

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON TURNING POINTS

WHAT is a turning point? A turning point is a critical point; or a point at which a decisive or significant change takes place; or a point at which something changes direction. Looking back at historical events, it is easy to mark several turning points, *i.e.*, events which were followed by a sea change. The great Depression of 1929 and the United States entering the World War II in 1941 may well be regarded as two very important turning points, when America as a nation changed in fundamental ways. In the context of spaceflight, many consider launch of *Sputnik 1*, the world's first artificial Earth satellite, by Soviet Union, on October 4, 1957, to be a turning point. Likewise, the Battle of Gettysburg was a turning point in the American Civil War, in which a set of events, had they not happened as they did, would have prompted a different course in history. In the summer of 1864, the Civil War had been raging for three years already. The battle that took place in Gettysburg, a farming village in southern Pennsylvania, though not recognized at that time, was a key battle that actually dealt what would prove to be a fatal blow to the South. By August 1864, most experts expected that Abraham Lincoln would lose the election. But the defeat of the South at the battlefield, just before the election, catapulted Abraham Lincoln to victory and ultimately provided momentum for permanently freeing all slaves in America.

Generally, every reform, revolution or a movement, when

successful, proves to be a turning point for the society, country or humanity at large. Interestingly, when these turning points concern nations and large sections of humanity, often there is a guiding hand of the Great Ones. For instance, Napoleon Buonaparte's foolhardy march to Moscow and his sudden and disastrous retreat was a turning point in the history of France, as the period after that marked the downfall, exile and death of Napoleon. The story goes that just when Napoleon was hesitating to enter Moscow, he was encouraged by a red letter delivered to him by a Red Man. This turning point was engineered by the *Nirmanakayas*, who swerved him from a path that would have plunged the world into depths of woe. "What he could have done had he remained in France, no present historian is competent to say," writes Mr. Judge.

On the other hand, the Indian mutiny of 1857 was a crucial event in the freedom movement of India, the success of which could have paved the way to end British rule in India. But during the great uprising in India that threatened the British rule, the *Nirmanakayas*, who work for man's best and highest good, saw to it that the uprising was not successful, "so that England at last remained master, even though many a patriotic native desired another result." They could see that had the British been driven away from India, some other western nation would have managed to rule over India, taking advantage of internal conflicts, and they would not have hesitated in destroying books and palm-leaf records of India. The failure of Indian Mutiny led to the protecting shield of England being raised against them.

Likewise, industrialization and computerization that brought about a sea change in human life, along with mobiles, Internets and Smart Phones that have radically changed human communication, may well be regarded as turning points.

There are turning points in an individual's life as well. It is a specific or significant moment, when something begins to change. Meeting a mentor leads to a new career; a chance encounter at a café leads to a marriage proposal; an accident shatters one's dreams

to be an athlete and leads to a new path in life. A few words of encouragement, at a crucial point, when one is about to give up the struggle, can make fire of passion blaze up in another person, and that may change his life for good. On the other hand, prolonged association and friendship with an alcoholic or drug-addict could change one's life for the worse. Disasters, calamities, pain, pleasure and even wickedness and meanness, could well be turning points in a person's life, having the power to bring about radical changes. But it is the attitude of the person that determines, whether an event becomes an experience, and therefore a turning point or not. An experience is called *anubhava* in some of the vernacular languages, and it means becoming someone different as a sequel to an event. For instance, every person suffering from cancer is not likely to undergo a change of heart or radical change in his outlook on life, as did the doctor in a concentration camp, mentioned in Viktor Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

Dr. Frankl considers pan-determinism to be an erroneous and dangerous assumption, which is the view of man which disregards his capacity to take a stand toward any conditions whatsoever. "Man is not fully conditioned and determined but rather determines himself whether he gives in to conditions or stands up to them." Hence, every human being has the freedom to change at any instant. He gives an example of a certain Dr. J who is described as a "mass murderer," who saw to it that not a single psychotic individual in the concentration camp escaped the gas chambers. After the war, he was imprisoned by the Russians. The author learnt from an acquaintance that this individual died at the age of forty, from cancer of the urinary bladder. Before he died, however, he showed himself to be the best human being. He gave consolation to everybody, and lived up to the highest conceivable moral standard! Dr. Frankl remarks, very pertinently, "How can we dare to predict the behaviour of man? We may predict the movements of a machine, of an automaton; more than this, we may even try to predict the mechanisms or 'dynamisms' of the human psyche as well. But man

is more than psyche.”

Thus, a person need not go on travelling along the downward path. He can choose to turn and begin to walk in the opposite direction. This choice to turn back is a great step, a difficult and definite choice. Hence, Shri Krishna says, “Even if the man of most evil ways worships me with exclusive devotion, he is to be considered as righteous, for he hath judged aright....Such a man soon becometh of a righteous soul” (*Gita*, IX). True repentance allows the person to turn the corner. Hence, Jesus says that there is more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine just men who need no repentance (*Luke*, 15:7). Theosophy teaches that incarnated mind or everyday mind of man, when it disconnects itself from desire nature, it becomes an organ of free will in man. The more we try to listen to the guidance and advice of the divine within, the more likely are we to make right choices, and turn the corner. Mr. Judge advises:

Every impulse from above, every prompting of the Divine within, should meet at once with a hearty welcome and response. If you feel as if something urged you to visit some sick or afflicted neighbour or friend, obey the suggestion without delay. If the wish to turn over a new leaf comes into the lower consciousness, don't wait till next New Year's before actually turning it over; turn it now....In short, put yourself at once in line with the Divine ways, in harmony with the Divine laws. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 32)

A good man must recognize the need and feel the urge to change. For those of us who are satisfied with our present state, spiritual life is irrelevant. Buddha said of such complacent, worldly persons: “Most people go their rounds on this shore only.” Spiritual aspirants long to cross over to the other shore. More often than not, what jolts us out of this complacency is some painful experience. It is said of the saint-poet Akha Bhagat, that before becoming a saint, he was a goldsmith—an honest and good businessman. Once he was asked to make a gold necklace for his sister. However, his sister did not

trust him, and asked another goldsmith to check the necklace for the purity of gold used. When Akha Bhagat came to know of this, he was pained, disillusioned and suddenly made aware of the hollowness of so-called “close relationships.” This incident proved to be a turning point in his life. Thus, *Light on the Path* suggests:

No man desires to see that light which illumines the spaceless soul until pain and sorrow and despair have driven him away from the life of ordinary humanity. First he wears out pleasure; then he wears out pain—till, at last, his eyes become incapable of tears. (p. 35)

For some, however, such a turning point can be brought about through extreme indulgence in pleasures. Generally, we feel that we can be happy if only we had a car, position, money, etc. When we have all these, we may try to get a better model of car, try for a higher post in the office, join a club, smoke most expensive cigarettes, and so on. Sooner or later, a point of satiation is reached, waking us up to higher possibilities. For instance, in the book *Code Name God*, Mani Bhaumik, the pioneer of LASIK eye surgery writes about his childhood life in India, soaked in poverty and hunger. Then there is a turning point, when the author moves to United States as a researcher and becomes a millionaire in the process. But extreme richness brings once again a turning point in his life, and leaves him contemplating on the more profound aspects of life, and he uses science to find answers to them.

An alcoholic may decide to quit drinking for the sake of his family members. Often there is an urge to set a good example, as happened in the case of an American lawyer. Many years ago, Al Capone, the notorious criminal, was involved in everything from booze to prostitution to murder. Al had a personal lawyer nicknamed “Easy Eddie,” who had kept Al out of jail for many years, by his skillful legal maneuvering. But Eddie was very attached to his son and wanted him to grow up to be a good man. That was one of the reasons which prompted him to turn the corner, and rectify wrongs he had done, by going to the authorities and tell the truth about Al

Capone. He knew that the cost of testifying against this criminal would be death, and sure enough he was killed, but he wanted to give his son this great gift, of cleaning up his tarnished name and offer his son some semblance of integrity.

Effort is of a life-time or even life-times, and the culmination is of a moment. What appears to be a sudden turn is often the result, or manifestation of the processes of change which might be taking place within, as a silent undercurrent. Hence, we have stories of sudden transformations, as that of Valiya the robber to Valmiki rishi, on meeting sage Narada. There is similar story of sudden turn in the life of Tulsidas that made him live the life of an ascetic. It is said that Tulsidas was passionately attached to his wife, and could not bear even a day's separation from her. One day his wife went to her father's house without informing her husband. Tulsidas stealthily went to see her at night at his father-in-law's house. His wife was ashamed of it all and she said to Tulsidas, "My body is but a network of flesh and bones. If you would develop for Lord Rama even half the love that you have for my filthy body, you would certainly cross the ocean of *Samsara* and attain immortality and eternal bliss." These words pierced the heart of Tulsidas like an arrow, and he abandoned home and became an ascetic.

A turning point symbolizes hope, as it could be a bend in the road, which marks a beginning of a new, and more exciting journey, or a more challenging and adventurous journey. Turning points on spiritual path may lead to many by-lanes, luring the aspirant to wander away from the main path. It is very easy for an aspirant to wander into by-lanes of wrong Yoga practices, Alternative therapies, acquirement of psychic powers, and so on. Such turning points test steadfastness of an aspirant. A firm position must be assumed in the pursuit of truth. "If we start out to reach the goal of wisdom, the mind and heart must not be permitted to wander, for the path is narrow and the wanderings of a day may cause years of effort to find the road again," advises Mr. Judge.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A REINCARNATION OF BEETHOVEN

AFTER death does the inner being continue to progress? That depends altogether upon the person. For everyone it is different. There are people—for example, writers, musicians, artists—people who have lived on intellectual heights, who feel that they still have something further to do, that they have not finished what they have undertaken to do, have not reached the goal they had fixed for themselves, so they are ready to remain in the earth atmosphere as long as they can, with as much cohesiveness as possible and they try to manifest themselves and continue their progress in other human bodies.

I have seen many such cases, I have seen the very interesting case of a musician, who was a pianist (a pianist of great worth), who had hands which were a marvel of skill, accuracy, precision, force, rapidity of movement, indeed, it was absolutely remarkable. This man died relatively young with the feeling that if he had continued to live he would have continued to progress in his expression of music. And such was the intensity of his aspiration that his subtle hands maintained their form without being dissolved, and each time he met anyone, a little receptive and passive and a good musician, his hands would enter the hands of those who were playing—the person who was playing at the time could play well but in an ordinary way; but at that moment he became not merely a virtuoso but a wonderful artist during the time he played. It was the hands of the other that were making use of him. This is a phenomenon I know. I have seen the same thing in the case of a painter: it was also a matter of hands. The same thing with regard to some writers, and here it was the brain that kept quite a precise form and entered the brain of someone who was sufficiently receptive and suddenly made him write extraordinary things, infinitely more beautiful than anything he had written before.

I saw that taking hold of someone. It was in the case of a composer

of music—not one of those who execute, but who compose, like Beethoven, like Bach, like Cesar Franck (but Cesar Franck executed also). The composition of music is an extremely cerebral activity. Well, here also the brain of the musician came in contact with one who was engaged in writing an opera and it is extremely complex for the performers who have to bring out in the music the thought of the person who had composed it; and that man (I knew him) when he received this formation had a blank paper before him and then he started writing. I saw him writing, putting lines, then some figures, on a big, very big page and when he reached the bottom, the orchestration of the Overture (for example, of a certain act) was completed (orchestration means the distribution of certain lines of music to each one of the instruments). And he was doing it simply on a paper, merely by his wonderful mental power. And it was not only his own; it was coming to him from a musical mind that incarnated in him.... Whilst I was there I saw him writing in front of me a page like that: it took him about half an hour or three quarters of an hour. And he got such a reputation that even big well-known musicians brought him their work for orchestration. He did it better than anyone, and just in that way on his paper. He had no need to hear or anything. Afterwards it was tried out and it was always very good. There were so many violins, so many violoncellos, so many altos, all the instruments: some were playing this, others playing that, yet others playing other things, sometimes all together, at other times one after another (it is very complicated, not a simple thing), well, there, while playing, hearing or even reading (sometimes he took the score and read it) he knew which notes had to be distributed to which instrument, which notes had to be played by another, and so on. And he had very clearly the feeling of something entering into him and helping him.

...I explained to you the other day that before leaving the physical body, the psychic being decides most often what its next rebirth will be, the environment in which it will take birth and what its occupation will be, because it needs a certain field for its experience.

So it may happen that very big writers and very big musicians take birth another time in somebody quite imbecile. And you say: “Why! it is not possible!” Naturally, it does not always happen like that, but it may. There was a case in which the contrary happened: it was a violin player, the most wonderful of the century... (*Mother tries to remember*). Just wait, I knew his name and it is gone—it came back and is gone again. What was his name?... Ysayë! He was a Belgian and a violinist, truly the most wonderful violinist of the epoch. Well, that man had most certainly in him a reincarnation of Beethoven. Not perhaps a reincarnation of his entire psychic being, but in any case, that of his musical capacity. He had the appearance, the head of Beethoven, I saw him, I heard him, (I did not know him, I knew nothing, I was at a concert in Paris and they were giving the concerto in D major). I saw him coming on the stage to play and I said: “Strange! How much this man looks like Beethoven, he is the very portrait of Beethoven!” Then it just started with a stroke of the bow, three, four notes.... Everything changed, the atmosphere was changed. All became absolutely wonderful. Three notes started off with such power, such grandeur, so wonderful it was, nothing stirred, all waited. And he played that from beginning to end in an absolutely unique manner with an understanding I have not met with in any other executants. And then I saw that the musical genius of Beethoven was in him.... But perhaps Beethoven’s psychic being had taken body in a shoemaker or anybody else, one does not know! It wanted to have another kind of experience.

16 September 1953.

[Taken from, *Stories Told By the Mother*, II. Published by, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry.]

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Theosophy teaches that after death of the physical body, the Ego or Real Man enters the state of consciousness called *Devachan*. This is the *swarga* of the Hindus, and paradise or heaven of the Christians. During life we have many high aspirations, ideals and

thoughts, but we are not able to live them all out, and hence these are stored as mental energy or force. This energy remains latent and after death, when the bondage of lower principles is absent, these thought-forces expand and develop. For instance, an artist, who aspired to advance in the field of art but could not achieve it during life, carries the force of aspirations to *devachan*. In *devachan* it would fully blossom like a flower, and also get assimilated with his higher nature (Ego). In *devachan* there is an assimilation and expansion of all the nobler qualities—sympathy, love for beauty, art, and the abstract things of life—and whatever good we aspired to do, so that the Ego comes back enriched on earth. As regards, the inner being continuing to progress after death, H.P.B. writes that in one sense, in *Devachan*, “we acquire more knowledge, *i.e.*, we can develop further any faculty which we loved and strove after during life, provided it is concerned with abstract and ideal things, such as music, painting, poetry, etc.”

As regards extraordinary talent exhibited by individuals, which reminds one of some genius known to the world, there may be several explanations. Theosophy teaches that a medium is a sensitive person “*through whom the action of another being is said to be manifested and transmitted; by the either consciously or unconsciously active will of that other being.*” In her article “Are Chelas Mediums?” H.P.B. explains that a medium is a person who allows the other beings to influence him to such an extent that he loses his self-control. This relinquishing of self-control can be conscious or unconscious. The other “being” may be man’s own higher principles or divine nature, and he will then be a great genius, a writer, a poet, an artist, a musician, and so on. A person may be in *rapport* with the “intellectual” ray of Shakespeare and write Shakespearean poetry, and at the same time imagine that the personal spirit of Shakespeare is writing through him, explains H.P.B. He may be influenced by some Adept to write a great scientific work and be entirely ignorant of the source of his inspiration, or perhaps imagine that it was the “spirit” of Faraday or Lord Bacon that is

writing through him, while all the while he would be acting as a “Chela,” although ignorant of the fact.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. explains that the divine or spiritual Self in man is practically omniscient, but it cannot manifest itself owing to the impediment posed by the grossness of the body. Therefore, when the physical body is paralysed, as in the deep trance state, the *inner* Self manifests itself on this plane. For instance, “Somnambulists have been known to compose music and poetry and to solve mathematical problems while in their trance state, without having ever learnt music or mathematics.” (p. 29)

As has been explained in “Fragments of Occult Truth,” it is possible for a pure sensitive or a medium to put himself *en rapport* with the spiritual entity in *Devachan*, in which case there is an identity of molecular vibrations between the astral part of the sensitive and the astral part of the *Devachanic* entity. Then, for a brief space of time, the sensitive becomes the departed personality, and writes in its hand-writing, uses its language, and thinks its thoughts. (*The Theosophist*, September 1882)

The article, “The Various States of Devachan,” mentions various degrees of *Devachanees*. We are given the example of Berzelius, who was one of the founders of modern chemistry, especially noted for his determination of atomic weights, the development of modern chemical symbols and his electro-chemical theory, among other things. We are told that his last thought was one of despair that his work should be interrupted by death. Such a scholar, who had lived for developing highest physical intelligence, will remain in a state of *Devachan* in which he will be magnetically held by his attractions to scholars and their work, influencing and being influenced by them subjectively, until the energy of unsatisfied yearning exhausts itself. (*The Theosophist*, August 1883)

Blind Tom was a Black African slave in Georgia and was born blind, with very weak mental development. He showed remarkable aptitude for music and after hearing a piece played once, could reproduce it accurately on the piano. He also performed other

musical wonders. Blind Tom was just a little boy when his genius was first noticed. How to explain this? We are asked to suppose that if this boy had an overwhelming love for harmony, peace and music, then he would turn within to seek harmony and sounds. At that time in that country there was a great singer, Jenny Lind, who was accompanied by one of the greatest performers on the piano. Everybody was thinking about them, talking about them, so that the atmosphere was charged with those impressions. It is quite possible that the great love for music and harmony in Blind Tom might have put him *en rapport* with the consciousness of this very musician who played with Jenny Lind, so that by purely psychic sympathy he became an instrument through which that talent or skill manifested.

The book, *Arigo: Surgeon of the Rusty Knife*, by John G. Fuller, deals with the curious case of a peasant named Arigo in a small village of Brazil, who brought about almost miraculous cures and hundreds of operations, without antiseptics and anesthetics, and usually with an ordinary kitchen knife, while in mediumistic trance. He made thousands of correct diagnoses without even examining the patient. He saved many with cancer and other fatal diseases who had been given up as hopeless by leading doctors. According to his autobiography, around 1950, he began to suffer from trances and hallucinations. One day he felt that the voice that was pursuing him took over his body and he had a vision of a bald man, dressed in a white apron, and supervising a team of doctors and nurses, in an operating room. This entity identified itself as “Dr. Fritz,” a German surgeon who had died during World War I. Hence, it is said that when Arigo performed operations, he embodied the spirit of Dr. Adolf Fritz.

THE TRUE MONITOR is within....Ten thousand Adepts can do one no great good unless we ourselves are ready and They only act as suggestors to us of what possibilities there are in every human heart.

—W. Q. JUDGE

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA THE MEANING OF PAIN—I

[Adapted from the Lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, delivered at One West Sixty Seventh Street, New York City, 1927-28.]

THE SIXTEENTH Discourse may seem to the unwary, almost unimportant as compared with the subject matter treated in the other discourses of the *Gita*. Yet, it is full of significance for those who are trying to tread the spiritual path. It really hoists the danger signal to warn all would-be disciples and aspirants of the pitfalls that may be encountered on the path to the Masters. As explained earlier, the eighteen discourses of the *Gita* can be divided into three definite sections, each of them comprising of six discourses. These three sections of the *Gita* correspond to one another, and each repeats the same teachings given in the previous one on a higher spiral. Thus, the Sixteenth Discourse corresponds to and repeats on a higher spiral, both the Fourth and the Tenth discourses. We should keep this fact in mind and try to discern the relationship between these three discourses. The Fourth Discourse conveyed the hopeful message that according to cyclic law, or the law of periodicity, whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world, there appears a great Spiritual Teacher, who gives to mankind the immemorial spiritual truths. In the Tenth Discourse Krishna gives the description of the great *vibhutis*, or divine perfections, the qualities which the perfected human beings embody in their own natures.

We can understand the Sixteenth Discourse thoroughly, only if we study it in connection with the great universal law mentioned in the Eighth Discourse, the law which says that light and darkness are the world's eternal ways. The Eighth discourse describes both the light in the world, those great divine beings who are called in the discourse the *Suras*, and the darkness that also exists in this universe—the beings who incarnate the devilish, the infernal tendencies, and are known as the *Asuras*. But before we consider

the description of these two classes of beings, we must remember that the words *Suras* and *Asuras* have been used to designate different classes of beings, and that every time the words are mentioned they do not indicate the classes of beings that are described in this particular discourse. Light and darkness are the world's eternal ways. As stated in the previous discourse, there exists in the universe a class of beings, designated in Theosophy as the Parentless Race, as also, the Spiritual Fathers of all humanity. These beings have attained and retain their own complete and unconditioned immortality. They are human perfected Beings, the Great Masters of the Wisdom, and the Bearers of the torch of truth across the ages. On the opposite pole to where those great sacred Beings stand, there exists another class of beings who are known as the *Asuras*, beings who have strengthened in themselves their lower nature, to such an extent that no trace is left in them of the divine and immortal nature. H.P.B. warns us against this particular class of beings, and calls them the "Brothers of the Shadow." They are also known as the black magicians. The great immortal Beings having attained that highest spiritual condition, and fulfilled the highest aim of human and all evolution, have transcended various stages such as sleep, death, the great night of the whole Universe, known as *pralaya*, or the period of non-manifestation. The other beings, the "Brothers of the Shadow" are similar, if we can use such an expression in this particular respect, to the great Masters of the Wisdom, as they too are always awake. They are also sleepless beings, but of course, the condition of consciousness that they experience is very different from that experienced by the Great Immortal Ones.

We know in our own lives how tremendously different and widely apart are the two conditions of waking consciousness: In the condition known as insomnia, we are restless during the night, and centred so strongly in our own physical nature that we cannot put our body to sleep, so that we experience a very unpleasant and wrong kind of wakeful condition. At other times, when our body is awake and yet is at peace and harmony, we are able to meditate

intensely and deeply, on some high metaphysical subject, and then also we are in a wakeful or sleepless condition of consciousness, yet it is a very different condition from that which we suffer when our body will not go to sleep. As widely different are also the two conditions of waking consciousness, spiritual and high condition of meditation which the Masters exemplify, and the restless, inordinate, and passionate insomnia, the wrong type of waking consciousness that the black magicians experience.

In the Sixteenth Discourse, although Krishna mentions, definitely, the existence of the *Asuras*, He does not go into the actual description of their powers, nor does He tell us much about their work. He describes in detail the evil tendencies displayed by human beings who are going on the downward path, and are therefore, under the influence of the black magicians. But of the black magicians themselves, Krishna gives very little. This is a very important point to note. There is in the world a certain psychic curiosity, a wrong desire to try to investigate the black arts, to understand and try to uncover the mysteries of the black magicians and their destructive work. But it has been explained in the Tenth Discourse that those who dwell upon the divine qualities (*vibhutis*), who try to understand and to meditate quietly within themselves upon the *vibhutis*, gradually but certainly, will be able to strengthen these very qualities in themselves. If it is true on the side of light it is also true on the side of darkness, so that human beings should not try to dwell upon or brood over the Brothers of the Shadow. All that is necessary for human beings to understand is, the place occupied by these beings in reference to the great ladder of evolution, and this is indicated by Krishna in verse 7 of the Sixteenth Discourse, thus:

Those who are born with the demoniacal disposition—of the nature of the *Asuras*—know not the nature of action nor of cessation from action, they know not purity nor right behaviour, they possess no truthfulness.

The two words as they stand in the Sanskrit are *Pravritti* and *Nivritti*, the two paths of going forth and then of returning. These

two paths of evolution must be kept in mind. The ultimate destiny or fate of the *Asuras*, the infernal ones, has been indicated in verse 20, where Krishna says:

And they being doomed to those infernal wombs, more and more deluded in each successful rebirth, never come to me, O son of Kunti, but go at length to the lowest region.

For students of the *Gita* it is interesting to note that the infernal wombs here mentioned are the *tamasic* wombs, falling to the quality of *tamas*, and the actual word exists in the original. “Never come to me” does not of course mean never in the infinite and ultimate eternity, but never at least in this particular *Manvantara* or the period of manifestation. That last region, into which fall those who thus persist in evil-doing deliberately, life after life, is what is known in Theosophical terminology as *Avitchi*. It is hell, but it is not hell in the sense of a geographical locality. It is not a place. It is simply a condition of consciousness. It is a state, and the lowest that is possible for any man to fall into. *Avitchi* exists as a condition of consciousness throughout the whole of manifestation, and through part of *pralaya* or non-manifestation. That is, there exists throughout all that time the condition of evil-doing and wickedness which is embodied in these. It is difficult to say very much; one cannot say, and one should not say very much about the particular part played by those beings during the non-manifestation or *pralaya*, yet a Master of Wisdom gives us an indication as to what that work is, thus: “There are Dhyan-Chohans and ‘Chohans of Darkness,’ not what they term *devils* but imperfect ‘Intelligences’ who have never been born on this or any other earth or sphere, any more than the ‘Dhyan Chohans’ have, and who will never belong to the ‘builders of the Universe,’ the pure Planetary Intelligences, who preside at every *Manvantara* while the Dark Chohans preside at the *Pralayas*.”

(To be continued)

THE BEGGING BOWL

THE GREAT MASTER of Wisdom, Lord Buddha’s teachings and way of life are still being followed all over the world. The truths given by him were simple yet profound. The Great Teachers of mankind have taught, by precept and example, the subjects upon which we may base our thoughts and actions. Out of these teachings and great ideas They have upheld, we may adopt, through our thought process, actions and attitude towards life, which will, if we maintained, transform our character and life into the likeness of Theirs.

One of the many ways of life taught by the Buddha and followed by monks all over the world involves carrying of the begging bowl. One may wonder, why did the Buddha request his Bhikkhus to carry the begging bowl? What is the significance of the begging bowl, and what purpose does it serve?

The begging bowl refers to the time in the Buddha’s life just before he attained enlightenment, when a young girl, named Sujata offered the Buddha a bowl of milk and rice. When Buddha was nearly fainting—after indulging in wrong ascetic practices—he was given food by Sujata, a simple and pious housewife. It is said that so wonderful was the virtue of that meal that Buddha experienced strength and life returning to him instantly. After partaking of the meal, one tradition states that the Buddha then threw away the small amount of food left in that bowl to symbolise the Buddha’s complete non-attachment to material possessions. According to another version, the Buddha threw away the begging bowl itself into the river to symbolise the mind of non-attachment.

With proper appreciation of its significance we will realise the meaning of the “true Bhikkhu,” the true ascetic who lives in the materialistic world like the Lotus plant which grows out of mud. The Bhikkhu depends on his begging bowl for daily nourishment, but for the remainder of the time he focuses his mind on higher thoughts and meditation. As per the ritual of the begging bowl,

anyone was free to put into it whatever he or she may choose. The Bhikkhu was never to ask for this or that, never to complain about or reject what was given to him.

According to ancient tradition, everything dropped into the bowl is mixed together, since the Bhikkhus are not supposed to have preference for one kind of food over the other. Food must be eaten to nourish the body, unmindful of the taste. Can we imagine eating curry mixed with cake? The begging bowl is a reminder for the Bhikkhus and the laity alike, of the renunciation taken up in pursuit of the holy life. The Bhikkhus are not supposed to hoard food but every day go out with the begging bowl, and there is no certainty that food will be offered. It means that if on a certain day no food is offered, the Bhikkhu has to be prepared to go without food. The tradition, wherein the Bhikkhus go out daily to collect food, is often perceived as that which gives opportunity to lay people to realize the importance of *Dana* (charity) and to earn merit or *punya*.

What he received he was free to make use of, however the Bhikkhu had to make use of his discrimination as to whom to go to with the bowl, thus avoiding receiving something which would be against his discipline, such as, the forbidden meat. This practice of begging bowl helped the Bhikkhu to live his life in complete accordance with the law of karma. This teaches the habit of *asking* for nothing, having the right discrimination, of simply accepting and making use of whatever comes our way to the best of our capabilities with a smiling face and right inner attitude.

The Bhikkhus had very few belongings, just one set of clothes, one begging bowl and prayer beads. It is said that we do not even own our bodies, then how could money, property, spouse, children, etc., belong to us? We should learn to look upon the body and all that we have as that which has been loaned to us by Mother Nature, to learn and perform our duty in the school of Life.

The Buddha says: “Him I call a Brahamana who, in this world, giving up sensual pleasures, wanders about without a home, in whom all desires for existence is extinguished. Again, him I call a

Brahamana who, in this world, giving up all craving wanders about without a home, in whom all craving for existence is extinguished.” (*The Dhammapada*, verses 415-16)

To ever keep in mind the great principles of the spiritual life and use them as the basis for thinking out how one should act in one’s small spheres, however humble, is creative thinking; it transforms our life and character, little by little, until at last, through the power of right thought and discipline only the good, the beautiful and the harmonious remain.

Madame Blavatsky wrote in the *Introductory to The Secret Doctrine* that “every reader will inevitably judge the statements made from the standpoint of his own knowledge, experience, and consciousness, based on what he has already learnt” (I, xlvi). This tendency to interpret and limit new knowledge in the light of what has already been acquired can be overcome, to some extent, if there is a determined effort to preserve an open mind, or to pass the teachings on exactly as received.

Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, writing in *Aryan Path* for July 1951, brings out how, as Buddhism flowed into the surrounding Asian countries from India, where the teaching of the Buddha had been given, it was translated into the cultural patterns. He maintains, however, that the flavour of the Fruit which the soil of those countries produced was always one, as the Seed from which it germinated was one.

There was however, a difference of emphasis among the different peoples. In Tibet the positive and dynamic elements were stressed, the Compassion Aspect of the Buddha–Nature and the Power Aspect of Enlightenment. Sangharakshita sees the flowering bowl, which in Tibet replaces the empty bowl which Indian art puts in the Buddha’s hands, as an expression of this difference in emphasis. For, if the empty begging-bowl symbolizes absolute spiritual poverty, *Sunyata*, the Voidness, the flowering bowl in the hands of the Enlightened One may, he suggests, be regarded as the dual symbol of the Wisdom of the Voidness and of Compassionate Activity.

COMMON BASIS OF WORLD RELIGIONS

OF THE three objects of the Theosophical Movement, the second object is to promote comparative study of world Religions and sciences, and to vindicate the importance of old Asiatic literature, namely, the Brahminical, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian philosophies.

The second object is a corollary, and logical sequel, to the first object, which is to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood of humanity, without caste, creed, colour and racial distinctions. Theosophy demonstrates on logical, philosophical and scientific grounds that all men have, spiritually and physically, the same origin; that mankind is of one and the same essence and that essence is one—infinite, uncreate and eternal, no matter by what name we call it—God or Nature. Therefore, no nation or no individual can act without affecting another nation or individual—for good or ill—just as a stone thrown into a pond sets in motion every single drop of water in the pond. This is the scientific basis of ethics taught by all the great teachers of humanity. Each individual or nation will receive by way of reaction, by the unerring law of cause and effect, for weal or woe, in exact proportion to the discordant or harmonious nature of their action. Hence every nation, as every individual, is bound by the law of Being to think and act in ways concordant with universal harmony. This is the scientific basis of ethics taught in all religions. Thus, ethics which are common to all religions is a proof of the common basis of world religions.

If the root of mankind is one, then there must also be one truth which finds expression in all religions. That Truth is the Divine Wisdom or the aggregate of knowledge and wisdom which underlies the universe—which Sri Krishna calls in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, “the exhaustless doctrine of Yoga,” and the *Voice of the Silence* describes it as “the shoreless waters of *Akshara*, the indestructible fount of Omniscience.”

This we call Theosophy, meaning Divine Wisdom, in its abstract sense; in its concrete sense it is the sum total of the same as allotted

to man, by nature, on this earth. “It is wisdom itself, the object of wisdom, that which is to be gained by wisdom, and *in the heart of all it ever presideth*” (*Gita*, XIII). This Divine wisdom, therefore, is the ultimate essence of every being, humanity being the outward expression of it. Every man has it in him as the divine spark, by the help of which he may claim his divine heritage, and re-become the God that he was, one with ALL, for humanity is an emanation from divinity, on its return path thereto.

Teachings contained in the scriptures of world religions are not the “Truth,” but more or less faithful representations of the Truth on earth, on the plane of human existence, in human language, in symbols, myths and allegories. For instance, the chemical symbol of a molecule of water, H-O-H is not water but a representation of its molecular structure. The same is the case with the symbolical language of world religions. The revealed word of the Veda is not the truth but the representation of the unrevealed WORD—*Vach*, the dynamic creative power of Cosmic Ideation. It is said in the Upanishads that when Yogis die during the fortnight of the dark moon, during smoke, at night, during the the sun’s southern journey, they go to the region of the moon, and, after a while, are reborn on earth; and that when death occurs during the bright fortnight of the moon, during fire, day, and the sun’s northern journey, they go to the region of the sun and are not born again. This is an example of symbolical language used in religious scriptures. It is an astronomical symbol of the various channels by which the Ego departs at the death of the body depending on the actual state of the psychophysiological condition of Yogis’ inner being, and of the degree of its purity and spiritual evolution. It does not apply to others whose life is wholly centred in material life, and in respect of such it is immaterial whether one dies during the sun’s northern or southern journey, and for them other laws of post-mortem states apply. Adhering to the dead letter of the scripture, many religious-minded men aspire to die during the six months of the sun’s northern course. It is thus that superstitious beliefs and practices grow from literal

rendering of the dead-letter words of the scriptures.

Those who are Initiates of the sacred science are the Masters of the Science of the Soul, and they know the inner meaning of every world scripture, no matter to which nationality they may belong. For instance, such an Initiate of the Sacred Science of any nationality in the world, though not knowing Sanskrit, when he hears chants of the Vedas, or recitation of scriptures of any other old nation, with which he may not be acquainted, will instantly know what they refer to, in all their ramifications.

Theosophy teaches that every human being has the innate power to develop in himself the Light of *Buddhi*—the Light of the Spirit (the Heart Light)—the faculty of apprehending *directly*, the Truth in the abstract. The uninitiated, however learned otherwise, can only apprehend the dead-letter meaning of the symbol. In the absence of the hidden sense of the sacred scriptures, apprehending merely the outer form of symbols and allegories, one is apt to misunderstand and misinterpret religions, however learned one may be. This is the reason why religions tend to split into various, mutually antagonistic and warring sects. Therefore, all religions are true at the bottom, in their pure Esoteric sense and meaning, and false on the surface, in their Exoteric outer garb. The former is the “Doctrine of the Heart,” the latter the “Doctrine of the Eye.”

Theosophy sheds light on religious symbolism and reveals their Esoteric sense by which one is able to separate the chaff of mere human dogmas and misinterpretations from the grain of true hidden essence in them, and discover that all religions from the remotest antiquity are based on one and the same all-comprehending universal Wisdom-Science. Of this, it is stated in *The Secret Doctrine*, in which Madam H. P. Blavatsky records a portion of this Wisdom-Science for the modern world:

The great archaic system known from prehistoric ages as the sacred Wisdom Science, one that is contained and can be traced in every old as well as in every new religion, had, and still has, its universal language—suspected by the

Mason Ragon—the language of the Hierophants, which has seven “dialects,” so to speak, each referring, and being specially appropriated, to one of the seven mysteries of Nature. Each had its own symbolism. Nature could thus be either read in its fulness, or viewed from one of its special aspects....all the ancient records were written in a language which was universal and known to all nations alike in days of old, but which is now intelligible only to the few. (I, 310)

Few indeed have the moral courage, inner purity and universalism of mind and heart to master Soul-Wisdom. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, for instance, is an allegory with many meanings contained in the verses. Theosophical Teachers show that it can be read in many different ways, each depending upon the view-point taken, for example, whether it is considered in its application to the individual, or to cosmogenesis, or to the evolution of the Astral world, or the Hierarchies in Nature, or to the moral nature, and so on. Mr Judge shows that if the poem is regarded from the cosmic standpoint, then various characters with their weapons, mentioned in the first chapter, refer to beings, forces, planes, and planets in the universe—which is a science pertaining to higher Initiation. But the allegory is equally applicable to lay students aspiring to devotion, in which case, the battle field refers to the body acquired by Karma and *Tanha*, thirst for life; Sanjaya and the party of Kauravas represent the lower self of man, and the Pandavas the Higher Self, between which battle rages—the *Mahabharata* war—in the body of man for supremacy, the moment he determines to live the Higher Life. The devotee who thus strives for perfection is Arjuna and the divinity in him, the Higher Self, his teacher and guide, is Krishna.

There has been on earth from remotest antiquity the sacred institution of Mysteries, headed by great Hierophants-Initiates, kept in great secrecy, in which were taught by dramatic representation and other methods, the origin of things, the nature of the human spirit, its relation to the body, and the method of its purification and restoration to higher life. They flourished in ancient Egypt and

Greece, and in every part of the world, all teaching one and the same universal Science of all Sciences—the inexhaustible Wisdom-Religion. The word “Mysteries” is derived from the Greek *muo*, “to close the mouth,” meaning, secrecy.

In short, the Mysteries were in every country a series of dramatic performances, in which the mysteries of cosmogony and nature, in general, were personified by the priests and neophytes, who enacted the part of various gods and goddesses, repeating...scenes (allegories) from their respective lives. These were explained in their hidden meaning to the candidates for initiation, and incorporated into philosophical doctrines. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

High character of Mysteries led to the noblest ends by worthiest means. It was held out to the public as stimulus to virtue. In the Lesser Mysteries were admitted candidates who aspired to live the Higher Life, and were taught the tenets of preliminary degrees of the higher science and ethical living for purification of soul and body. To the Higher Mysteries were admitted only such who were found fit, from among the neophytes of Lower Mysteries, to take on the awful responsibility of the Divine Science. There were five gradations, beginning with inner purification, and ending with, “*friendship and interior communion with God.*” (*Isis*, II, 101)

While exoteric religions in their dead letter sense make cryptic statements, apparently unmeaning, contradictory, leading to religious schisms and conflicts, their hidden meaning, however, shines forth when they are regarded by the Light of the Heart, the Light of *Buddhi*, which shines forth through the purified Soul of the seeker after Truth, illuminating his mind. By that Light one apprehends that all religions are nothing but purest and highest science, and have one common basis. Even exoteric religions when studied with an eye to symbolism and intuitive understanding of the hidden sense of the metaphors and myths, one discerns the unmistakable evidence of common basis of world religions.

Our examination of the multitudinous religious faiths that

mankind, early and late, have professed, most assuredly indicates that they have all been derived from one primitive source. It would seem as if they were all but different modes of expressing the yearning of the imprisoned human soul for intercourse with supernal spheres. As the white ray of light is decomposed by the prism into the various colours of the solar spectrum, so the beam of divine truth, in passing through the *three-sided* prism of man’s nature, has been broken up into vari-coloured fragments called RELIGIONS. And, as the rays of the spectrum, by imperceptible shadings, merge into each other, so the great theologies that have appeared at different degrees of divergence from the original source, have been connected by minor schisms, schools, and off-shoots from the one side or the other. Combined, their aggregate represents one eternal truth; separate, they are but shades of human error and the signs of imperfection...It but needs the right perception of things objective to finally discover that the only world of reality is the subjective. (*Isis*, II, 639)

...MAN ought to be ever striving to help the divine evolution of *Ideas*, by becoming to the best of his ability a *co-worker with nature* in the cyclic task. The ever unknowable and incognizable *Karana* alone, the *Causeless Cause* of all causes, should have its shrine and altar on the holy and ever untrodden ground of our heart—invisible, intangible, unmentioned, save through “the still small voice” of our spiritual consciousness. Those who worship before it, ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls; making their spirit the sole mediator between them and the *Universal Spirit*, their good actions the only priests, and their sinful intentions the only visible and objective sacrificial victims to the *Presence*.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

SAINT JNANESHWAR—LIFE AND TEACHINGS

I

“ALL ALONG the stream of Indian literature we can find the names of scores of great adepts who were well known to the people and who all taught the same story—the great epic of the human soul. Their names are unfamiliar to the western ears, but the records of their thoughts, their work and powers remain,” writes Mr. Judge. India has produced a number of wise beings, who have inspired and instructed the laity through their teachings and by setting an example of their own lives. Saint Jnaneshwar is one of them.

Jnaneshwar, also known as Jnandev (Lord of *Jnana* or knowledge) or *Mauli* (Mother), was a thirteenth century Marathi saint, poet, philosopher and yogi of the Nath tradition. He was born in 1275 in Apegaon village on the banks of Godavari river near Paithan in Maharashtra, India. Biographical details of Jnaneshwar’s life are preserved in the writings of his contemporary, saint Namdev and his disciples. There are various traditions giving conflicting accounts of details of Jnaneshwar’s life. Jnaneshwar’s father was Vithal Pant and mother was Rakhumabai, who lived in the city of Alandi. Vithal Pant was religious by nature, had studied the Vedas. Even as a householder, he longed for spiritual learning and self-realization. Vithal Pant kept asking his wife for her permission to leave the world and become a *Sannyasin* (renunciate). His wife kept saying, “After we have a son, then only shall you go.” As no children were born, Vithal Pant grew impatient, and one night as his young wife slept he left home and went to Kashi (Varanasi), where he met Swami Ramananda and requested to be accepted as his disciple, and initiate him as a *sannyasin*. When Swami Ramananda asked, if he had any dependents, Vithal Pant lied and said that he had no relatives except his aged parents. It was an old rule that a married man who wished to leave the world must first obtain his wife’s permission to do so.

As destiny would have it, Swami Ramananda decided to go on

a long pilgrimage of the South, and on his way he visited the city of Alandi, and discovered that his disciple Vithal was the husband of Rakhumabai. He returned to Kashi and ordered Vithal Pant to go back to his sorrowing wife and carry out his family duties.

Home was cherished as a sacred institution by the Sages of old. Theosophy holds aloft the same ideal. One is not allowed to desert family duty in order to devote himself almost entirely to theosophical work. Writing about discipleship, H.P.B. states that no Master will accept any one as a *chela* who tries to sacrifice someone else’s interest. Not only permission of the wife, but also the blessings of both the parents and their permission is essential for one desiring to become an accepted disciple. Someone who deserts his family duty can likewise prove faithless as a disciple. The article, “Living the Higher Life,” states that the consequences of someone impetuously rushing into the circle of ascetics is that such an action on his part leaves an impression in the universal, invisible, register called Astral light, and affects others, and many others are influenced to transgress similarly. His ignoble example becomes a precedent. In the course of time, the leading of the ideal family life becomes almost impossible and very rare. The same article goes on to state that if we shirk family duty, some day we might discover with shock that this tendency extends in all directions. Some day we might find ourselves becoming apathetic to our nation, to our own divine nature, and even to mankind. For a husband and wife who have not become ready for chelaship through exertions in previous lives, the householder’s life fits them to acquire qualifications for entering *Sannyasa ashrama* in some subsequent life. In the given life they can assist each other in living the higher life, “giving the world the benefit of children, who would become *gnanis* and work for humanity.”

In her book, *Saints of Maharashtra*, Savitribai Khanolkar writes that when Vithal Pant returned back to Alandi, the people of Alandi were horrified that a man who had once renounced the world came back to it, to live a married life. It was very much like someone

swallowing his own vomit. The *Shastras* never even mentioned such a thing. So after ridiculing them the Brahmins of Alandi decided to ex-communicate the couple. For several years they lived in a hut, on the outskirts of the town, and silently bore harassments from the town people. In the course of time four children were born to them, whose grasp of spiritual truths was astonishing, from a very young age. The father gave to all four children very significant names: The eldest son was named Nivrutti, which means in Yoga parlance, “the Controller and Subduer of senses,” the first step towards Self-realization. The second son was Jnaneshwar or “the Attainment of Knowledge,” because once the senses are under control, one receives Divine Knowledge. The third son was named Sopan, “the Way.” The path is made easy with divine knowledge. The last child was a girl, named Mukta, “the culmination of all three, in Liberation or Salvation.”

It is said that when Nivrutti was only ten years of age he met his guru, Gahininath, the disciple of Gorakshnath. The guru is said to have imparted the teachings only in seven days to Nivrutti, with the instruction to teach the same to his brother Jnaneshwar, saying, “Jnaneshwar has a mission to fulfil in this world and will be the guide of many.” Thus Nivrutti, the elder brother initiated his younger brother Jnaneshwar, into what is known as Nath *Sampradaya* (cult), and who in turn passed on the teachings to Sopan and Mukta.

The term “Nath” simply means “lord,” or “protector.” The Nath tradition is described as a sub-tradition within Shaivism, who trace their lineage to nine Nath, of which Shiva is considered to be the first, and is called “*Adi-nath*.” Their first human guru is Matsyendranath followed by his disciple Gorakshnath. However, the roots of this tradition are considered to be in a far more ancient *Siddha* tradition. The term *Siddha* means, “one who is accomplished.” It refers to perfected masters who have achieved a high degree of physical as well as spiritual perfection. A notable aspect of Nath tradition practice has been refinement and use of particularly *Hatha Yoga*. Mr. Judge writes, “Hatha Yoga was

promoted and practised by Matsyendra Nath and Goraksh Nath, and their followers, and by many sects of ascetics in this country (India)... This system deals principally with the physiological part of man with a view to establish his health and train his will... On the other hand, the Raja Yogis try to control their mind itself by following the rules laid down by the greatest of adepts.” (*The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, p. viii)

When Vithal Pant felt that his sons should be invested with the sacred thread, and initiated in the duties of the Brahmins, he approached the Brahmins of Alandi for permission. He requested them to prescribe a penance for him so that his children would not be outcastes. It is said that the Brahmins of Alandi referred to the sacred books but could not find any penance, so they advised him to go to the Brahmins of Paithan who were more learned in scriptures. We are told that Vithal Pant and his wife went to Prayag and ended their lives by plunging into the river. After this, the four children went to obtain a certificate of purification (*Shuddhipatra*) from the Brahmins of Paithan. At first the Brahmins of Paithan told them that the remedy lay simply in doing good works such as repeating God’s name and abiding with the truth. The children complied, but still the Brahmins were not ready to give purification letter, and instead ridiculed them.

Then, the children argued, one of them saying, “Who cares for caste, race or creed? I am the fearless, formless, nameless *Atman*, which resides in all creatures.” Jnaneshwar said, “When nothing exists outside the One infinite *Brahman*, my *Atman* is no different from that of this he-buffalo!” The Brahmins were greatly amused and taunted the boy, saying, “If the he-buffalo is as much a part of the *Atman* as you, let us hear him recite the Vedas.” Jnaneshwar was unruffled by the challenge and said that all things belong to the same *Brahman* who has no caste and breathes through them all. The Vedas speak of caste according to one’s inner nature, not birth. The buffalo was dragged close to Jnaneshwar, who petted his forehead, and smiling affectionately, asked him gently: “If the True

Self which resides in all things abides in you, speak the truth to all present.” It is said that Jnaneshwar began to recite a passage of the Rig Veda, extolling the inner meaning of the word “AUM,” the buffalo completed the verses in a deep and clear voice. The Brahmins were astonished and they saluted Jnaneshwar. Having witnessed this great miracle, they had to accept supernatural powers and greatness of Jnaneshwar.

“It is one thing to know about the events and incidents in the life of a person and altogether another thing to understand their real significance and interpret them accurately,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. Many incidents in the lives of great beings are symbolic. The symbology in the above incident is that of a buffalo. Among animals, a buffalo is considered *jad-buddhi*, i.e., a creature of dense mind. It is very difficult to induce that animal to move or act. Some animals have the habit of sitting or standing in the middle of the road. It is our common experience while driving a vehicle on a road that on honking, most animals move away, but not so a buffalo. A buffalo keeps sitting where he is, oblivious to all noise. In *Jnaneshwari Gita*, Jnaneshwar compares Dhritarashtra with a buffalo, and says that his intellect had been narrowed by his affection for his sons. Moreover, at the end of the Ninth Chapter of the *Gita*, Sanjaya is made to say, “In this way, Lord Krishna...instructed Arjuna. But the old King [Dhritarashtra] remained as quiet as the buffalo, who remains seated in the river even when it is in floods....We are having a shower of nectar here, but this old King is sitting as if he is in a different town.” Swami Shri Savitanandji adds, but even on such a person of dense mind, when a *Siddha Purush*, like Jnaneshwar’s hand is raised in blessing, then, even he can recite verses of the Vedas. If one of us were to meet a Wise One like him, then the dense-minded buffalo within us would be transformed, and we will begin to make quick progress.

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

If we frequently feel our energy levels dipping for no apparent reason, then it is quite possible that we are in the company of energy vampires, or vigour-sapping people and things. All of us emanate some form of energy, and we are a mix of good and bad energies. However, some people may have such low vibration that they can seek balance by feeding on other people’s energy. Such people are energy vampires who deplete your energy quickly. Such people are attention-seekers, who complain constantly to get sympathy, and never take responsibility for their actions. Research shows that human beings “catch” energy through their interactions with people. Thus, positive people leave us feeling good, while energy vampires suck the life out of us. Some people are energising because they simply give off positive vibes, or they create genuine connections by making us laugh, writes Nona Walia.

We are energised emotionally when we socialise with people we care about; when we show and receive appreciation. We should try to identify what we do best and enjoy most, allocate our time and energy to the area of our lives that we deem most important. Just like the athletes, we need to alternate periods of training and recovery. We should try to identify behavioural habits that are depleting our energy levels and try to replace them with those that expand and renew it. Some CEOs were asked how they go about saving energy during their long day at work. How do they recharge?

One of them felt that most of our energy gets wasted in negativity—when we worry, in fear or anxiety. These expend a great amount of energy and kill positive thoughts and experiences. For another person it is introspection in isolation which helps to recharge his batteries. For some it is the practice of eating well, self care and exercising, working hard but taking regular breaks, which help restore energy. For one of them the energy-enhancing ritual is using cognitive energy which helps to reduce the number of decisions that he has to make in a day. By setting up a routine as to what to

wear and eat, on weekly basis, one saves energy. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, November 19, 2017)

We are floating in the ocean of life or *Jiva* which permeates every object on earth. The *pranic* currents circulating in the astral body affect the body and ultimately stream forth as our magnetism in the form of magnetic fluid. The quality and motion of *prana* which partakes of man's psychic nature is dependent on our thoughts. Since we are always thinking, our magnetism changes for better or for worse every hour, and gets reflected in our magnetic emanations. A pure person is able to purify the *psychic atmosphere* around him. A dynamic personality emanates a particular type of forceful magnetism.

When we hold any object in our hand we transfer our magnetism to that object. In a healthy and young person these magnetic emanations are strong while the same are weak in case of diseased or old person. When two such people come in close proximity of each other, there is transfer of magnetic fluid or vitality from the stronger to the weaker person, which may leave the stronger person exhausted. H.P.B. points out that breeders never herd together young animals with old; intelligent physicians forbid parents to have young children occupy their own beds. As an extreme example, there is the case of Seeress of Prevoist, Madame Hauffe, who repeatedly stated that she supported life merely on the atmosphere of the people surrounding her and their *magnetic emanations*. H.P.B. points out that the seeress was a *magnetic vampire*, who absorbed vitality of stronger people in the form of *volatilized* blood. (*Isis*, I, 463)

A pure and healthy magnetizer or mesmerizer cures his patients by projecting or imparting his healthy, vital fluid. When a healthy operator mesmerizes his patient with a determined desire to cure him, the exhaustion felt by the former is proportionate to the relief given to the patient. However, when an unconscious exchange takes place we have no control, except to avoid coming in close contact with such a person who is shown by experience, to drain us of our vitality.

“Psychic and vital energy are limited in every man. It is like a capital. If you have a dollar a day and spend two, at the end of the month you will have a deficit of \$30,” writes H.P.B. (*She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*, p. 10)

Does Religion make you a good person? A “good person” described in text books is normally a man of God, who invokes the Almighty all day. Several questions arise. Does being religious make us morally better or good? *Or*, are atheists bad people? When a survey was conducted by Will Gervais, a psychologist at the University of Connecticut, to study people's attitude towards atheists, he found “widespread and extreme moral prejudice against atheists around the world. Across all continents, people assumed that those who committed immoral acts, even extreme ones such as serial murder, were more likely to be atheists,” writes his colleague, Dimitris Xygalatas, assistant professor in anthropology, in *The Conversation*. Is there any relation between religion and morality? It is true that the world's major religions are concerned with morality, but that does not mean that morality cannot exist without religion, writes Xygalatas.

In fact, he says, morality founded in religion can be problematic in several ways. For instance, “in the nineteenth century, Mormons considered polygamy a moral imperative, while Catholics saw it as a mortal sin.” Religious morality also changes with time. Sati was meritorious act once, but is not so today. Even today, some religions do not allow contraception, abortion and vaccination. Also, the beliefs and behaviour of the religious people are not always in accordance with the official religious doctrines. Some of the Catholics, for instance, practice birth control.

When we look at actual behaviour, we find that the claim that the religious individuals are more altruistic, compassionate, honest and charitable than non-religious ones is untenable. In an experiment called the “Good Samaritan Study,” the researchers monitored who

would stop and help an injured man lying in the alley. “They found that religiosity played no role in helping behaviour.” Thus, it appears that religious people do not behave more morally than the atheists, though they may claim to do so. (*Sunday Times of India*, November 26, 2017)

Is it possible to remain ethically sound and morally good without the belief in God, religion, etc.? There is a need to distinguish between religion and religiosity. The latter emphasizes prayers, pilgrimages, austerities and ceremonies. People find it easier to practice rituals, penances and offerings than to understand and apply the deep moral, social and philosophical tenets of religion. “True religion must give us a basis for thinking, and consequently, a basis for acting; it must give us an understanding of nature, of ourselves and of other beings,” writes Mr. Crosbie. Some of the religionists tend to believe that morality is God-given and hence no God, no morals, or that we are good for the sake of God, who might punish us if we are not good. The atheists and Humanists believe that it is possible to be “good without God,” by being good for goodness’ sake.

True morality is different from conventional morality. Conventional morality is a result of consensus of opinion of the people of the society of a particular time. “True morality rests in an understanding and in a realization of man’s own spiritual nature, and must of necessity flow from it, irrespective of all kinds of convention,” writes Mr. Crosbie. There are many types of atheists. Some reject personal God, but believe in a Law. Such a person may live a noble, sensible and useful life and his basis for living a morally pure life may be moral law, or law of Karma, or the principle of Brotherhood. These might not be his explicit beliefs. But he may be seen to abstain from evil conduct because his better nature rebels against immorality, thus admitting the existence of morality and moral law.

Moreover, even science seems to agree that human beings have an innate moral faculty. Theosophy teaches that the Divine Instructors who endowed infant humanity with the light of mind, impressed on the imperishable centre of man’s consciousness, first

notions of arts and sciences, spiritual knowledge and moral ideas, and we may term these as “innate ideas,” which reside in *Buddhi-Manasic* or Divine consciousness. Hence, each one of us receives moral guidance from this divine consciousness in terms of “voice of conscience,” irrespective of whether we believe in God or religion.

December 3, 2017, is the day of the supermoon in the sky. The term supermoon was coined by astrologer Richard Nolle in 1979. A supermoon happens when a full moon (*poornima*) or new moon (*amavasya*) is in closest proximity to earth, which is also called perigee. The moon revolves around the earth in an oval-shaped orbit, which means it is closer to the earth, on one side of its path. On this orbital path, when the moon is closest to the earth from one side, that point is called perigee, and the point at the opposite end when it is farthest from the earth, is called apogee. Thus, the supermoon occurs when the moon is at perigee, and simultaneously, it is full moon or new moon. The joint impact of the supermoon and the full moon, causes it to look far bigger than its normal size. The supermoon on November 14, 2016 was the closest since the one that happened on January 26, 1948.

The moon is a dead, barren and dark land which borrows light from the sun. Thus, the moon’s very existence is owing to impact of another entity, and therefore, in astrology, the moon is considered to be the most easily impacted planet amongst all, and represents the mind. The moon’s ever-changing size is indicative of our ever-changing mind. The origin of the word “lunatic,” mentally ill person, is based on the word lunar. The moon holds a significant place in astrology and human life.

The impact of any astral event on earth can be seen at the world level, and at the individual level. A moon-related astral event generally creates high tides in the sea, and also creates possibilities of earthquakes and tsunamis. At an individual level, its impact is seen on a person’s thoughts, emotions and behaviour. Thus, for

instance, it can happen that a person going through emotional turmoil can get further depressed, or a person completely depressed turns suicidal. However, a person practising meditation can sail through such times of emotional upheavals without much harm, writes Vishal S. Saxena, an astrologer. (*Life Positive*, November 2017)

We know the moon only from the astronomical, geological and physical standpoint. Her psychic and metaphysical nature remains an occult secret. Her real nature and properties have been known to every occultist. The moon is a substitute for a secret planet with retrograde motion, very near to her, and sometimes visible at a certain hour of the night. The occult influence of this planet is transmitted by the moon.

The Secret Doctrine points out that the moon is the satellite of the Earth only in one respect, viz., that physically the moon revolves round the Earth. But in every other respect it is the Earth, which is the satellite of the moon. It is evidenced by the tides, by the cyclic changes in many forms of diseases that coincide with the lunar phases, it can be traced in the growth of the plants and also in the phenomenon of gestation and conception.

Her emanations are both beneficent and maleficent. The moon influences us physically, astrally and psychically. “For she is a *dead*, yet a *living body*. The particles of her decaying corpse are full of active and destructive life” (*S.D.*, I, 156). The moon acts perniciously upon the mental and bodily constitution of people in more than one way. In the article, “Whence the name Lunatic?,” H.P.B. observes that it has been proved by a series of experiments that even a person of remarkably strong nerves could not sit, lie or sleep for a long time in a room lit by moonlight without injury to health. There does exist a connection between phases of the moon and various plant, animal and human diseases. An intimate connection has been observed between certain nervous diseases, such as epilepsy and neuralgia, with certain phases of the moon, and the cure for that is the sun.