIENCE OF ALCHEMY

*Know the world from end to end is a mirror;
 In each atom a hundred suns are concealed.
 If you pierce the heart of a single drop of water,
 From it will flow a hundred clear oceans;
 If you look intently at each speck of dust,
 In it you will see a thousand beings,
 A gnat in its limbs is like an elephant;
 In name a drop of water resembles the Nile,
 In the heart of a barley-corn is stored an hundred harvests,
 Within a millet-seed a world exists,
 In an insect's wing is an ocean of life,
 A heaven is concealed in the pupil of an eye,
 The core in the centre of the heart is small,
 Yet the Lord of both worlds will enter there.*

—SA'D UD DIN MAHMUD SHABISTARI

ALCHEMY, or Arabic *Ul-Khemi*, is the chemistry of nature. A major endeavour of the Alchemists was to convert base metals—say for example Lead—into a nobler one such as Gold. Modern chemistry recognizes that Lead can be transmuted to gold, but not by chemical means. Nuclear transmutation is capable of such achievements, but the costs being prohibitive, the exercise is deemed not worth it. Putting aside the question of whether alchemical processes could convert Lead into Gold, we must enquire what these metals symbolized to the alchemist-philosopher. We find the following explanation in the French alchemist Théodore Henri's work, *Alchemical Catechism*:

“Q. When the Philosophers speak of gold and silver, from which they extract their matter, are we to suppose that they refer to the vulgar gold and silver?”

“A. By no means; vulgar silver and gold are dead, while those of the Philosophers are full of life.”

Similarly, Heinrich Khunrath, the early 17th century alchemist, viewed the process of transmutation as occurring within the soul of the alchemist. Like the true philosopher of all ages, the true alchemist too spurned riches and dedicated his life to purification of his heart. We find similar sentiments being expressed by H.P.B.

Disdaining the rewards of petty traffic, spurning wealth, luxury, pomp, and worldly power, they aspired to knowledge as the most satisfying of all acquisitions. They esteemed poverty, hunger, toil, and the evil report of men, as none too great a price to pay for its achievement. (*Isis*, I, 67)

It was not the earthly gold that attracted them, but the true “gold”—the knowledge of, and the process of, merging with one's spiritual and immortal nature. Lead, the base metal, symbolized the lower, personal desires and proclivities. This “lower mind,” they said, when controlled and made subservient to the purposes of the divine conscience within, has the power to transform a man into God. The institution of *Mysteries* during ancient times had five steps of initiation. The fifth and final step being “friendship and interior communion with God,” the first one was called “previous purification.” The Alchemist rejected the terrestrial, and sought the celestial by purifying his heart. The body and its desires and comforts were entirely rejected. This is poetically explained by Sri Shankara thus:

He who wishes to realise the Atman through the indulgence of the body is akin to the one who wishes to cross a river on the back of a crocodile thinking it is a log of wood. For the seeker of liberation, attachment to the body is the great death. He alone deserves liberation who is free from this attachment. (*Vivekachudamani*, verses 86, 87).

This transmutation of one's animal nature to Human, and subsequently the latter to Divine nature, was the primary purpose of life. Paracelsus declared that man and the universe are composed of “Three Substances”—Salt, Sulphur and Mercury. The chemist

recognizes only the physical nature and material body as real, whereas the alchemist recognizes material body as the lowest, most transitory aspect of man. This lower aspect is symbolized by “Salt,” because Salt represents the principle of fixity and solidification. Beyond body is a complex, psychic nature of man. While this psychical nature is seen by the chemist and biologist as a byproduct of chemical and neurological mechanism of the brain, the alchemist recognized psychic nature as superior to physical nature.

Mercury, being malleable and having lustre, was the symbol used to represent this second aspect. Thus, alchemy was named *Rasavaatam* in ancient India, meaning “the way of Mercury.” Like water, mercury takes the shape of object it is contained in. Mind, like mercury, takes the colour and characteristic of the subject or object it is directed to, and hence the injunction to watch and purify one’s thoughts and feelings.

The final and the only permanent aspect of man—his Divine aspect—was represented by Sulphur. Sulphur was taken by the alchemists to represent the principle of combustion. Sulphur is bright yellow in colour, and has an etymological root meaning “to burn.” Our Divine nature, when afforded the opportunity, “burns” the impurities arising from ignorance, and the bright yellow light of wisdom shines through our heart.

Mind is the balancing point between Spirit and Matter. It is our thoughts and ideas which make or mar our ability to apprehend truth. As explained by Manu, “Mind alone is the cause for the bondage and the liberation of men. Attachment to objects of sense through the mind makes for bondage, while withdrawal from them leads to liberation.”

We are placed between truth and untruth: the higher, altruistic nature being truth, and the lower, selfish nature being falsehood. The purpose of life is to so train our mind that it is liberated entirely from the trammels of falsehood and illusion, and remains in ceaseless contemplation of reality. This needs thorough purification of the mind from the impurities of illusion arising from ignorance

of the true nature of our real Self.

This purification of mind from the darkness of ignorance and making it shine and reflect the sun of truth, was symbolically referred to as the transmutation of Lead into Gold. Alchemists also mention the Philosopher’s stone, and extol its ability to turn base metals into gold. It is said that the Philosopher’s Stone also has the power to remove all seeds of disease. A Rosicrucian treatise says: “if you separate the pure from the impure you will have the stone of the Philosophers.” Sri Shankara says, “By attaining to a state of *Yogaarudha* by firm knowledge of Brahman, let one raise one’s impure mind steeped in the ocean of *Samsara*, by one’s pure mind.” The symbology is evident: Our divine aspect has the power to liberate us from all seeds of disease—ignorance and selfishness.

There is no purifier compared to spiritual knowledge, says Sri Krishna in the Third Chapter of the *Gita*. Neither rituals, nor religious works can liberate man from the bonds of ignorance; the fire of Spiritual Knowledge—*Jnana*—alone, and nothing else, can burn away, as it were, the dross of the lower self, and make it fit to be assimilated to the Higher Self, the Gold of the Alchemist. A few verses from *Vivekachudamani*, or “Crest Jewel of Wisdom” will help in understanding the importance of knowledge:

Let one read the Sastras, sacrifice to the gods, perform karmas or meditate on the divinities; liberation will not arise even after hundreds of brahmakalpas without knowledge of the unity of atman. (6)

If a person merely repeats the name of the medicine without drinking it, he is not cured of his disease. So too, a person is not released by merely uttering the word Brahman without direct realization of it. (64)

It is said that “this world is an enigmatic mirror of pure truth.” According to modern chemistry, the atomic number of Lead is 82, and that of Gold is 79. In other words, Lead is Gold but for the 3 extra protons. Once these “three protons” are released, Lead is Gold. What are these protons? Maybe Krishna has the answer to it

when he says in the Sixteenth Chapter of the *Gita* that there are 3 gates of hell: Desire, Anger, Covetousness. Once these are overcome, “Lead” is transmuted to “Gold” and human man is transmuted to Divine Man or God.

The lower self has to die in order to reach eternal life. The Sufis speak of *Fana*—Annihilation, as a step which precedes the last step in the spiritual journey, which is *Baqa*—Immortality. Persian poet Farid-ud-Din Attar wrote an allegorical work called *Mantiq-ut-Tayr* (The Conference of the Birds). He traces the journey of the soul through the world of matter, and its final merging with the source from which it emerged—the Divine Spirit. Thirty birds, representing individual souls, hear about the King Bird—*Simurgh*. They are enchanted by what they hear about *Simurgh* and resolve to reach the palace of *Simurgh* overcoming all odds. The journey is as interesting as the climax of the work. One can do no better than quote the poet who describes what happens when the birds actually meet *Simurgh*—a transmutation which is the highest and noblest goal of Alchemy. Thus:

When they [the birds]...gazed at both [themselves and Simurgh] in a single glance, they were convinced that they and the Simurgh formed in reality only one Being. This single Being was the Simurgh, and the Simurgh this Being. That one was this and this one was that. Look where they would, in whatever direction, it was only the Simurgh they saw.

Simurgh speaks: “All that you have known and seen is neither that which you have known nor that which you have seen....As for Me, I am more than thirty birds. I am the very essence of the Simurgh. Annihilate yourselves in Me joyfully and gloriously so that you find yourselves in Me.” Thereupon, the birds lost themselves for ever in the Simurgh. The shade thus vanished in the Sun. Neither the traveller remained, nor the guide, nor the path. Finding the Simurgh they found themselves and the riddle of I and Thou was solved.

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: What is Theosophical explanation of *Chakras*? Why is there so little mentioned in Theosophical literature on *Chakras*?

Answer: The concept of *Chakra* originates in Hindu texts, mainly found in tantric and yogic traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. *Chakra* is the Sanskrit word for wheel. They are wheel-like vortices believed to exist in the the subtle body or astral body, which is the model for the physical body. Because autopsies do not reveal *chakras*, most people think they are a fancy of fertile imagination. In the article, “Mesmerism” Mr. Judge explains that just as physical body has a spine and brain, the astral body also has spine and brain. Our material organs, bones and tissues are undergoing change each instant. The inner, astral or subtle form and the astral brain undergo very little change.

In the physical body the nerves originate from physical brain and spine. So also, in the astral body, the inner brain and spine are the centres from which the nerves ramify in all directions. They are more of the nature of currents than nerves and may be called *astro-nerves*. They move in relation to important centres in the physical body, such as, heart, the pit of the throat, umbilical centre, spleen etc. There are also three great nerves in astro-spinal column—positive, negative and neutral—which may be looked upon as channels of magnetic fluids, and it is important for these to remain in balance for the sanity of the person. These three great nerves are described in exoteric literature as three *nadis*. In the above description given by Mr. Judge, we are given a hint to understand the *chakras*. In exoteric literature *Chakras* are described

as energy centers along the spine beginning at the base of the spinal column and moving upward to the top of the skull. As the three great nerves or *nadis*, mentioned above, run along the spinal column in a curved path they cross one another several times. At the points of intersection they form strong energy centers known as *chakras*. A *Chakra* is a plexus, a centre where two or more nerves meet. There are seven such major *chakras*, of which the one at the base of the spine is called *Muladhar chakra* or Sacral plexus and the one in the navel area is called Solar plexus and the highest is called *Sahasrara chakra* at the top of the head. Regarding Solar plexus it is said that it is the brain of the stomach, and emotions are felt there, owing to the correspondence with *Kama*. Psychic clairvoyant perception often acts in this region, as in the reading of letters, psychometrizing substances, etc.

The reason why Theosophy does not give out details of *chakras* is that it is related to astral body and pranic currents, and any disturbance created by psychic practices can easily lead to psychic imbalance. Another reason is that *chakras* are closely related to arousing of the *Kundalini Sakti*. *Kundalini* is the power or energy which is said to lie at the base of the spine in *Muladhar chakra*. Once awakened, this energy goes on breaking through the *chakras*, causing various levels of realization and obtaining of occult powers. In Hatha Yoga there are various preparatory practices of *asanas* and *pranayamas* before the awakening of *Kundalini*, which is described in *The Voice of the Silence* as “World Mother.” *Buddhi* as a vehicle of *Atma* is a passive principle. However, when *Buddhi* is activated it gives rise to one of the mystic yogic powers, an electro-spiritual force called *Kundalini*, a creative power which when aroused into action can *as easily kill as it can create*. It is the Power, which rises into the sixth, the middle region, the place between the eyes (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 10 fn.). It is very easy to get tempted to awaken this *sakti* through various practices even before attaining inward purification. When one attempts it prematurely, without a proper guide, without inner purification, it

is bound to result in ruining of psychic health, losing of psychic balance, besides the danger of falling into mediumship. Since astral, inner man is inextricably connected with the physical man, as explained by Mr. Judge, any disturbance in the astral body and pranic currents are bound to produce deleterious effects on the physical. There is no short-cut to self-realization. The emphasis of Theosophy is on living the altruistic life. As the *Voice of the Silence* says, “To live to benefit mankind is the first step, to practise the six glorious [transcendental, divine] virtues is the second.”

Question: Do “names” have any significance? Do they have any impact on the personality or destiny of the person?

Answer: What is in a name? A rose is a rose by any other name, said Shakespeare, and yet names do have significance. Parents take great care in choosing names for their children, and often name their children after names of gods and goddesses or heroes, with the hope that the child would show forth those qualities. “Does the meaning of your name impact the type of person you are? I am not sure, but I do believe it reveals the kind of person your parents wanted you to become. People spend lifetimes trying to live up to the meaning of their given names. How can you be ‘*Anwasha*’ and not ‘search for perfection’? How can you be called ‘*Bhagwan*’ and not try to be ‘God-like’?” writes Vinita Nangia. H.P.B. points out that every name carries about with it invisible, secret, but very potential influence and “leaveth wherever it goeth.” Personal names have often ancient and even a deeply philosophical as well as a symbolic basis is well known to any student of etymology.

Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy points out that the connection of the word with its meaning is not due to convention, but is by nature inherent in the word itself. The spoken word (*vach*) and its meaning (*artha*) are inextricably bound together, even as Parvati and Parameshwara. H.P.B. points out that we are not aware of the forces or powers latent in sound. “Names (and words) are either BENEFICENT or MALEFICENT; they are, in a certain sense, either venomous or health-giving, according to the hidden influence attached by a

Supreme Wisdom to their elements, that is to say, to the LETTERS which compose them, and the NUMBERS correlative to those letters” (*S.D.*, I, 94). “There are words which have a destructive quality in their very syllables, as though objective things” (*Isis*, II, 411). Vinita Nangia remarks that when infant mortality rate was high, parents were scared of losing their children, particularly sons, and so to ward off the evil eye, they would name their sons, “Kaala” or “Kaalia,” meaning black. In numerology every letter of alphabet is connected to a number and therefore, when numbers of the letters in a name are added we get a number, which is supposed to determine impact of the name on the destiny of the person. For instance, some numerologists say that when India was called “Bharat,” the name added up to number 23, and the country was prosperous, but when it was called India, it adds up to number 28, which signifies rise and setback over and over again!

It is but obvious that there is great significance attached to names of gods and goddesses. For instance, there are one thousand names of Vishnu. Constant remembrance of the name of the Deity is called *namasmarana*, and it is considered to have a purifying effect on mind, elevating the consciousness and enabling the mind to turn inward. In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (pp. 100-101), Mr. Judge writes that the disciple must learn to do every act with the Divine in view, and see the divine in everything. It is said in the *Brihad Nundekeshwar Purana* that “while taking medicine one should think of Vishnu or the all-pervading...while travelling to foreign land, of Trivikrama, at the time of death, of Narayana...in the midst of a forest of Narasingha...and in all acts, of Madhava.” Mr. Judge writes that all these names of Vishnu represent his various powers and appearances. We would do well to keep alive in us the memory of various aspects of divinity, which are also present in us as various powers and potentialities, as we pass through this dense forest of existence. Then we would never feel helpless and miserable, so as to look outside of us for salvation.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

It is being increasingly accepted that the future of health care lies in the fusion of Allopathy with alternative therapies, giving rise to a system that will treat each patient holistically and uniquely. This shift seems to be on account of realization that Allopathy only healed symptoms, because it dealt only with body and hence, did not go deep enough to the cause, and thus ignored the fact that a human being is a continuum of the body, mind and spirit. Over last 25 years there has been a steady exodus of patients towards holistic therapies. According to spiritual texts, the human being is made up of five sheaths, *viz.*, food sheath or physical body—being grossest sheath, with four subtler sheaths—the life-force sheath, the mind sheath, wisdom sheath and bliss sheath. Before an ailment affects our physical body, it first affects the more subtle bodies. Integrated healing system recognizes that for complete wellness we must heal all the sheaths or body, mind and spirit.

Speaking at the International Conference on “Spirituality in Healthcare,” 2009, Dr. Mia Leijssen from Belgium expressed that “the older I grow, the more I experience ‘love’ as the most powerful healer of the suffering soul....A healing process includes the physical, social, and psychological dimensions over time, while the ultimate healing seems to come from an opening up to the spiritual dimension, a resource beyond that of our own will, a self-transcendent source.”

Dr. Pramod Tripathi from B. J. Medical College, Pune, is of the opinion that conventional medicines are very useful in acute conditions, but when the root cause, such as, wrong diet and lifestyle is tackled, and the person is put on the natural path, the need for modern medicine is drastically reduced or eliminated. Dr. Yugandhar GR, a Hyderabad-based general surgeon, and a practitioner of integrated healing is of the view that acute emotional problems like anger, hatred, fear, stemming from imbalanced emotional health, gradually pave the way for chronic ailments like

diabetes, hypertension, etc. Diseases turn chronic because the underlying cause is not addressed. He says, “If we want to be really healthy, we must work on our psychological software.” He suggests that complementary therapies should be focused on the *preventive* aspect of health rather than its *therapeutic* aspects.

The World United Doctors’ and Healers’ Association (TWUDHA), India, is a platform where well-known doctors and healers from across the globe gather to give shape to the idea of Integrated Healing. The aim is to reduce unnecessary heavy medications and its side-effects. “As patients also join hands with their healers in taking responsibility for their health, the focus will shift to prevention rather than intervention,” writes Punya Srivastava. (*Life Positive*, November 2014)

There are certain basic things which must be kept in mind by a good doctor and a healer. For instance, the body has its own intelligence or wisdom. There is also a natural healing process. A wound in the body heals on its own. We apply an antiseptic as a preventive measure to avoid sepsis, but the healing is from within. Mr. Crosbie points out that no specific method is a cure-all shows that there are different kinds of diseases, and those which are caused by bad habits, lack of exercise, wrong diet, and the failure to observe the ordinary laws of hygiene can be cured by correcting the wrong habits and ways of living. Majority of diseases may be regarded as inner sickness of inner man being discharged into the physical plane. Hence Mr. Judge writes, “The seeds of disease being located primarily in the mind, they begin to exhaust themselves through the agency of the inner [astral] currents that carry the appropriate vibrations down upon the physical plane. If left to themselves—aside from palliations and aids in throwing off—they pass out into the great crucible of nature and one is free from them forever.” By resorting to mental healing, hypnosis and other such methods, we are sending the seeds of diseases back to the mind, for future expression, though we may experience temporary cure.

Plato said that it is a great mistake of the physician of the day

that they treat the body without considering the soul. Theosophy emphasizes that correct mental and moral position will lead to sound health. “The world could get along with what disease there is, if it only turned attention to high ethics and altruistic endeavour. For after a few centuries of right living the nations would have purged themselves and built up a right moral building well founded on the rocks of true philosophy, charity, and love,” writes Mr. Judge. (*W. Q. J. Series No. 22*, p. 20)

Nature as a destroyer is a blessing in disguise. Nature has supported life on earth for thousands of years, but in the last few years we have witnessed that the same Nature is causing suffering on a massive scale, with storms, floods, droughts and earthquakes, claiming lives, damaging property and destroying livelihoods, in different parts of the world. It is believed to be the result of gradual deterioration in the interaction or relation between humans and nature, destroying the equilibrium and harmony. When the drama of life begins at the start of the cycle of time, all souls and elements of nature are in pure state, and human beings abstain from actions which might be harmful to nature. All souls are free from selfish desires, using natural resources in a sustainable way because there is no greed to get more than what is needed. During this period of Golden Age, of innocence, the influence of human consciousness which was pure and elevated, on the elements of nature was benign and generous and did not lead the forces of nature to cause any upheaval or destruction. As the time goes by there is decline in human consciousness which is reflected in their actions, which show traces of selfishness, anger, ego, attachment, etc.

Even when the human population rises, nature continues to sustain life on earth, but man is mistaken in believing that nature will continue to “give” irrespective of how much it is exploited. Under this assumption we are extracting and burning increasing volumes of oil and gas, cutting down forests for timber and farming,

dumping toxic waste on land and in water, and releasing noxious gases into the air. However, it is now more than evident that industrial activity and resource-intensive lifestyle has upset planet's ecological balance and this is causing changes in weather patterns and threatening our very survival on the planet. As a result the forces of nature act with violence to produce cyclones, tornadoes, snowstorms, earthquakes, heat-waves, etc. Through natural disasters of escalating intensity, nature performs the role of destroyer and rejuvenator, restoring the balance. (*Purity*, November 2014)

Are we really working with, through and along with nature? Man is the crown piece of evolution and kingdoms below man look up to him for their evolution. Instead of helping, we seem to hinder the progress of the lower kingdoms. Instead of working on with nature we have only sought to conquer nature for selfish ends.

Besides undue interference with and exploitation of nature, there is a direct relation between man's thoughts and natural calamities. We can look upon earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes and tsunamis to be like sickness of the earth. Mr. Judge describes physical illness as discharge of the inner sickness of the inner being on the physical plane. Similarly, "the 'lives' of the earth that have been impressed by the harmful thoughts—the selfish thoughts—of millions of men [and women] have reached a point of explosion, which comes about just as naturally in its own order and cycle, as day follows night. Those...who suffer most from such events have earned the suffering...Man is a part of Nature, and if he makes Nature suffer, he will suffer through Nature." ("*Because—*" *For the Children Who Ask Why*)

Ancients have always revered Nature, never seeking to conquer it. An article, "Morality and Pantheism" that appeared in the magazine *The Theosophist* (November 1883), expressed the Theosophical views regarding man-nature relationship thus: "If an individual attempts to move in a direction other than that in which Nature is moving, that individual is sure to be crushed, sooner

or later, by the enormous pressure of the opposing force....The only way therefore, in which happiness might be attained, is by merging one's nature in great Mother Nature, and following the direction in which she herself is moving....The effort to assimilate the individual with the universal law is popularly known as the practice of morality."

Meditation can be a transforming experience. "The Dhamma Brothers" is an inspiring documentary film about the introduction of meditation into an American high security prison in the state of Alabama. The film chronicles the experience of the inmates. The intensive 10-day meditation workshop was originally restricted to hardened criminals serving life sentence, but when for many of them it turned out to be a transformative experience, it was expanded to include other prisoners also. Research in this direction has shown that meditation is beneficial and has led to "improved physical and psychological wellbeing, a decrease in anger and stress, an increase in emotional intelligence and a 20 per cent reduced rate of institutional infractions."

Some of the inmates felt that they began to deliberate and reflect, instead of impulsively reacting. Others felt that when things are thought over, one is able to come up with a better solution. Though confined in a prison, meditation allows one to be mentally free. Life presents challenges but we have the power within us to choose our response. There is *spiritual dimension* to meditation, because besides reducing stress and increasing calmness, it helps us to realize who we really are. "Meditation is the inner laboratory of those seeking a deeper understanding of life's purpose. The spiritual scientist plumbs the depths of consciousness to discover the nature of reality behind the senses. He discovers for himself the truth saints have attested to throughout history: we are much more than this little body and brain. Our true nature is *sat-chit-ananda*, ever existing, ever conscious, ever-new bliss," writes Nayaswami Jaya

Helin. If we can find time to eat when we are hungry, we should be able to also find time to meditate. Regular practice of meditation will help develop intuition and make life more meaningful and happy, says Jaya Helin. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, November 22, 2014)

“Mind is flighty, alighting where it listeth. Good is to tame it. The tame mind is the bearer of happiness,” teaches the Buddha. The practice of concentration and meditation helps to control the mind. Theosophical philosophy recommends setting apart half-an-hour of time every day, preferably at the same time of day or night, for self-examination and for turning attention and thought to some high and noble spiritual themes. “Every genuine student owes it to himself to examine his deeds and words, his thoughts and feelings.” We are advised to examine the lower, personal man in the light of the Inner, Divine, Impersonal Self. It enables us to judge our daily thoughts, feelings and actions from an impersonal standpoint, without feeling elated by awareness of our virtues, nor feeling dejected by becoming aware of our weaknesses and vices, but being ever ready to take corrective measures, without justifying unwholesome feelings and actions. If we really want to experience peace and happiness and radiate happiness and peace towards those around us, regular practice of meditation is imperative. It should be looked upon as an hour when one can receive guidance from one’s divine nature—the God within. It is through meditation that one can become aware of one’s true nature, which in turn enables us to perform actions with perfect detachment and prevents us from sinking deeper and deeper into karmic debt. Mr. Judge recommends that every day and as often as you can, think, think, think, “I” am not the body, the mind, the emotions, the intellect, praise or blame, but I am THAT.

NO LEARNING is learning unless it leads to readjustment.

—ROBERT CROSBIE